



Press Release

Leather Lane Conservation Group Announces Major Conservation Wins and Future Plans

7 May 2025

The Leather Lane Conservation Group (LLCG) is pleased to announce significant achievements in the preservation of Leather Lane’s unique landscape and biodiversity, following four years of dedicated collaboration and advocacy.

In late 2023, Align took over as the principal contractor for Leather Lane, marking a new chapter in constructive engagement. Thanks to the sustained efforts of LLCG, a complete redesign of the original plans has been secured—ensuring protection not only for the critical bat flightpath but for the wider ecosystem and local landscape. A summary of our engagement with Align has been produced by Align as part of their Schedule 17 planning application to Bucks Council. Align states:

“Working collaboratively with the local action group the LLCG, we set about meeting and reviewing the existing approved designs to ensure that local concerns regarding environmental mitigations, and potential loss of the iconic “Lone Oak”.¹



¹ ‘Appendix A, Align Schedule 17: Plans and Specifications – Written Statement – South Heath - Leather Lane (For Information)’ <https://tinyurl.com/LLCG-S17ws-65>

A Redesign Driven by Conservation

The original plans would have been unlawful in light of the bat activity data that LLCG collected and presented. It is directly because of LLCG's work that HS2 and Align accepted the need for a fundamental redesign of the Leather Lane overbridge crossing HS2's track. As a result, the design now submitted for approval by Bucks Council² now includes:

- A 25-metre wide green bridge (rather than a simple bridge or tunnel), planted to maintain essential wildlife corridors—currently the only green crossing of its kind in the Chilterns National Landscape.
- A lower road alignment, reducing visual and environmental impact on residents and the landscape.
- The relocation of the transformer power station to the trackside, avoiding the skyline placement originally proposed—which would have created long-term maintenance challenges and visual intrusion.
- Improved landscaping at Hammonds Hall Farm, with sound barriers moved down to the track line, protecting both the landscape and local tranquillity.
- The preservation of “Ilona”, the iconic hedgerow oak, along with other mature oaks and the ancient hedgerow from Ilona to Potter Row, thanks to targeted design modifications and protective measures.
- Root protection zones established for the remaining veteran oaks, directly secured through LLCG's advocacy.
- Mitigation put in place during construction to create an artificial bat flightpath.

In total, while the initial plans would have resulted in the loss of 100 trees (mostly oaks), only 16 oak trees have been lost—a testament to the LLCG's tireless advocacy.

A Commitment to Long-Term Stewardship

Beyond influencing the construction phase, LLCG has taken proactive steps to secure the long-term protection of Leather Lane's biodiversity. The LLCG has formally registered as a charity (Charity Number 1212850), with the mission of establishing a conservation area that encompasses the new and old lanes, the remaining trees, hedgerows, ponds, and surrounding habitats.

“Our goal is to ensure that the green crossing continues to function effectively as a wildlife corridor—and to safeguard the trees and habitats that so many have worked so hard to protect,” said a spokesperson for LLCG. “We are committed to ongoing monitoring, auditing, and conservation of Leather Lane's wildlife, measuring both the impacts of construction and the effectiveness of mitigation measures. This work will not only benefit our local environment but also contribute valuable insights for future large-scale infrastructure projects.”

Looking Ahead

LLCG continues its ongoing program of bat walks, bat ecology education and monitoring the lane for bat activity. LLCG's future plans include regular monitoring of the area's wildlife, ponds, copse, hedgerows, to assess habitat use and the success of mitigation efforts. The

² <http://leatherlane.org/schedule-17-news>

group is actively exploring pathways for land stewardship, including ownership, maintenance, and governance of the proposed conservation area. Additional volunteers and funding will be sought to support this ambitious work.

“The Leather Lane Conservation Group exists because of the passion and dedication of our community,” the spokesperson added. “We are determined to honour that commitment by preserving the landscape and biodiversity for generations to come.”

For more information, contact the LLCG at leatherlanecg@gmail.com

To support our work please donate here: <https://gofund.me/2f428a5f>

The Leather Lane Conservation Group is a registered charity set up to protect the ecology of Leather Lane in Buckinghamshire (a crucial wildlife corridor).

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