

Preliminary Bat Roost & Breeding Bird Assessment

15 Broadhalgh Avenue, Rochdale, Greater Manchester,
OL11 5LW

Prepared for

Andrew Marsh

14th March 2023

Version 02

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Field surveys have been carried out and focused to a level of detail required to achieve the stated brief of the work. No part of this report may be copied or duplicated without express permission of Miranda Cowan Ecology Ltd. and the party for whom it was prepared.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1. BACKGROUND	4
1.2. SURVEY AIMS	4
1.3. LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING CONTEXT	5
2. METHODS	7
2.1. DESK STUDY	7
2.2. PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT	7
2.3. BATS FORAGING & COMMUTING	8
2.4. NESTING BIRDS	8
3. RESULTS	9
3.1. DATA SEARCH	9
3.2. BAT FORAGING AND COMMUTING POTENTIAL	9
3.3. BREEDING BIRDS	10
4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	11
4.1. BATS	11
4.2. BIRDS	11
5. REFERENCES	12

Appendix A: Proposal Plan, Drawing No. 0.02, August 2022
MMA Tree Consultancy, Tree Constraints Plan, October 2022.

Appendix B: Preliminary Roost Assessment & Photographic Plates

1. Introduction

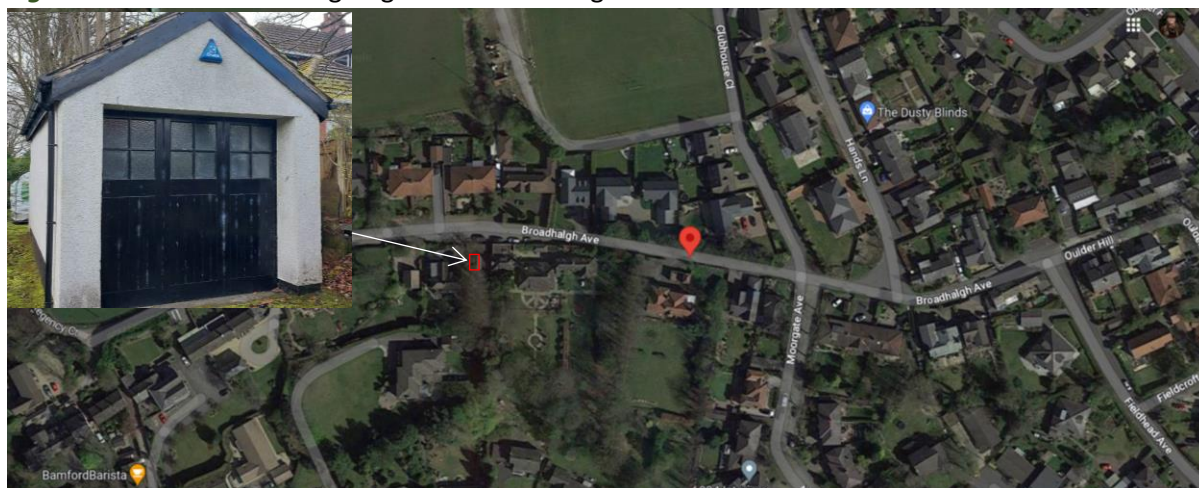
1.1. Background

Miranda Cowan Ecology Ltd. was instructed by Mr Andrew Marsh ('the client') in February 2023 to undertake a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) and breeding bird assessment of a small garage located at the residential property of 15 Broadhalgh Avenue, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, OL11 5LW. **Figure 1.1** illustrates the location of the garage, which is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (OSNGR) SD 872 131 and positioned at an elevation of 140m.

It is understood the garage is to be demolished and will be replaced with another garage structure, see **Appendix A** for the proposal plan. The purpose of the demolition is to increase the parking facility within the garden of the property, which may require tree removal subject to planning consent.

A PRA and breeding bird assessment was completed on the 22nd of February 2023 by Miranda Cowan Ecology Ltd, BSc (Hons), PGCert FdSc, MCIEEM (Bat Class licence WML – CL17-2021-52426). The garage was accessible externally and internally.

Figure 1.1: Location of the garage at 15 Broadhalgh Avenue



1.2. Survey Aims

The objectives of the PRA and breeding bird assessment were to:

- Determine the potential of the garage for roosting bats, by identifying and describing PRF and any access / egress points into the building structure.
- According to standard assessment criteria, grade the garage as Negligible, Low, Medium or High potential for roosting bats.
- Subject to the assessment findings detail recommendations for follow up bat activity surveys.
- Identify the evidence of disused bird nests or potential for nesting birds between March to August, inclusive.
- Outline potential mitigation measures relating to European Protected Species Licencing to avoidance of significant ecological impacts.
- In line with national and local planning policies identify measures for biodiversity gain.

1.3. Legislative and Planning Context

Bats

All bats are protected in the UK under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In summary, in the UK, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat.
- Deliberately disturb a bat in a way that would affect its ability to survive, breed or rear young, hibernate or migrate or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
- Damage or destroy a roost (this is an absolute offence).
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost.
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost.

The legislation also applies to sites that are not currently occupied, as bats can return to roosts year after year.

Some UK bats species are also included in the list of habitats and species, which are of Principle Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England as required under Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act. The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers, including local planning authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act, to have regards to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

Natural England is the Government body responsible for nature conservation in England. Local planning authorities must consult them before granting planning permission for any work that would be likely to result in harm to bats or their habitat. Natural England consults with the BCT to provide advice.

“Development” licences for European Protected Species (EPS) are issued by Natural England for any actions that may compromise the protection of bats, under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Breeding Birds

All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and it is an offence, with certain exceptions, to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird; and,
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building or is in, on or near a nest with eggs or young; or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides further protection for species such as barn owl, a species that typically nests in barns / agricultural buildings. If any person intentionally or recklessly disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a

nest containing eggs or young; or disturb dependent young of such a bird. That person shall be guilty of an offence.

Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and provides guidance on how these policies are expected to be applied. The NPPF includes a chapter on biodiversity, Chapter 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, which outlines ways the planning system is required to contribute to enhancement of the natural environment by giving guidance to local authorities in respect of protection and enhancement of biodiversity within development projects.

The NPPF is transposed into Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Councils Unitary Development (adopted 2006), has two key policies relating to protected species and the natural environment, including:

- NE/3 - Biodiversity and Development. Relates to safeguarding and encouraging the integration of biodiversity within all types of development.
- NE/4 - Protected Species. Relates to ensuring that no adverse impacts on protected species should occur resulting from any development.

All types of development should have regard to maintaining and enhancing the status of protected species and biodiversity.

2. Methods

2.1. Desk Study

Defra's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) interactive map was used to identify any Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 10 km of the garage which were relevant to bats.

MAGIC was also used to determine the presence of any bat European Protected species licencing (EPSL) within 2 km of the site and aerial imagery was reviewed to establish the value of potential functionally linked habitat between the site and any EPSL.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been reviewed as part of the desk study, which was prepared by MMA Tree Consultancy in October 2022. The AIA identified five trees that could not be realistically retained should a new garage be constructed. As shown in **Appendix A** the trees include T1 to T5, with two additional trees (T21 and T22) adjacent to the garage identified for retention and to be protected with Tree Protective Fencing. Trees T1 to T5 and T21 and T22 were included in the PRA assessment.

2.2. Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

The PRA adhered to methodology detailed in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd Edition (2016)*. This involved a ground level external and internal inspection of the garage and an inspection of surrounding trees that could be impacted by the works. External features of the garage were assessed using close-focusing binoculars and a high-powered torch to identify PRF, such as gaps above doors and between the corrugated metal work. The internal inspection comprised of a search for roosting bats by torchlight, inspections for bat droppings / feeding remains and an assessment of potential egress points. Trees were inspected for cavities, rot holes and lifted bark that could be used by winter or summer roosting bats.

The garage was assigned a level of roost suitability in accordance with the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2016), see **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Bat roost suitability and descriptions (PRF Potential Roost Features)

Bat Roost Suitability	Description of Features
Confirmed presence	This category is where positive evidence of bats has been recorded. For example, bats are found; bat droppings may be present at a suitable location for roosting bats; existing bat records may be associated with the structure.
High	A building structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions* and surrounding habitat.
Moderate	A structure or tree considered to have one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions* and surrounding habitat but are unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (With regard to roost type only – assessments are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. The feature and surrounding habitat do not provide enough shelter, conditions* space for larger roost types such as a maternity or hibernation roost.

Bat Roost Suitability	Description of Features
	A tree of sufficient size and age to support roosting bats, but with no features observed from the ground, or the features only have a limited potential to support roosting bats.
Negligible	Buildings which appear unsuitable for roosting bats due to a clear lack of roosting spaces such as voids and/or absence of suitable access points.

(* in this context conditions refers to the level of disturbance, light, height above ground, temperature, and humidity etc.)

2.3. Bats Foraging & Commuting

Habitat features surrounding the garage were assessed for their suitability to support foraging and commuting bat populations. This assessment was independent from the suitability of the site to support roosting bats and provides information on the likeliness of bat foraging activity within the local environment, and the dependence of individuals on these features for commuting to alternative roosting sites, foraging and migration. The suitability of the sites bat commuting and foraging habitat was evaluated professional judgement and against criteria within **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2: Suitability of foraging and commuting bat habitat, adapted from Collins (2016)

Category	Description of commuting and foraging habitat
Negligible Suitability	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low Suitability	Habitat which could be used by low numbers of commuting bats such as an isolated hedgerow (with gaps), or an unvegetated stream unconnected to suitable habitat in the wider environment. Suitable, yet isolated habitat that could be used by foraging bats such as individual trees, or a patch of scrub.
Moderate Suitability	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by commuting bats, notably tree lines, hedgerows or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape which could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, open water, scrub or grassland.
High Suitability	Continuous, High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape which is considered to be highly conducive to commuting bats including river valleys, stream, hedgerows, and woodland edge High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree lined watercourses, and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

2.4. Nesting Birds

An inspection was made for the presence of disused birds' nest, including accumulations of twigs, cup formed nests built from mud, moss, grasses or other materials.

3. Results

Appendix B details the PRA findings with supporting photographic plates, with the data described below.

3.1. Data Search

Review of MAGIC shows there to be one European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) within 2km of the garage. The reference is EPSM2009-709, relating to common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, dating from 08-04-2009 to 21-12-2010. The licence allowed for destruction of a resting place.

The record is assessed as not significant due a combination of distance and extent of urban conurbation between the site and the EPSL record.

3.2. Bat Foraging and Commuting Potential

The site is located with a suburban context and surrounded by a continuous network tree filled residential gardens and mature hedgerows along field boundaries to the north. The properties along Broadhalgh Road are also of varying ages and may offer potential roosting opportunities for bats, which in combination with surrounding trees and hedgerows, offer moderate potential for bat commuting and foraging.

Building Description and Potential Roost Features

The garage is built from standard brick that has been rendered and painted white. The front concertina doors are black painted wooden doors, wooden fascia boarding and concrete fabricated tiles, positioned on an apex roof. Internally the apex structure was supported by wooded rafters and tie beams, with underfelt in good condition. The client expressed the roof had been replaced approximately 5 years ago and garage was noted to be in regular use as an exercise gym.

The garage has one PRF at the front of the garage, beneath a tile of the front gable end. The PRF extended inwards by 100mm and then came to an abrupt end due to the presence of a wooden batter. There was an old disused small moss formed bird's nest within the void. With use of a torch the void was fully visible, with clean battening and felt, not cluttered by dust or cobwebs. There was no evidence of winter roosting bats or bat droppings.

There were no gaps under fascia at the front or rear of the garage. Fascia on the sides of the garage did have a gap beneath, which extended directly into the internal garage and not between the underfelt and tiles. Internally there were no PRF, with the underfelt being cleanly maintained and no evidence of roosting bats or droppings. The concrete fabricated tiles were fully sealed and also moss covered approximately 70% of the roof.

As the garage supports a PRF, the presence on an occasional summer roosting crevice dwelling bat cannot be excluded. Therefore, the garage has been assessed as having low bat roost potential.

Description of Trees and Potential Roost Features

Trees T1 to T5 (**Appendix B**) are all mature common lime *Tilia x europaea* trees, which are all maintained in a good condition. Only T1 had a small (40 x 20 mm) cavity, located in the stem approximately 4m above ground level and south facing. Inspection of the cavity with use of a torch revealed a blank end of inner bark, thus the cavity had negligible potential for roosting bats.

Trees T21 pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and T22 sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* did not support any PRF.

3.3. Breeding Birds

There was an old disused small moss formed bird's nest within the void identified at the front of the garage, below the tile of the apex roof. There was no evidence of old birds nest within the surrounding trees.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Bats

Due to the presence of a single PRF associated with the garage, there is a low risk that a crevice dwelling bat such as common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* may seek summer roosting opportunities from April to September. As the PRF is open and fully visible by torch and absent of deeper access points, it is recommended that a pre-demolition inspection is completed during this period, as bats are becoming increasingly active in April and may start to move between roost sites.

Should there be any evidence of roosting bats / or bat droppings during the pre-demolition check, the works will not be able to commence until a further single bat activity survey is completed, which may result in mitigation licencing through Natural England. In the absence that any bat evidence is found at the time of the pre-demolition inspection, it will be recommended that that works can proceed as planned.

No further surveys are required for the surrounding trees as a single PRF associated with a common lime tree (T1) was assessed as negligible, with the PRF being a blank end and blocked by inner bark.

Where the works are delayed until 2024, it will be required to undertake an update of the Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and report the findings with relevant planning documents.

4.2. Birds

The assessment confirmed the presence of an old bird's nest within the PRF, where there is potential for further nest building between the months of March to August, inclusive. This period marks the core breeding bird season.

To avoid impacting the potential presence of breeding birds, the demolition of the garage (and any tree removal) should take place during the winter, between September to February, inclusive. If winter demolition is not possible, a pre-demolition / tree removal check for breeding birds will be required 24hrs in advanced of the planned works. The nesting check will need to be completed by an experienced ecologist.

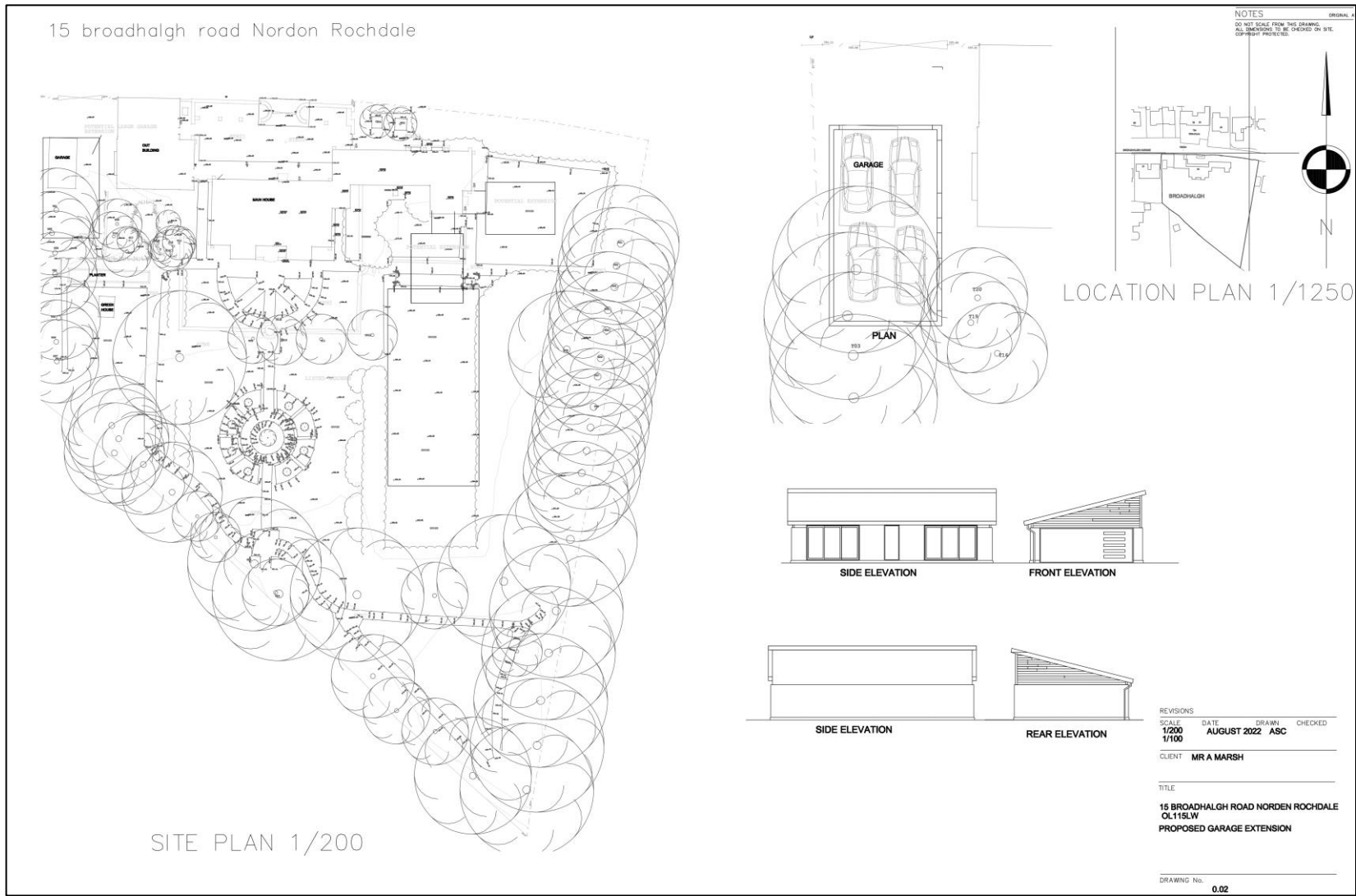
Where an active nest is found, the demolition / tree felling works cannot proceed until the ecologist has confirmed that all fledglings have vacated the nest. This can take up to 28 days or longer subject to the nesting species present.

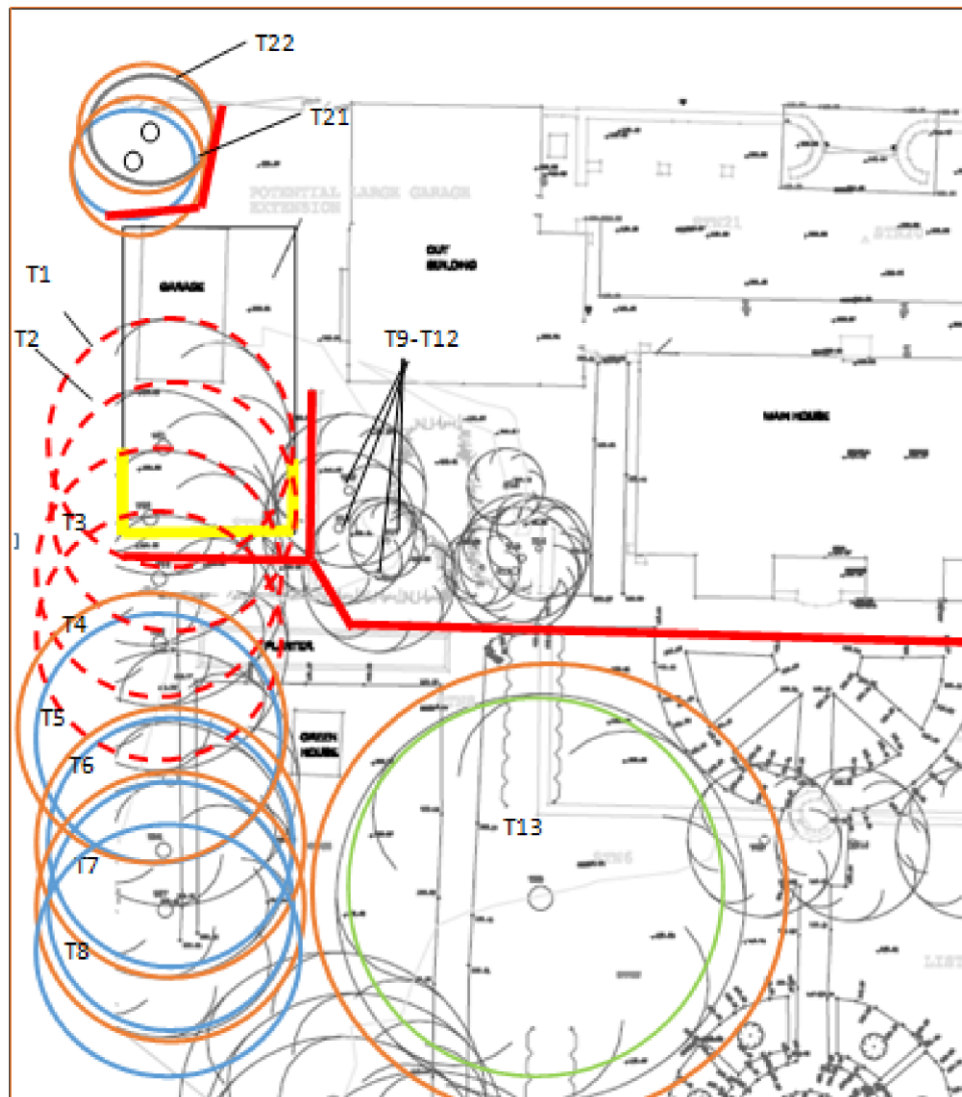
It is recommended that any nesting bird checks are timed with pre-demolition checks for summer roosting bats within the visibly accessible PRF.

5. References

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Appendix A: Proposal Plan, Drawing No. 0.02, August 2022 and MMA Tree Consultancy, Tree Constraints Plan, October 2022.





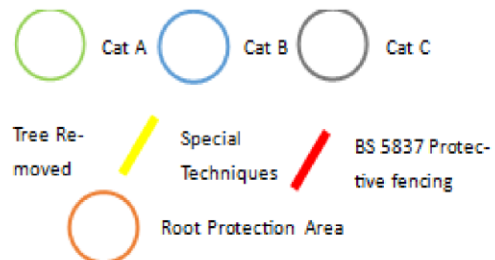
Tree Constraints' Plan

15 Broadhalgh Avenue,

Rochdale,

OL11 5LW

Key



MMA Tree Consultancy

mmatreeconsultancy@mail.com

Mobile 07718785102

Client—Mr Andrew Marsh

Architect—Mr Andrew Chapman

Arborist—Mr Nicholas Anderson

Planning Ref—To be allocated

Appendix B: Preliminary Roost Assessment:

Site: 15 Broadhalgh, Rochdale, demolition of a garage.	Structure Ref / OS Ref: SD 872 132	Date: 22nd February 2023
Surveyor: Miranda Cowan Ecology Ltd.	Weather: Patchy cloud, sunny intervals, 13 degrees, beaufort 0 (still).	
Structure Description: Standard brick-built garage that has been rendered, black wooded doors, wooden fascia boarding and concrete fabricated tiles, positioned on an Apex roof. Internally the apex structure was supported by wooded rafters and tie beams, the underfelt was in good condition. The client expressed the roof had been replaced approximately 5 years ago and internally the roof structure appeared new. The garage was noted to be in regular use as an exercise gym.		
Note of PRF: The garage has one PRF at the front of the garage, beneath a tile of the gable end. The PRF extends inwards by 100mm and then comes to an abrupt ends due to the presence of a batter, beyond this there was no other suitable bat access points. There was an old disused bird's nest within the void. With use of a torch, internally the void was fully visible with no evidence of roosting bats or the presence of any bat droppings. There were no gaps under fascia at the front or rear of the garage. Fascia on the sides of the garage did have a gap beneath, which extended directly into the internal garage and not between the underfelt and tiles. Internally there were no PRF, with the underfelt being cleanly maintained and no evidence of roosting bats or droppings. The concrete fabricated tiles were fully sealed and also moss covered approximately 70% of the roof.		
Resulting Value: A single PRF ruled out due to being able to fully see within the void, with no evidence of roosting bats or bat droppings. Resulting value therefore negligible.		
Additional Survey Requirements: No further survey requirements for bats or breeding birds.		
Plate 1: Front view of garage, sealed around doors and beneath fascia. One PRF beneath tile. Inspected with torch, extended inwards by 100mm, sealed be wooden batter.		Plate 5: PRF extends inwards by 100mm and abruptly ends with a wooden batter, no other access points or bat droppings. There is a disused bird's nest to the left of the hole. No evidence of staining or bat droppings.
		
Plate 2: Rear view of garage, no PRF, no gaps under fascia.		Plate 6: Internal view of garage, wooded rafters & tie beams. Intact felt underlining.
		

Plate 3: Sealed slates largely moss covered.



Plate 4: Typical view of fascia underside, close view with no PRF and cobwebs.



Plate 6: PRF of T1, reduced to negligible due to the presence of inner bark, the crevice is also exposed to the rain.



Plate 7: View of internal roof structure.



Plate 5: Trees T1 to T5

