

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

Vale Road, Gravesham

Frankham Projects

21/10/2025



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Executive Summary

Consult Sustainability was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Roost Appraisal by Frankham Projects for a site at 107 Vale Road, Gravesham.

This survey aimed to establish the potential for roosting and hibernating bats to inform appropriate mitigation, compensation, and enhancement actions regarding a proposed renovation.

This document is a report of this survey and has been produced to support a planning submission for the site. The proposal is for the “Frankhams to provide specific description.”

The survey area comprises a typical suburban small detached bungalow, with a small vegetated front garden with an individual palm tree and an overgrown vegetated back garden. Information on the tree and trees outside the site boundary are outlined within the accompanying arboricultural report.

The survey has identified that there is negligible roosting habitat for bats in the survey building, and therefore no further surveys are recommended.

Mitigation, compensation, and enhancement measures are discussed, which should be factored into the design and approach at site. Assuming key mitigation actions identified are completed, alongside enhancements for the site including wildlife friendly landscaping, bat boxes and invertebrate habitat features, then the proposals have the potential to result in positive for bats and the local ecology.

Introduction

Consult Sustainability was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Roost Appraisal by Frankham Projects for a site at 107 Vale Road, Gravesham.

This survey aimed to establish the potential for roosting and hibernating bats to inform appropriate mitigation, compensation, and enhancement actions regarding a proposed renovation.

A bat survey has been deemed necessary to support a planning application due to the nature of the proposed building and location of the Site close to Northfleet Urban Country Park and other areas that may support foraging bats.

The survey area comprises a typical suburban small detached bungalow, with a small vegetated front garden with an individual palm tree and an overgrown vegetated back garden.

This document is a report of this survey and has been produced to support a planning submission for the site.

Scope & Context

This report identifies and describes all features within the Site that could support roosting bats and evaluates these in relation to the Site and its surrounding environment. It records any physical evidence observed during the Site survey that may indicate the presence of roosting bats. The report also outlines any constraints posed by potential bat activity, summarises requirements for additional surveys, and provides guidance to support the development of appropriate mitigation measures, secure planning or statutory approvals, and ensure compliance with current wildlife legislation.

The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether bats are present, or likely to be present, and to understand how they may utilise the Site. Given the mobile nature of bats, the findings cannot confirm their complete absence—only the absence of evidence of use at the time of survey or prior to it.

To meet these objectives, the following actions were undertaken:

- A desk study drawing on data from local wildlife organisations and the MAGIC Maps website.
- A field survey comprising external and internal investigations
- An initial appraisal of the potential impacts on any identified roosts based on current development proposals.
- Recommendations for further survey work and assessment, with guidance on European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing where relevant.

This assessment follows the methodology and principles set out in the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J. (Ed), 2023).

Green spaces in the wider area that have been considered to be significant include:

- Northfleet Urban Country Park ~ 220m Northwest
- National Cycle Route 1 ~ 150m Northwest
- Sawyer's Lake ~ 700m Northwest

Methodology

Desk Study methodology

A combination of online and desk-based data sources was reviewed to gather contextual information on known bat habitats and historical records of bat activity within approximately a 2 km radius of the Site.

The following key resources were used:

- **Google Maps** - to review up-to-date aerial imagery and identify habitat features within the surrounding landscape.
- **MAGIC Map (DEFRA's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside)** - to obtain details of statutory designations, priority habitats, and other environmental constraints relevant to the Site and its surroundings.

Site Survey Methodology

All structures and landscape features that could potentially be affected by the proposed development were assessed for their value to roosting or commuting bats.

The ecologist carried out a systematic, non-intrusive external visual inspection of all accessible areas from ground level, paying particular attention to the building's external elevations, rooflines, and any potential entry or exit points for bats.

Internal inspections were completed within the accessible loft and enclosed spaces, including any disused or partially derelict areas. A torch was used to examine crevices, joints, and hidden cavities. Specific attention was given to features such as floors, ledges, lintels, window frames, and other sheltered surfaces where bat evidence - such as droppings, staining, or feeding remains - could be present.

Suitability Assessment

All surveyed features were then evaluated for their potential to support roosting bats, following the criteria outlined in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2023).

Each feature was assigned a suitability category—high, moderate, low, or negligible—based on its characteristics and ecological context. This classification determines whether additional survey effort is required before construction or demolition works can proceed.

Building Features utilised by bats

Higher likelihood of bats being present:

- Buildings or structures that contain features of particular significance for roosting bats, such as mines, caves, tunnels, icehouses, or cellars.
- The site and surrounding landscape provide high-quality foraging habitat, for example broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses, and grazed parkland.
- The site is connected to the wider landscape by strong linear features such as rivers, streams, or hedgerows that are typically used by commuting bats.
- The site is also located close to known or likely roosts based on historical records.

Lower likelihood of bats being present:

- A small number of potential roosting features that may be used occasionally by widespread species.
- Habitat suitable for foraging is available nearby but is relatively isolated in the wider landscape, or the site itself lacks strong connections via linear features.
- Few suitable features are present for roosting, with only limited potential for minor foraging or commuting activity.

Limitations

While every effort has been made to assess and describe the features on site in relation to their potential suitability for roosting bats, the findings should be regarded as a preliminary overview rather than a complete ecological characterisation of the Site.

The assessment represents an informed evaluation of the likelihood of bat presence, based on the quality and suitability of habitats both on-site and within the surrounding landscape, combined with current understanding of bat ecology, behaviour, and species distribution data obtained from the desk study.

There were no constraints or limitations that affected the survey process or the accuracy of its findings.

Results and Evaluation

Desk Study Findings

The desk study encompassed a 2 km radius around the Site to identify relevant ecological features and species records. The Site is located at National Grid Reference SD 74606 37477.

Designated Sites and Priority Habitats

The Site lies approximately 1.4km east west of the Swanscombe Peninsula Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Priority habitats in the area include semi-natural woodland, situated around 150m northwest of the Site, with further areas of deciduous woodland present within the wider study area.

Landscape Context Overview

The site is situated on Vale Road in Northfleet, a suburban-residential part of the Borough of Gravesham in Kent. It lies close to a mix of uses: residential housing along Vale Road, and open/green space to the west in the form of Northfleet Urban Country Park (which is bounded by Vale Road on one side).

The wider area has undergone significant regeneration, being part of the Thames Gateway / urban-riverside growth zone, with previously industrial land now being redeveloped for residential and mixed uses. Vale Road itself has an urban street character with residential properties fronting the road, close to junctions and transport links, rather than being in a purely rural or isolated setting.

Because of its surroundings, the site is influenced by both the urban-residential environment and adjacent greenspace/open land, providing a transitional zone between built development and lower-intensity open land use.

A review of designated site data, aerial imagery (Figure 1) and MAGIC maps was undertaken to establish the ecological context of the Site.

FIGURE 1: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SITE SHOWING SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE STRUCTURE



Relevant Attributes for Ecology & Landscape

The proximity to Northfleet Urban Country Park means there is potential for green corridors, vegetation and open habitats near the site which is important for species movement, foraging and commuting. However, the immediate street environment on Vale Road is fairly built-up, which means that any natural habitat features may be somewhat fragmented or constrained by infrastructure and neighbouring built-form.

The redevelopment context in Northfleet (including infill, regeneration of former industrial land) suggests that the landscape may be dynamic with changing land uses and possibly increasing pressures from development.

Given the mixed character, there may be opportunities to integrate landscaping, biodiversity enhancements, and linkages to the adjacent green space to improve habitat connectivity and ecological value.

Implications for the Site

The site's location implies moderate habitat connectivity potential: although the immediate setting is urban/residential, the adjacent greenspace offers potential for ecological links. The landscape context supports the idea of commuting/foraging habitat nearby, though the built-environment may limit some features.

Given the urban/edge location, constraints such as light spill, traffic, noise and building density may influence species use of the site, so these should be factored into any assessment or design.

Historical Records

Gravesham Borough is home to numerous bat species, with common sightings including the common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, and Daubenton's bat. Other species known to be in the wider Kent area, and therefore likely in Gravesham, include the noctule bat, brandt's bat, whiskered bat, Leisler's bat, and Nathusius's pipistrelle. Recent discoveries in North Kent also highlight the potential for rarer species like the grey long-eared bat to be present.

Field Survey Results

The survey was undertaken on 27th August 2025 by Sam Luker, an MSc qualified ecologist with 10 years' experience in bat and ecology surveys. The survey was carried out using a high-powered torch and endoscope where necessary. The entire exterior of the dwelling was surveyed for potential bat roosting features, to ensure no disturbance will be caused to bats by the proposed works. There is one survey building on the site which is illustrated in the map in Appendix 1.

Site Features, Descriptions & Photos

Building Description

The survey building is a detached single storey small bungalow of masonry construction with a pebble dash render. The building has a dual pitched roof with interlocking concrete tiles. All of the windows were covered with perforated metal coverings. There was a small vegetated front garden that had been recently cut back with an individual palm tree, and an overgrown vegetated rear garden.

FIGURE 2 – FRONT ELEVATION OF THE BUILDING



Potential roosting access points

The roof tiles were all in a reasonable condition with a few small gaps or slipped slates which could allow bats to roost. Similarly, the soffits and external walls were in a slightly deteriorated condition with several cracks and gaps that could be used by bats to gain access into the building for roosting.

FIGURE 3 – SOFFIT & CORNER OF THE BUILDING



FIGURE 4 – UNDERSIDE OF THE SOFFIT ILLUSTRATING GAPS



Evidence of bats or roosting

There was no evidence of bats historically or currently using this building as roosting habitat i.e. no droppings, urine stains or grease smudge marks either internally or externally.

The inside of the building, in particular the attic space, was comprehensively surveyed to ascertain whether any signs of bat activity could be identified. No signs of bat activity were noted.

The under lining of the roof in the attic space was torn and in poor condition with the underside of the concrete tiles and gaps exposed across the whole roof. This indicates that the roof is likely to strongly fluctuate in temperatures across day and night, which would deter bats looking to for a maternity or hibernation roost location.

FIGURE 5 – UNDER LINING OF THE ROOF IN POOR CONDITION



FIGURE 6 – CONCRETE BLOCKS WITHIN THE ATTIC ILLUSTRATING ABSENCE OF BAT ACTIVITY



Impacts and Recommendations

Legislative context

All species of bats and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This legislation makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or disturb bats, or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to their roosts.

Evaluation

Following the desk-based assessment and site survey results, the following value for roosting bats has been identified.

The desk-based review and on-site inspection have been used to evaluate the likelihood of bats being present on or near the Site. The surrounding landscape includes features of moderate ecological value, such as hedgerows, mature trees, and gardens, which could provide suitable foraging and commuting corridors for local bat populations. Records of European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs) within a 2 km radius further confirm that several bat species are known to occur in the wider landscape.

However, the subject building is assessed as having low potential for roosting bats. Several external cracks and small gaps within the brickwork and roofline could, in theory, provide limited access opportunities for bats. However, internal inspection of the roof void confirmed that the attic space is unsuitable for roosting, being cold, draughty, and lacking secluded crevices or stable microclimates preferred by bats.

No evidence of bats (e.g., droppings, staining, feeding remains, or audible calls) was recorded during the inspection. Consequently, it is the professional opinion of the surveyor that the likelihood of bats using the building for roosting purposes is negligible, and no further survey effort is required under current guidelines (Bat Conservation Trust, 2023).

Potential Impacts

Given the absence of suitable roosting features and lack of direct evidence of use, the proposed works are assessed to pose negligible risk to bats. It is considered highly unlikely that any individuals would be harmed or disturbed during demolition or construction. The development will therefore not result in an offence under the relevant wildlife legislation.

Recommendations

- No further survey effort is required at this stage.
- If bats or potential roosting evidence (e.g. droppings, staining, or individuals) are discovered at any point during development works, all work should stop immediately, and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted to provide guidance and, if necessary, obtain a mitigation licence from Natural England.
- Contractors and site staff should be made aware of potential bat presence through a toolbox talk prior to works commencing.

Enhancements

In line with the NPPF and Circular 06/2005, ecological enhancements should be incorporated. Installing a bat box upon completion of works will help provide additional roosting opportunities. Suitable options include:

- Kent Bat Box (timber)
- Vivara Pro Woodstone Bat Box

Bat boxes should be mounted 3–5 metres above ground level, facing south or south-west, with an unobstructed flight path to the entrance. These features will provide additional roosting opportunities for local species such as common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment, the building at *107 Vale Road* is considered to have low potential for roosting bats. Although several external cracks and small gaps were noted that could offer limited access opportunities, the attic space is unsuitable for roosting due to its exposure, lack of enclosed voids, and generally suboptimal environmental conditions. No direct evidence of bat use - such as droppings, staining, or feeding remains- were identified during the inspection.

At this stage, and in accordance with current Bat Conservation Trust (2023) guidelines, no further surveys are required unless future works reveal additional potential roosting features or evidence of bat presence. If bats are encountered during any stage of development, all works should cease immediately, and a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted for further advice and, if necessary, a Natural England licence obtained prior to proceeding.

Overall, the site is assessed to pose negligible risk of harm or disturbance to bats through the proposed works. With appropriate ecological awareness during construction and the implementation of recommended bat enhancement measures (e.g. installation of a bat box), the development can proceed in compliance with relevant wildlife legislation and contribute positively to local biodiversity objectives.