Aerial Tree Bat Inspection

Project	Land on the south-east side of A12, Ardleigh
Date	21/12/2023
Update	18/01/2024 Version A – Tree numbers changed to match with tree survey.
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Review	Simon Thomas, MCIEEM, Director of Ecology

Summary: Climbed inspection was undertaken on 19th December 2023 of tree T8 to confirm if features identified on the tree during the ground-level inspection provide suitable opportunities for roosting bats.

Features present within the tree were inspected using an endoscope and consequently assessed as offering limited suitability for roosting bats (PRF-I). As such, a pre-works inspection is recommended to ensure no bats are present prior to felling.

Introduction:

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (TMA, ref. 230961-ED-01) assessed all trees within the site from ground level for their potential to be used by roosting bats. There are a number of trees within the site boundary. T8, due to be removed, was assessed as having potential for roosting bats.

A climbed inspection for the tree was recommended to confirm the suitability of the features identified during the ground-level inspection and to look for any evidence of use by bats.

Legislation:

All species of bat and their breeding sites or resting places (roosts) are protected under Regulation 41 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence for anyone intentionally to kill, injure or handle a bat, to possess a bat (whether live or dead), disturb a roosting bat, or sell or offer a bat for sale without a licence. It is also an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter, whether they are present or not.

Methods:

The tree climbing inspection was undertaken on 19th December 2023. Weather conditions during the inspection were not considered to pose any limitations.

In the first instance, tree T8 was inspected from ground-level using a high-powered torch and close-focusing binoculars to identify potential bat roosting features (PRFs). The tree was then climbed with the aid of a rope and harness, and each PRF was checked for bats and/or secondary evidence of bats using a handheld torch and endoscope.

The tree climbing inspection was undertaken by Thomas Haley of Tom Haley Ecology on behalf of TMA, and Will Hardy. Both Thomas and Will are certified in tree climbing and aerial rescue, and Thomas is an experienced bat ecologist who holds a Natural England Level 2 survey licence for bats (registration number 2020-44792-CLS-CLS).

Limitations.

Bats are transient, mobile species and switch roost locations regularly. Therefore, it is possible that a roost feature might be vacant one day and occupied the next. Recommendations are made in this report to provide confidence and certainty, which may involve further surveys and repeat inspections prior to tree work.

In contrast to buildings, where bat droppings are sometime obvious and can be preserved, droppings in trees deteriorate more rapidly or are consumed, therefore, absence of bat droppings is not conclusive evidence that a tree PRF is not used.

This report is broadly considered valid for 12 months, after which point updated surveys may be required.

Results:

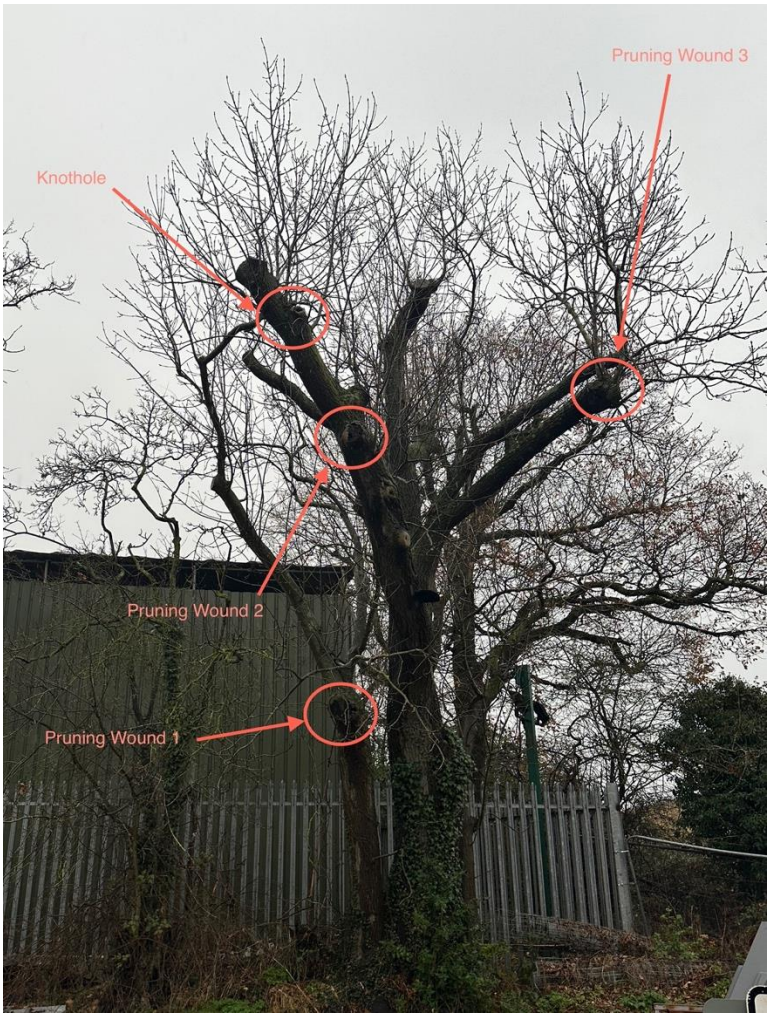
The table below details the features found on tree T8 and their potential for roosting bats.

Table 1. Results of aerial inspection of tree T8 (Located at grid ref. TM 02503 29565)

Features	Notes	Overall Bat Roosting Potential	Recommendation
Knothole – 9m high, South facing.	**Knothole:** Entrance measures approx. 5x4 cm Upward facing wet bowl – **Negligible**.	PRF-I (low roost suitability)	No Further surveys required. A pre-works check (by licence bat ecologist) to confirm continued absence of roosting bats immediately prior to removal is recommended as PRF-I features still retain some suitability.
Pruning Wound 1 – 3m high, south facing on second stem.	**Pruning Wound 1:** Pruning wound with split leading in 4cm exposed on the eastern side – **PRF-I.**		
Pruning Wound 2 – 6m high, south facing	**Pruning Wound 2:** Pruning wound with split leading in 8cm, wet at base with sludge – **PRF-I**.		
Pruning Wound 3 – 6m high, east facing end of limb.	**Pruning Wound 3:** Pruning wound with split at end of limb leading in 8cm, wet at base with sludge – **PRF-I.**		

Snapped Limb – 7m high. North facing.	**Snapped Limb:** Rot hole, underside of limb. Closed – **Negligible**.		

Images of the features within the tree are shown below.



Picture 1: Southern view of T8

Picture 2: View of Snapped limb on northern side of tree

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Picture 3: Alternate view of Pruning Wound 3

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Features within the tree have been assessed as 'PRF-I' which is defined as Potential roost features which are only suitable for individual bats or very low numbers due to their small size (Collins, 2023).

In line with BCT Guidelines, it is recommended that a precautionary pre-works inspection is undertaken by a licensed bat ecologist immediately prior to felling. Where possible, the inspection should be undertaken using an elevated work platform.

If bats or evidence of bats are found work must cease and a Natural England Licence will be required.

References:

- Tim Moya Associates (2023), Preliminary Ecological Appraisal ref. 230961-ED-01
- Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

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