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17 August 2022

Our reference: 2484266 – George & Dragon Tree Climbing Survey Letter Report

Dear Shane,

GEORGE & DRAGON TREE CLIMBING SURVEY

RSK Biocensus were instructed by Greene King Developments to undertake a Tree Climbing Survey in relation to proposed development at the George & Dragon, Reading in Berkshire (RG30 2HA). We understand that this development will require the removal of trees on site. A mature sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) tree on site was identified during the original preliminary ecological appraisal (conducted by RSK Biocensus on 26th July 2022) as having unknown suitability for supporting roosting bats due to the dense coverage of ivy. It was therefore recommended that the tree be inspected to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats.

Methods

Tree climbing survey

Two suitably experienced and licensed tree climbers, Richard Moulds (Utilitree Arb) and Keir Parsons (Pennant Ecology), carried out the survey on the 8th of August 2022. Both surveyors hold a valid Natural England bat licence permitting the inspection of potential roost features using artificial light, endoscopes, and hand-held static nets. Both climbers hold valid climbing and LOLER certification for climbing and aerial rescue.

Where possible, our ecologists used ladders or tree climbing techniques to access features such as holes, cracks, and cavities to assess their true potential for roosting bats and to search for bats or evidence of bats, including droppings, staining marks etc. Endoscopes and torches were used where necessary, to aid inspection.

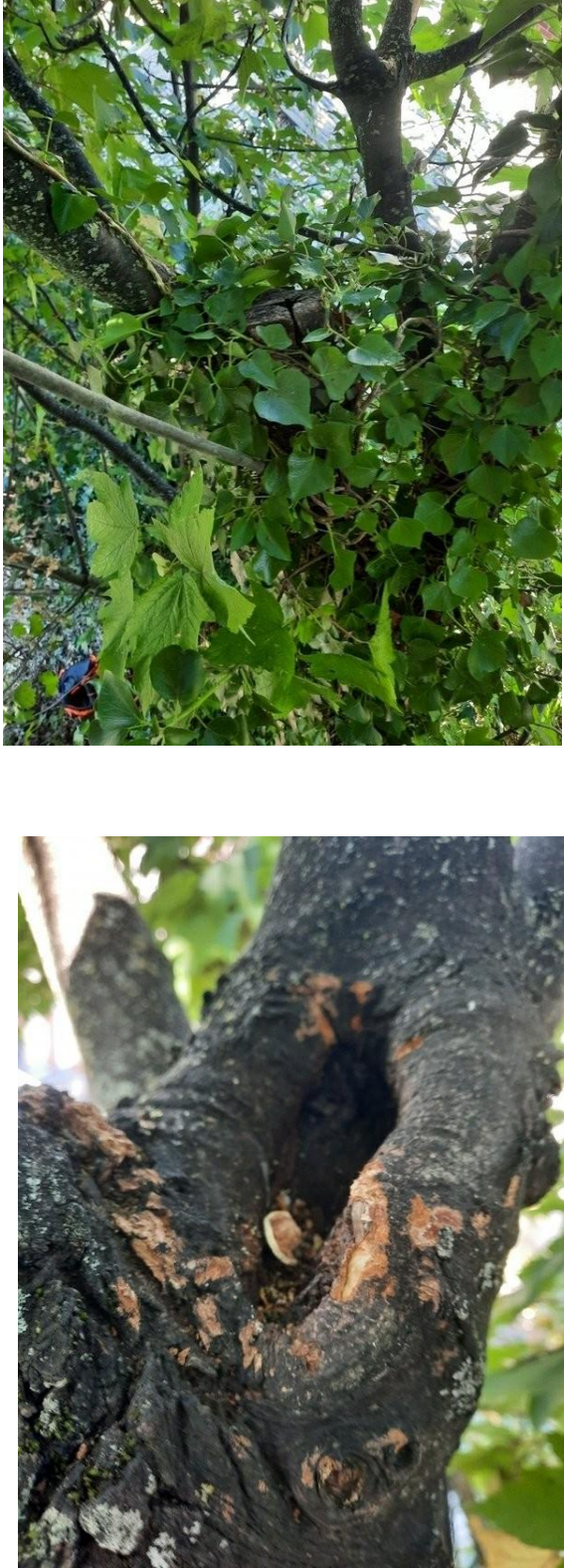
Results

None of the features previously identified in the original PEA were determined to have roosting potential during this climb. These features have therefore been given a negligible bat roost potential

rating. Table 1 summarises the results of the single tree climbing survey with photographs of the features identified. A total of six potential roosting features (PRFs) were assessed during the survey.

Table 1. Results of tree climbing survey of a single mature sycamore.

Feature Number	Photograph	Description and Bat Roost Potential
PRF1 ivy cover		Ivy stems less than 50 mm in diameter and no matted sheets present so no roosting potential between the stems and not sufficiently dense to provide any roosting potential within the foliage. Negligible Potential
PRF2 - 6 rot holes		Multiple superficial cavities at point of previous topping cuts throughout the crown at approximately 10 m height. Many obscured from ground level view by the ivy cover. None with any roosting suitability. Multiple, superficial cavities developing at the point of previous topping cuts, where the remaining branch has decayed, and wound wood formation is developing. Cavities all open and shallow and very exposed with no roosting suitability Negligible Potential

Feature Number	Photograph	Description and Bat Roost Potential
		

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During the survey an active wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) nest was discovered on the tree (Photo 1).

Photo 1. Active pigeon nest with juvenile present.



Evaluation and Conclusions

These survey results indicate that bats are unlikely to be using this tree for roosting. Therefore, no further surveys or a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence are required in relation to bats and this tree.

All active birds' nests are protected by law. A nest is deemed to be active even if it is in the process of being built and does not yet contain eggs or young. As such, this tree cannot be felled until the young have fledged. Ideally the felling of this tree would occur outside the breeding bird season (October and February). If it is necessary to remove the tree during the breeding season, this will require a watching brief by an ecologist no more than 48 hours before the tree is removed to ensure the chicks have fledged and that no other active nests are present within the tree.

If you have any further questions, then please do not hesitate to contact me via email Eleanor.Holloway@rsk.biocensus.com.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eleanor Holloway', written over a horizontal line.

Eleanor Holloway, MSc
Assistant Ecologist

Technical Review by



Prof. Richard (Dez) Delahay PhD MCIEEM CEcol.
Director