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Thirley Cotes Farm, Harwood Dale

Barn Owl Survey, June 2018.

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Notes	:	This report contains sensitive information concerning protected species and caution should be exercised when copying and distributing to third parties.	
Disclaimer	:		

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In March 2018, Wold Ecology was commissioned by P & G Durbin Properties to undertake a barn owl survey at Thirley Cotes Farm, Harwood Dale. The site is located at approximate National Grid Reference SE 97581 95071, in North Yorkshire.

1.2 The Application Site comprises the following buildings:

- Barn1
- Barn 2
- Garage

1.3 The proposed development includes the conversion of the barns into holiday lets including new glazing, re-roofing and internal conversion works. The garage will be modified and have a change of use in association with the holiday lets.

2.0 LEGISLATION

2.1 Barn owls are protected under schedules 1 and 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended. This is the highest level of protection afforded to a British bird. To disturb a nest recklessly or destroy a nest site or drive away a nesting pair can lead to a fine of up to £5000 or six months imprisonment. It is listed in the EC birds Directive and under Appendix II of the Bern Convention. Barn owl is on the 'amber' list in 'Birds of Conservation Concern' as a bird of unfavourable conservation status in Europe and it is included on the list of species of conservation concern in the UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report (1995).

3.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 The field survey on 24th March 2018, 7th May 2018 and 26th June 2018 and was carried out by Daniel Lombard and Chris Toohie who are experienced barn owl surveyors.

3.2 The following survey followed guidance and methods recommended within; Survey Methodology and Techniques for use in Ecological Assessment: Developing Best Practice in Survey and Reporting. IEEM, Winchester Shawyer, C.R. (2011) and Barn Owl *Tyto alba* Bird Monitoring Methods, a manual of techniques for key UK species Gilbert et.al RSPB 1998, Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Birds JNCC 2004 and Survey Techniques Leaflet 8, The Barn Owl Trust.

3.3 Wold Ecology also conducts voluntary monitoring of barn owl nests within designated grid squares in East Yorkshire for the Wold Barn Owl Study Group (WBSG). Wold Ecology also liaises with the WBSG to ensure data is shared and good survey practice is maintained.

3.4 The daytime assessment identified whether the area had any signs of residency and/or barn owl usage. Specifically, the visual survey involved:

- An assessment of the suitability of buildings, trees or stone feature to enable access for breeding barn owls.
- A thorough check for pellets, feathers or signs of old nest remains in the form of pellet debris and/or old broken egg shells.
- An assessment of the suitability of the habitat for hunting barn owls within and surrounding the study area.

4.0 SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 Habitat Assessment

4.1.1 The Application Site is located 1.5 km south east of Harwood Dale village; in a rural location. The Application Site and complex of buildings are less than 1 hectare, the studied buildings are immediately surrounded by converted holiday cottages (circa 2011) and private gardens. Thirley Cotes Farm is immediately surrounded by a broadleaf woodland shelterbelt and agricultural land dominated by arable with grazed pastures; it is located within the North York Moors National Park and habitats within 2km include grazed pastures, arable and a mosaic of woodland, forest and open countryside including moorland.

4.1.2 A summary of the surrounding habitat is (radius of < 2km from the site):

- Buildings – farm buildings and residential properties.
- Hedgerow – fragmented.
- Mature trees and woodland.
- Cloughton Woods.
- Harwood Dale Forest.
- Broxa Forest.
- Tongue Field Plantation
- Hodson Moor Plantation
- Cockerill Plantation
- Standingstones Rigg
- Pits Wood.
- Arable.
- Brown Beck
- East Syme
- Thirley Beck
- Keas Beck
- Harwood Dale Beck and tributaries.
- Grazed pasture

4.1.3 Assessment of habitat quality relating to barn owl involves an appraisal of an ecosystem potential to hold prey items and the habitats associated connectivity and scale.

4.1.4 Habitat within 2km from the farm exhibited features indicative of **Type I Habitat.** These habitats defined as: those which provide optimum habitat to field voles *Microtus agrestis* (for breeding, foraging and shelter) and are of the highest value to barn owls. This habitat type is usually permanent, unimproved or semi-improved grassland, rank and heterogeneous in appearance, often of mixed height, with fully or partly collapsed dead grass stems (straw) often dominating the leaf sward.

4.1.5 The majority of habitat adjacent and close to the building was assessed as **Type 2 and Type 3 Habitats.** Types 2 habitat is sub-optimal to field voles and is of intermediate and often transient value to barn owls. This type of improved or semi-improved grassland is characterised by having a homogeneous, more even-height sward, sometimes displaying some lush and emerging tussock structure but little sign of a litter layer or 'thatch'. Type 3 are those which offer very poor habitat for field voles and most other small mammals and as such are of low value to barn

owls. These improved grasslands are characterised by having a homogeneous sward, which is often kept short throughout much of the year, no tussock structure and are devoid of any litter layer at their base. They are usually mown closely for hay or silage, heavily grazed by sheep, horses or cattle or used for public amenity.

4.1.6 In summary, the habitat within 2km of Thirley Cotes Farm provides sufficient hunting potential to support breeding barn owls.

4.2 Barn Owl Presence: Building Survey

4.1 Throughout the southern section of barn 1 and especially beneath beams, several fresh (<1 month) and old (>1month) barn owl pellets were found on the survey visits. These results indicate the barn is used as an Active Roost Site (ARS).

4.2 A barn owl box is located on the southern gable of barn 1. The timber box is at least ten years old and is in a poor state of repair. A single male barn owl was observed flying from the box on the 7th May 2018.

4.3 These signs confirm barn owls are using barn 1 to roost at or before the survey visits. No active and/or old nest remains were found and no evidence of chicks were observed during the field surveys. Access for adult barn owls is through permanently open cavity on the box located on the south gable.

4.4 As male barn owls often roost away from the nest site. There remains a possibility the roosting bird could be part of an active pair with the main nest being in the vicinity of Thirley Cotes Farm.

5.0 MITIGATION

5.1 The barn owl is associated with ruined farm buildings, church towers, and parks, mature trees in hedges, cliffs, and quarries. They nest in roof spaces, hollow trees (particularly elms and oaks), rock crevices, caves and buildings. Barn owls feed predominantly on small mammals especially the short-tailed field vole *Microtus agrestis* as well as insects and birds. Hunting takes place in a variety of grassland habitats such as linear verges and rough grassland where the leaf litter sward is suitable for their prey. Barn owls are largely crepuscular, hunting at dawn and dusk, as well as at night. They are protected under Schedule 1 and 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended due to their susceptibility to disturbance causing a nest to be abandoned. Threats include;

- Climate; snow cover and low temperatures creating difficult feeding environments
- Deaths; poisoning, road deaths and destruction/disturbance of nesting sites
- Habitat Loss; Changes in land management reducing habitat for small mammals, fragmentation and direct loss of suitable grassland.
- Loss of nest sites; Loss of mature trees, changes in or loss of buildings without appropriate mitigation
- Human disturbance; nestlings taken for illegal purposes

5.2 Barn owls are highly faithful to their roost and/or nest sites. Consequently, if barn owls are disturbed and/or loose a site through destruction or alteration of the site they are less likely to survive. Where barn owls have been lost from an area and years later new individuals arrive, the nest sites they select are usually the same sites that birds used previously.

5.3 There are two main concepts to managing barn owls within buildings and planning applications; **Continuity and Permanence.** The aim should always be to keep the birds on-site whilst the development takes place. It is highly likely the birds will not want to leave so the aim is to enable them to stay nearby whilst the development takes place.

5.4 Recommendations and Method Statement

5.4.1 **Immediately prior to development works taking place an inspection by a qualified barn owl surveyor should be made to ensure the status of barn owls has not changed since the initial survey.**

5.4.2 **To enable continuity of the roost site, a nest box should be erected on site (within c.200 metres of the barn 1) at least 30 days before disturbance works begins. This alternative provision must remain available to the birds until at least 30 days after permanent provision has been made within the development.** Advice on design of the interior box can be found in Appendix 2 of this report. Additional on-site advice can be provided by Wold Ecology Ltd.

5.4.3 **To enable permanence, it is recommended that a new permanent nesting/roosting place is provided on the south gable of barn 1.** The aim of this provision is to ensure that a suitable roost/nest site remains available long beyond after the development has taken place. Recommendations within Barn Owls and Rural Planning Applications A guide for Planners should be followed. The relevant guidance on design and construction of an indoor box is included with this report in Appendix 2.

5.4.4 Permanent nest boxes will be carefully located away from any bat mitigation on site.

6.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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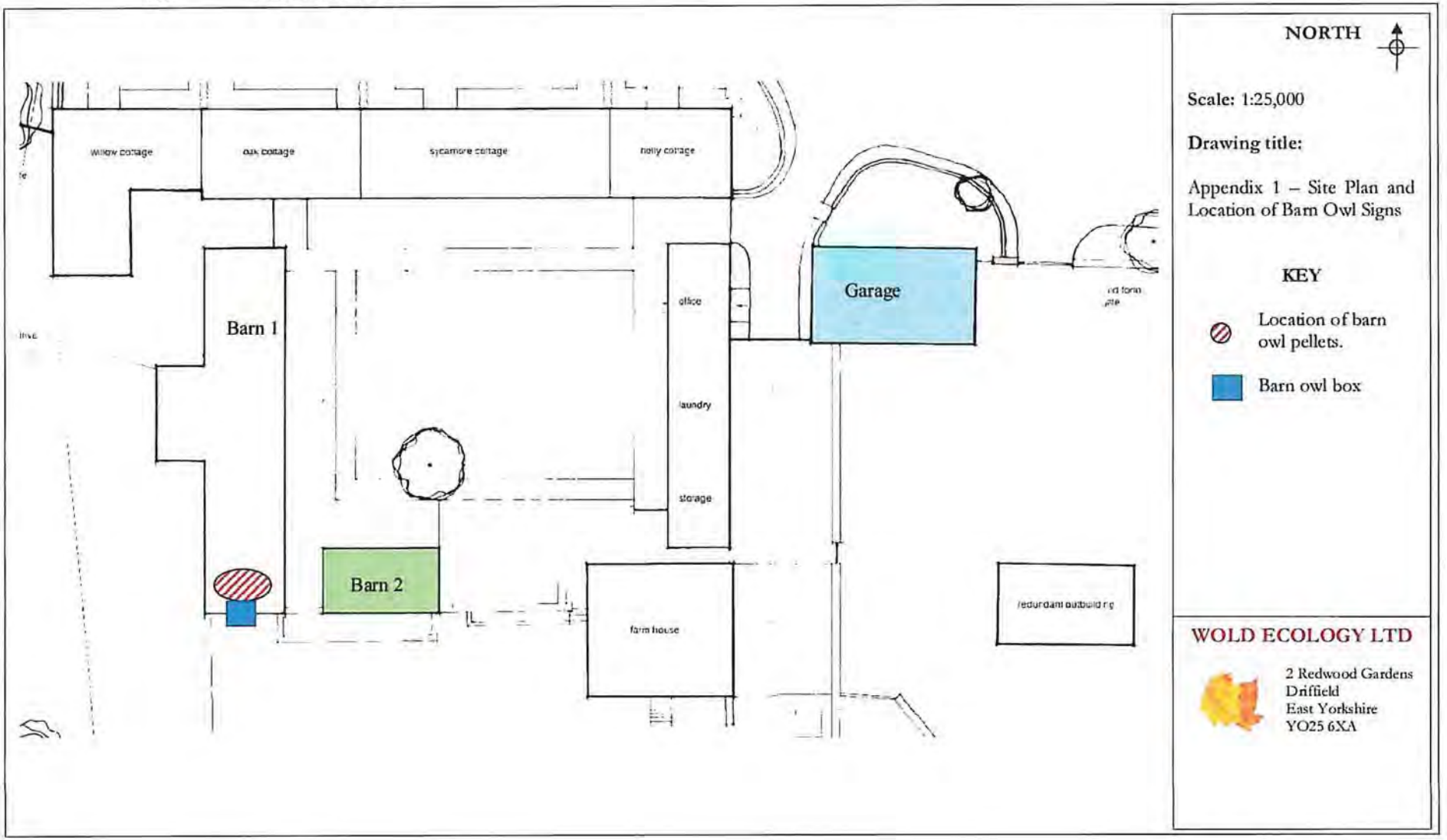
7.0 APPENDICES



Appendix 2 – Advice Notes: extracts from *Barn owls and Rural Planning a guide for Developers*

Making Provision for Barn Owls

A Guide for Planners, Applicants and Developers

Barn Owls are a specially *PROTECTED SPECIES*

- ❑ Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule One
- ❑ Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)

PLANNING AUTHORITIES are required to consider biodiversity conservation:

- ❑ Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)
- ❑ The Habitats Directive (EC directive 92/43/EEC)
- ❑ Environmental Impact Assessment (85/337/EEC as amended by directive 97/11/EC)
- ❑ Strategic Environmental Assessment (2001/42/EEC)
- ❑ The Environment Act (1995)

...and follow planning policy:

- ❑ Planning Policy Statement 1: Sustainable Development (2005)
- ❑ Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (DCLG 2005)
- ❑ ODPM Circular 06/2005 (Defra Circular 01/2005)
- ❑ ODPM (March 2006) Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

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INTRODUCTION - *alternative provision* and *permanent provision*

In the context of rural planning applications and developments (for example, barn conversions) there are two distinct types of provision used in conjunction: *Alternative Provision* and *Permanent Provision*. Providing the *alternative provision*, helps to ensure that resident Barn Owls stay on-site until the *permanent* provision is made. Where no Barn Owls are resident the aim is to ensure that the site is continuously available for birds to return to the site or for new birds to occupy it.

Alternative provision

Alternative provision provides a temporary hiding/roosting/nesting place for birds on-site whilst the development takes place. It usually consists of one or more nest boxes erected inside outbuildings, in trees, or (if neither suitable outbuildings nor trees are available) a nestbox on a pole. Alternative provision should always be made at the earliest opportunity, at least 30 days before works commence and within 200 metres of the main potential nest/roost place at the development site. The alternative provision must be maintained until at least 30 days after permanent provision becomes available within the development. It is imperative that no works commence until at least 30 days after alternative provision has been made. These thirty-day periods are the absolute minimum - the longer the better.

Permanent provision

Permanent provision means creating (or leaving) a small entrance hole into the top part of one of the developed buildings so that owls can enter, roost and nest for many years to come. Providing that this is done properly there are no health, nuisance, or significant cost issues. Most potential roost/nest sites (such as old barns or veteran tree holes) have been available for Barn Owls to use for at least a hundred years and replacing these with outdoor nestboxes that will only last about 15 years is simply not adequate. Permanent provision must be placed inside one of the developed buildings in order for it to last a substantial length of time.

Why do it?

Barn Owls are amazing to watch and much admired. In spite of this, they have become very rare and as a consequence have special legal protection. Their survival depends upon people providing and maintaining roost/nest sites and on sympathetic land management. The conservation of biodiversity, including protected species, is a Key Principal of the planning system and Planning Authorities are required to ensure that planning decisions do not cause significant harm. As well as *maintaining* biodiversity, Planning Policy dictates that the planning system should identify opportunities for *enhancing* biodiversity at development sites. By making provision for Barn Owls you are not only complying with policy, or abiding by a specific planning condition, you are maintaining a potential nesting place and one day, because of your vital contribution, the site may once again be graced by these most beautiful birds.

Second only to the Robin, the Barn Owl is Britain's most popular bird species. Furthermore, with only 3,500 to 4,000 pairs of Barn Owls in the British Isles at the last census, a property with resident Barn Owls is a very special selling point.

PLEASE NOTE
Under normal circumstances, provision for Barn Owls should not be made within 1km of a motorway, dual-carriageway, or similar (if in doubt please seek advice info@barnowltrust.org.uk)

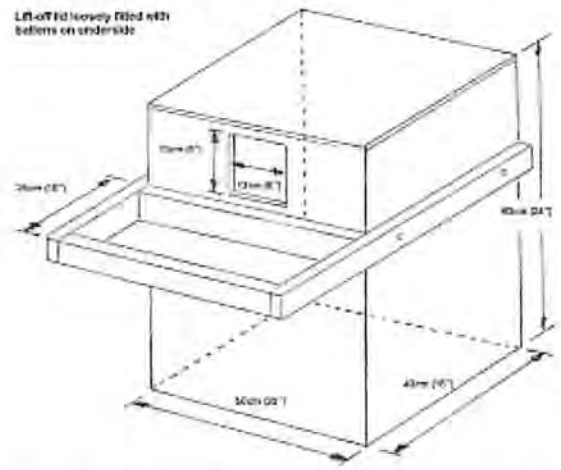
ALTERNATIVE PROVISION
BOXES IN BUILDINGS

How to make and erect a Barn Owl nestbox suitable for a barn or other building

Background

Nestboxes can be of great benefit, especially in areas where there is plenty of food available but a shortage of suitable nesting or roosting sites. When you are considering an area for nestboxes remember that the Barn Owl is not a woodland species but a bird of open country, most of which is farmland. See Optimum habitat in Britain

Many old barns and almost all modern farm buildings are far from ideal for Barn Owls as they lack suitable cavities for the birds to nest in. Barn Owls like to roost out of sight of humans and are much less inclined to be flushed from a building if they have a box to hide in. In fact, it is amazing how much disturbance Barn Owls will tolerate at sites with a suitable nestbox. Almost any tall rural building can become an ideal roosting and nesting site when a nestbox is provided.



Indoor nestboxes can be constructed from 9mm ($^{3}/_{8}$") softwood ply with 50mm x 25mm (2" x 1") batten along all the edges on the inside. Please avoid using hardwood ply unless it is stamped 'FSC Approved'.

As a cheaper alternative, a tea-chest can be simply adapted by cutting an entrance hole, fixing on an exercise platform and adding a removable lid. In this case, do ensure the foil lining and any sharp nails or strips of metal which may injure the owls are removed.

The platform on the front gives more air space for the young owls to exercise their wings before their first flight. The removable lid is essential as occupied boxes do need to be cleared out occasionally.

The internal depth of the box is important as it reduces the chances of a nestling Barn Owl falling from the box and dying as a result of neglect or predation. Therefore, it is important that the box depth is maintained by clearing out the box once it has more than about 3 inches of nest debris. If Jackdaws use the box it must be cleaned out every year (wear gloves and a dust mask). Boxes only used by breeding Barn Owls will need clearing out every two or three years, ideally in November or December.

NOTE that it is illegal to disturb wild Barn Owls whilst they are breeding. It is not even permitted for the provider of the nestbox or the site owner to inspect the nest unless they have a current licence to do so. Legal protection

When siting your indoor nestbox, remember:

1. Fix it as high up as possible. However, remember that fully enclosed modern barns with little ventilation can become very hot in fine weather - in this type of building the box should be placed below the apex but at least 3 metres (10ft) above ground level. Bear in mind that you also need to place the box to allow removal of the lid.

2. Position the box so that an owl entering the building through the most likely opening will see the entrance hole and have an easy flight path to it.

3. If possible, position box so that emerging nestlings can walk onto beams or other flat surfaces.

4. Consider your own safety (for which you are responsible). Try to position the box where it can be easily and safely inspected at a later date.

5. The box must be in a completely dry position.

6. Avoid placing boxes within 1km (half a mile) of a motorway, dual-carriageway, or similar (if in doubt please seek advice info@barnowltrust.org.uk)

7. Avoid buildings subject to irregular loud disturbance.

There is no need to line the nestbox. Eggs are usually laid on top of the birds' own pellet debris which is a wonderfully absorbent material - much better than anything you might provide.

Permanent access into the building for the owls is obviously essential. If there is no existing access for owls you can create access using the following guidelines:

1. Make the entrance hole about 12cm (5") wide x 25cm (10") high (minimum 4" x 4").

2. Make the hole as high up the wall as possible and at least 3 metres (10') above ground level.

3. Position the hole so that it is likely to be noticed by a passing bird. Don't face it towards a close tree or other tall building which will obscure it.

Safety

When erecting your nestbox please have due regard for Health and Safety.

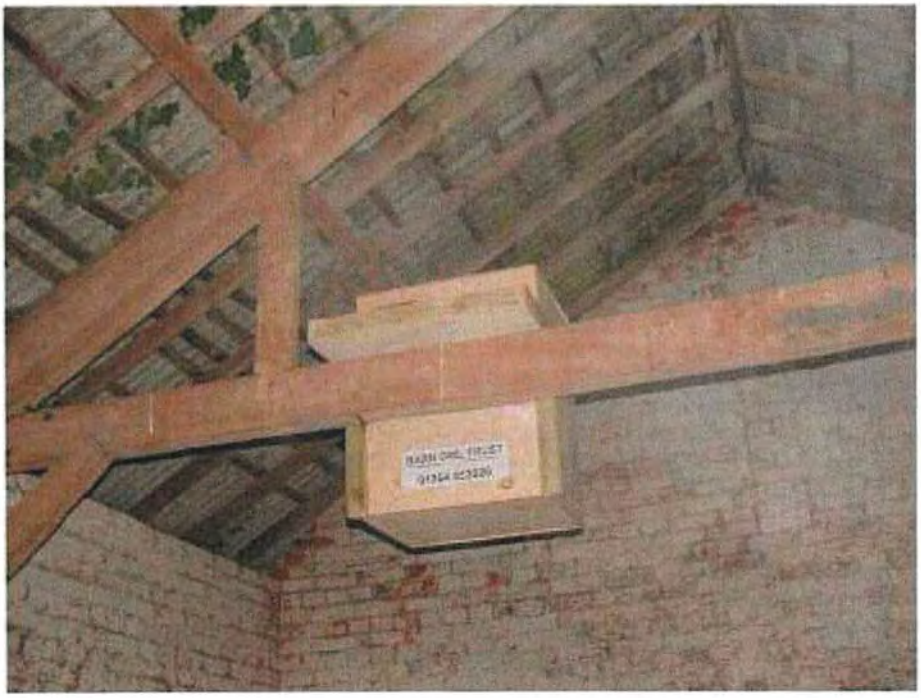
Positioning requirements - for Barn Owl nestboxes in buildings

- Boxes should be erected at a height of not less than 3 metres above ground level.
- The building chosen should have an owl access hole at high level and no less than 100x100mm, ideally 125mm wide x 250mm high.
- The box should be positioned so that it will remain completely dry.
- The box should be positioned so its hole can be easily seen by a bird entering the building.
- Provision for Barn Owls should not be made within 1km of a motorway, dual-carriageway or similar (if in doubt please seek advice info@barnowltrust.org.uk)

Essential design requirements - for Barn Owl nestboxes in buildings

- Entrance hole: minimum size 100mm x 100mm, optimum size 125mm x 125mm, maximum size 150mm x 150mm.
- Floor area of nest chamber: absolute minimum 0.16m^2. Good size range 0.2 to 0.4m^2.
- Depth from bottom of entrance hole to nest must be not less than 460mm.
- There must be an exercise/landing platform below the entrance hole that allows climbing/jumping young birds to get from the platform onto the roof of the box and (ideally) onto other nearby perching places. The platform must have a generous raised edge suitable for Barn Owls to grip easily.
- Human access for easy clearing-out of nest debris is essential.
- Measures aimed at reducing the chances of entry by other species (such as Jackdaws) are to be encouraged, provided that they do not significantly reduce the box's suitability for Barn Owls.
- Should be substantially constructed yet light enough to permit safe erection using basic equipment. Normal indoor-box weight range is 10-15kg. Total weight should not exceed 18kg and an indoor-box under 8kg is probably not substantial enough.
- Should not be constructed from tropical hardwood unless the timber is certified as sustainably grown.

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION cont.



You can view the construction of one of these boxes here.

You can view more pictures of indoor nestboxes here.

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BOXES IN TREES

How to make and erect a Barn Owl nestbox suitable for siting on a tree

Suitability of the area

The Barn Owl is not a woodland bird. It hunts mainly by flying over areas of rough grassland, ditches, hedgerows, young tree plantations etc. that support a high population of small mammals. In areas with an abundance of food but a shortage of suitable sites, nestboxes can be of great benefit. They should always be placed in areas with some good Barn Owl habitat or they are unlikely to be used. For further information, see Optimum habitat in Britain.

Most nestboxes for Barn Owls are erected within buildings; see Getting the best nestbox for your site. However, where a suitable location for an indoor box is not available, outdoor nestboxes are often the next-best option.

Construction

The basic box should be built using rot-resistant or treated sheet material. The Barn Owl Trust uses 9 or 12mm tanalised ($^3/_8$"-$^1/_2$") softwood ply, 25 x 50mm (2" x 1") tanalised batten and 30mm (1¼ ") rust resistant screws. Please avoid using hardwood ply, unless it is stamped "FSC Approved". You may use any type of preservative on the box where tanalised ply is not available, but always follow the product instructions and always ensure the box is completely dry before erection. The dimensions are given as a guide, variations of + or - 10% are quite acceptable.

The front of the box should have an access panel to enable nest debris to be cleared out periodically. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence to disturb breeding Barn Owls so nestboxes should only be cleaned out between November and January. The top of the box should be covered with heavy duty roofing felt and a waterproof sealant in all the wood joints to increase weather protection (such as *Ever-Build Weather-Mate)*. If you need proof that this is necessary, try leaving your nestbox under a sprinkler for a few hours. Large drainage holes (20mm - ¾" - diameter) are also drilled in the floor of the box. The front, back and sides MUST overhang the floor of the box.

Selecting a suitable tree

Within 200 metres of the development you should look very carefully at all available large trees and select the most suitable one. Do not rush this. The success of your nestbox will depend partly on the size and shape of the tree, its position and the position of the box when erected. If there are no suitable trees, then a pole box may be the only remaining option.

An isolated tree overlooking an area of good habitat is ideal. Whenever possible, choose a tree with rough bark to enable owlets to climb back up to the box should they fall out. A tree on the outside of a copse is acceptable but avoid trees within woodland. Avoid siting your box within 1km (½ mile) of a dual-carriageway, motorway or similar (if in doubt please seek advice info@barnowltrust.org.uk). If possible, choose a deciduous tree or a Scots Pine. Often there is no choice, but do have a good look around. Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted.

The ideal tree is old and very big. Pick a tree where the box will be visible below the crown (twigs/leaves) of the tree so that Barn Owls can see it and can fly in and out from various directions without having to negotiate small branches in the dark. Some old Oak trees, dead trees and Scots Pines are particularly accommodating in this respect. If ivy is growing on the tree, it may soon grow over the entrance hole of the box. Anything that makes the hole less visible will reduce the chances of the box being used.

Advantages of this design
The main advantage of the box described in this leaflet is that it's fairly difficult for the young to get out. This reduces the chances of them falling from the box before they can fly and dying as a result of neglect or predation. Another advantage of this style of box over some other designs, is that it provides an exercise area outside the box for the young and the flat roof allows the young to hop from the tray to the roof and then to the tree to exercise, and the reverse if they fall and need to climb back up. Many nestbox designs are impossible for the young to get back into unless they are already able to fly.

Siting the nestbox
Having found a suitable tree for your box, take your time in deciding where in the tree you are going to put it. Several factors need to be considered. The box must face open ground so that the entrance hole is obvious to a passing owl. Do not hide it behind the tree - if the hole cannot be seen the box is unlikely to be used. Try to avoid facing the entrance into the prevailing wind and rain. Generally this means avoiding the west or south-west. South-east is generally a good direction. If you know which way the birds are currently flying into the site you should take this into account and face the box towards the flight path.

Birds roosting low to the ground probably feel vulnerable and at higher levels birds can feel safer. Within reason, the higher the box is above ground level the more likely it is to be occupied. A height in the region of 4.5-7 metres (14'-24') may be achieved depending on the tree concerned. Boxes placed less than 3 metres above ground level are much less likely to be successful. It is a good idea to ensure that, when erected, the box is slightly lower at the front. This will help prevent rain water splashing in through the entrance hole.

Although young Barn Owls do not start to fly until eight weeks old, they begin to walk at only three weeks. There is often an age difference of two weeks between the oldest and the youngest owlet. As the oldest ones become more and more mobile they emerge from the nestbox to stretch, flap their wings and attempt short flights within the tree. It is at this stage that an owlet is most likely to fall to the ground. The chances of this can be reduced by positioning the box so that the owlet can jump easily from the tray or roof of the box into nearby branches. You should also position the box so that it can be inspected safely.

Erecting the box
Tanalised 50mm x 50mm (2"x 2") timber and galvanised nails can be used to secure the box; often this is the only practical option. Alternatively you can drill holes and use nylon bolts, or use ratchet straps.

A piece of tanalised timber 50mm x 50mm x 750mm (2" x 2" x 30") should be attached to the trunk of the tree, making sure that it is level and VERY secure. This should have 'hooks' made out of 25mm x 50mm (1"x 2") tanalised timber attached to each end. These should be approximately 75mm (3") long and the top 25mm (1") will protrude above the top of the ends of the 50mm x 50mm timber (see diagram). The purpose of this is to enable the box to be placed so that it is held in place by the hooks, allowing the person erecting the box to have both hands free whilst attaching it.

A second piece of 50mm x 50mm tanalised timber should be attached firmly to the back of the box approximately 200mm (8") from the top (see diagram). Screw from the inside of the box through to the timber. This joint will take all the weight of the box so it needs to be very secure. The piece that is attached to the box will rest on the piece that is attached to the tree. Holes should be drilled to enable the two pieces to be nailed or screwed together when the box is in position. Bear in mind that it will be difficult to get at some parts of the timber to hammer or screw once the box is in position so drill the holes close to each end.

Clearing out your Nestbox
The internal depth of the box is important as it reduces the chances of a nestling Barn Owl falling from the box and dying as a result of neglect or predation. Therefore, it is important that the box depth is maintained by clearing out the box once it has more than about 3 inches of nest debris. If Jackdaws use the box it must be cleaned out every year (wear gloves and a dust mask). Boxes only used by breeding Barn Owls will need clearing out every two or three years.

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION cont.

Safety
When erecting your nestbox please have due regard for Health and Safety.

Positioning requirements - for Barn Owl nestboxes in trees

- Barn Owls are NOT woodland birds and will not usually enter dense woodland. The chosen tree should be isolated or on the very edge of a wood or copse facing open ground.
- Boxes should be erected at a height of not less than 3 metres above ground level. The box should be positioned so the hole can be seen easily by a Barn Owl flying past (not hidden by branches, twigs or leaves).
- Provision for Barn Owls should not be made within 1km of a motorway, dual-carriageway or similar (if in doubt please seek advice info@barnowltrust.org.uk)

Essential design requirements - for Barn Owl nestboxes in trees

- Entrance hole: minimum size 100mm x 100mm, optimum size 100mm x 125mm, maximum size 150mm x 150mm.
- Floor area of nest chamber: absolute minimum 0.16m^2. Good size range 0.2 to 0.4m^2.
- Depth from bottom of entrance hole to nest must be not less than 460mm.
- There must be an exercise/landing platform below the entrance hole that allows climbing/jumping young birds to get from the box into the tree and vice versa. The platform must have a generous raised edge suitable for Barn Owls to grip easily and it should be positioned, and have sufficient shelter and drainage, to prevent rainwater being deflected into the box entrance.
- Interior must remain dry during prolonged heavy rain coming from any direction. All sides should overhang the floor and the floor should have adequate drainage. The installation of a (drier) false floor can be an advantage.
- There must always be sufficient height difference between the nest and the external platform so as to prevent the accumulation of a continuous (internal/external) layer of pellet debris allowing rainwater to soak through the debris to the inside thereby chilling the nest contents.
- Roof should be covered in thick roofing felt guaranteed for not less than 10 years or an equally long-lasting material. Very steeply sloping roofs may not need covering but any apex join must be permanently waterproofed.
- Human access for easy clearing-out of nest debris is essential.
- Timber liable to decay within 20 years must be treated with long-lasting preservative: either pressure treated (CCA) or surface treated including all edges of all component parts.
- All screws/nails and any metal fittings used should be rust proof.
- Measures aimed at reducing the chances of entry by other species (such as Jackdaws) are to be encouraged provided that they do not significantly reduce the box's suitability for Barn Owls.
- Should be substantially constructed yet light enough to permit safe erection using basic equipment. Normal tree-box weight range is 13-18kg. Total weight should not exceed 25kg and a tree box under 10kg is probably not substantial enough.
- Should not be constructed from tropical hardwood unless the timber is certified as sustainably grown (FSC approved).

BOXES ON POLES

An outdoor Barn Owl nestbox suitable for erection on a large pole

Nestboxes in buildings are generally the best option, followed by nestboxes in trees. Pole boxes are usually only erected where these options are not available, see Getting the best nestbox for your site. Nestboxes should never be erected on operational telegraph/electricity poles and erecting your own telegraph pole is expensive. Building and erecting a pole nestbox is a lot of work so before deciding to proceed make sure there is no alternative.

Suitability of the area
The Barn Owl is not a woodland bird. In the UK, Barn Owls hunt mainly by flying over areas of rough grassland, ditch sides, young tree plantations etc. that support a high population of small mammals. See Optimum habitat in Britain. At development sites pole boxes are used as temporary alternative provision where there are no suitable buildings or trees within 200 metres of the development site.

Selecting a suitable pole
A pole box is big and heavy and cannot be adequately supported by a thin or flexible pole. A good pole will not only support the box for many years but will also be strong enough to take the weight of someone climbing a ladder leaned against it during inspection or clearing out. Most proper telegraph or electricity poles are suitable and just need to be cut to the right length.

You should be aiming for an erection height over 4 metres above ground level using a substantial pole of not less than 150mm diameter and 6 metres long (1.5m underground and 4.5m in height). In areas where climbing nest-predators are a problem position the pole away from buildings or trees and wrap a 1.5m section of the pole with thin aluminium or other very slippery material.

Pole-box construction
The basic box should be built using exterior grade rot-resistant or CCA-treated sheet material. The Barn Owl Trust uses 12mm tanalised (½") softwood ply, 25 x 50mm (2" x 1") tanalised batten and 30mm (1¼ ") rust resistant screws. There's also a small amount of 50 x 50mm timber and a piece of 18mm ply used in this design. Please avoid using hardwood ply, unless it is stamped "FSC Approved".

You may use any type of wood preservative on the box where tanalised (CCA-treated) ply is not available. The preservative should be applied to all component parts before the box is assembled so that all the edges are properly treated. Make sure the treated wood is dry before you assemble the box. During construction a waterproof sealant (such as *Ever-Build Weather-Mate*) should be applied to all the wood joints to increase weather protection. If you need proof that this is necessary, try leaving your box under a sprinkler for a few hours and then look inside it. Although tanalised timber is very rot-proof it's not very waterproof so the roof sheets should also be treated with Creosote or some other water-resistant preservative. The apex should be covered with a strip of aluminium or copper. The front, back and sides **MUST** overhang the floor of the box and as an extra precaution a large drainage hole (20mm - ¾" - diameter) should be drilled in each corner of the floor of the box.

All the dimensions are given as a guide and variations of + or - 10% are quite acceptable. The box must have a large access panel to enable nest debris to be cleared out periodically.

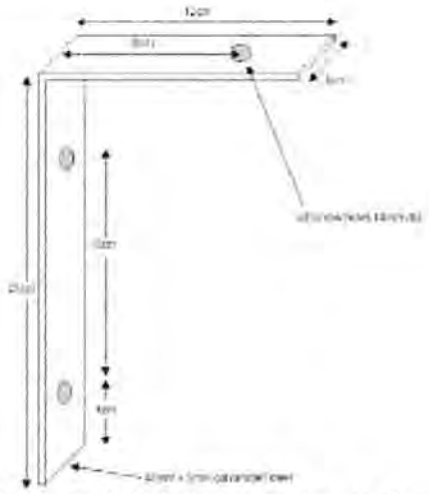
ALTERNATIVE PROVISION cont.

Siting the pole-box
Time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted. Please avoid siting your box within 1km (½ mile) of a dual-carriageway, motorway or similar (if in doubt please seek advice info@barnowltrust.org.uk). Nestboxes placed in a patch or strip of good (rough grassland) habitat are likely to be discovered more quickly as are boxes placed at existing roost sites. However, neither of these factors is essential.

The box should face open ground so that the main entrance hole is obvious to a passing owl. Do not hide it between big trees or tall buildings – if an entrance cannot be seen easily the box is less likely to be discovered. Try to avoid facing the box towards prevailing wind and rain. Generally this means avoiding the west or south-west (with the ridge of the roof lying north-south or northwest-southeast). If you know which way the birds are currently flying into the site you should take this into account and face the box towards the flight path.

The box will need to be cleaned out in future so think about where the ladder could stand and position the box so that this can be done safely.

POLE-BOX BRACKET DIMENSIONS



Erecting the box
By far the simplest and safest option is to attach the box to the pole before the pole is erected. If the pole has already been erected you may consider the use of tower scaffolding or a "cherry-picker" hydraulic platform. It is possible to erect a pole-box (on a pole that is already up) without using any machinery. However, a pole-box is heavy and awkward to lift by hand and the use of ladders is potentially dangerous. The Barn Owl Trust has placed pole-boxes onto previously-erected poles on numerous occasions with a team of three people using three ladders but a detailed description of the method is beyond the scope of this leaflet. Heavy duty galvanised steel brackets, coach bolts and coach screws are used to secure the box to the pole.

The most important thing when erecting the box is your own safety (for which you are responsible), the safety of your helpers and the safety of anyone going up to the box in future years. Make sure you carry out a detailed assessment of the risks associated with whatever method you choose and do not attempt to erect a pole-box when working alone!

Each half of the exercise platform should be slid onto the box after erection and retained by screwing through the two outer battens. To facilitate this, the box has ladder rests on both sides as well as below the inspection hatch.

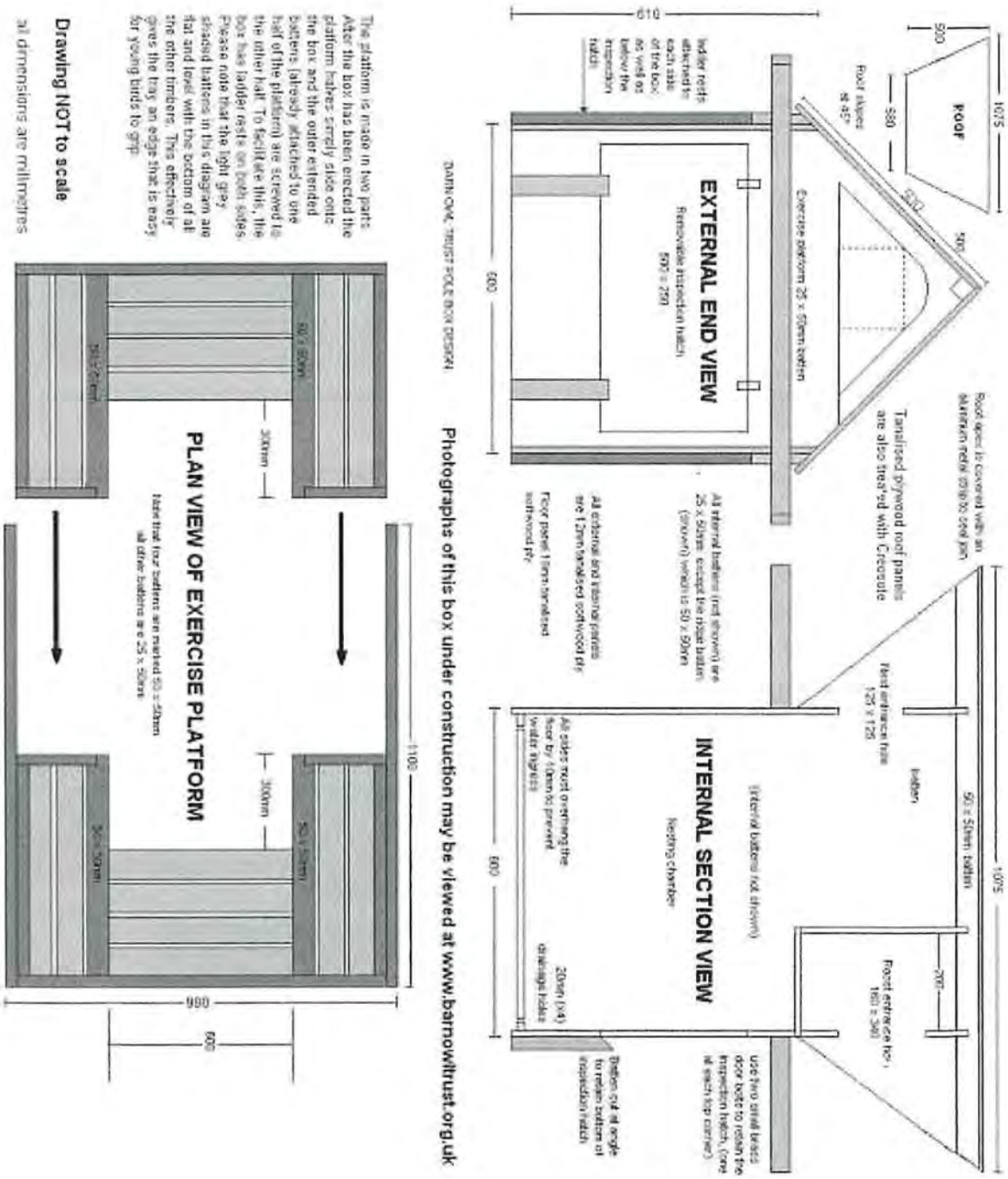
Important advantages of this pole-box design
The nestbox described in this leaflet is very deep which makes it almost impossible for the young to emerge prematurely. This reduces the chances of nestlings falling from the box and dying as a result of neglect or predation. By the time a young Barn Owl is big and strong enough to get out of the box it will soon be fully fledged. The design also provides emerging young with a very generous exercise platform enabling them to do lots of wing-flapping before their first flight. They can even get onto the roof of the box and safely back inside before they are able to fly.

The combination of box depth and safe exercise area means that when a young owl leaves the box for the first time it stands a very good chance of being able to fly up and get back inside. This period of returning to the box is important for their survival. Boxes with low entrance holes allow young to leave the box before they are big or strong enough to fly back up again. Young on the ground are generally ignored by the adults and either starve or are predated. Whereas young emerging from a tree-mounted nestbox stand some chance of being able to climb back up, a pole box does not allow the same possibility.

This design has other important features, see How to choose the best nestbox design

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION cont.

POLEBOX DESIGN



Photographs of this box under construction may be viewed at www.barnowltrust.org.uk

PERMANENT PROVISION

How to make permanent provision for Barn Owls in a barn conversion or other development

Background

The loss of traditional agricultural buildings through unsympathetic conversion into dwellings has frequently resulted in the loss of roosting and nesting sites, many of which were available to Barn Owls for hundreds of years. Far from being the worst-case scenario, re-development can be a potential lifeline, safeguarding the site for future generations. Experience shows that Barn Owls can continue to use sites during the development phase and adapt to radical alterations, provided that their needs are catered for.

Barn Owls have lived alongside man for thousands of years and some old farmhouses have had owls in the attic for countless generations. Although they are rather shy, Barn Owls will readily occupy dwellings, or any other type of building, provided they can enter and hide unseen. The range of site-types they will use includes: churches and chapels, barns, houses, modern farm buildings, industrial units, ruins, hollows in trees, rock crevices and occasionally even mine shafts. For many years Barn Owls were actively encouraged into buildings, evidence of which can still occasionally be seen in the form of owl windows, usually in the gable ends of traditional agricultural buildings.

Not every building or tree is suitable and some basic requirements must be met. Obviously the birds must be able to get in and will sometimes use surprisingly small entrance holes. They must be able to perch out of sight somewhere that is always dry and for nesting they need an adequately-sized dry ledge or cavity. The vast majority of holes, perches and nests used by Barn Owls are more than three metres above ground level and low-level opportunities are generally ignored.

PLEASE NOTE: provision for Barn Owls should not normally be made within 1km of a motorway, dual-carriageway, or similar (if in doubt please seek advice info@barnowltrust.org.uk)

The importance of making a space for owls INSIDE one of the developed buildings

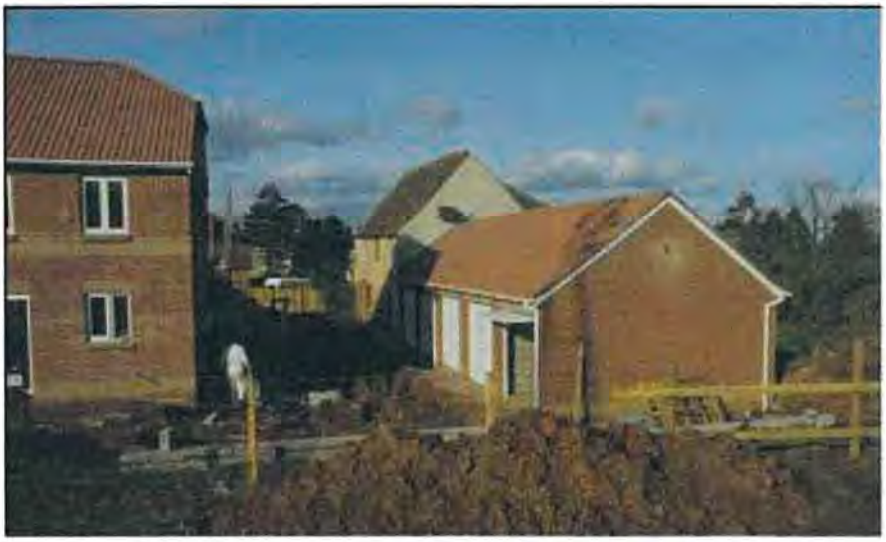
You may think that the best way to provide a long-term nesting place is to fix a wooden nestbox on the outside of one of the buildings or perhaps on a nearby tree. However, an outdoor nestbox will, at best, last about fifteen years so cannot be considered as permanent provision. You cannot be certain that such boxes will ever be replaced. Most traditional barns have been available for Barn Owls to use for hundreds of years. Making permanent provision means making sure the site continues to be available for at least another hundred years and this is why it really needs to be inside a permanent structure. However, there are lots of different ways in which permanent provision can be made and provided that the owls' needs are taken into account, you can choose exactly where and how you do it within your development.

PERMANENT PROVISION cont.

Deciding on the best way to do it
First of all, check your wildlife survey report. If you employed an ecological consultant he/she should have recommended where permanent provision is made within the development. You may wish to take further advice or simply proceed once you've read the "essential requirements" and "positioning" information below.

In a single-building development it's simply a question of choosing the best place for the hole - the most suitable gable end, or part of the roof. In a group of buildings you should be choosing one of the tallest. However, provided that it is high enough (and meets the other requirements) the provision could be made in a new or redeveloped outbuilding such as a garage overlooking open countryside. Although most holes are incorporated into walls, owl holes have been successfully made through re-thatched roofs and through slate/tile roofs either by constructing a miniature dormer or fashioned in lead. The hole itself is quite small (see below) and the nesting space can be immediately inside the hole, you can create a tunnel that leads to the nesting space, or in the case of a large loft, the birds can fly from the entrance hole to a conventional indoor nestbox. If necessary, a tunnel or passageway can slope upwards to discourage the ingress of rainwater, or downwards, or turn horizontally. Where a nesting space is being built-in, you can make it any shape provided that it meets the "essential requirements" (see below).

If there is no residual loft space, then the box can be partly contained within the wall and the remainder incorporated into a room as an interesting feature. Provided that it is done properly there are no health, nuisance, or condensation problems. For viewing the owls, one-way glass and peep holes can be problematic. However, where a range of barns are converted for holiday accommodation, customers will often return year after year to watch the owls through a CCTV system or webcam. Please note that artificial lighting of nests or nest inspections have licence implications and the relevant Country Agency must be consulted.



PERMANENT PROVISION cont.

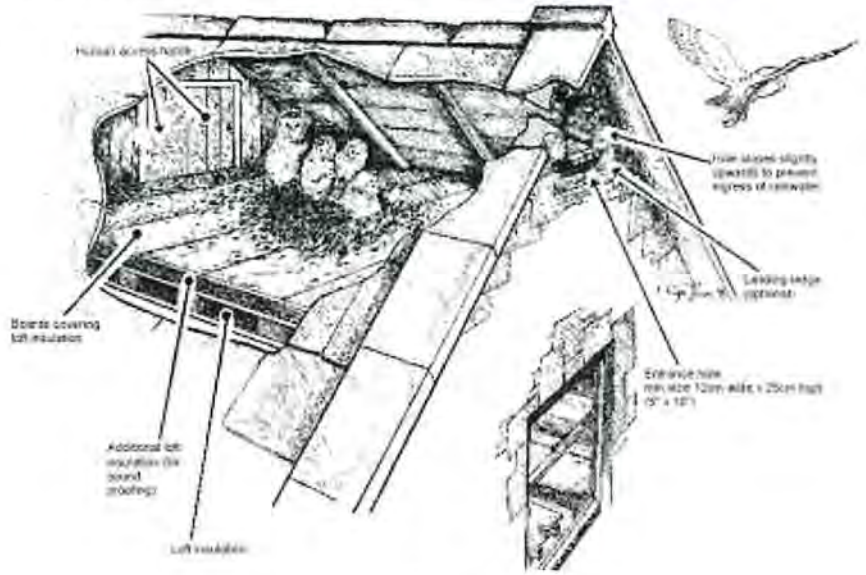
Positioning requirements - for permanent provision in barn conversions etc.

The owl hole should be at a height of not less than 3 metres above ground level and positioned so that it is easily noticed by a bird flying past over open ground (i.e. - not screened by other buildings or trees).

At sites with evidence of occupation by Barn Owls, the position of the owl hole and the proximity of the new nest-place should replicate (as far as possible) those already used by the bird(s). However, where birds may have been "forced" to use one of the lower buildings (because, for example, the larger buildings had no owl hole or no nest-ledge) the permanent provision should be made in one of the tallest buildings irrespective of which building birds are currently using.

Essential design requirements - for incorporating a nesting space (for Barn Owls) into barn conversions, other redeveloped buildings and new build

- Entrance hole: minimum size 100mm wide x 200mm high, optimum size 130mm W x 250mm H, maximum size 200mm W x 300mm H.
- Floor area of nest chamber: absolute minimum 0.4m^2, ideal size is 1m^2 (These dimensions are bigger than those for nestboxes because built-in provision usually lacks external exercise areas that would permit maximum wing stretching prior to fledging).
- Depth from bottom of entrance hole to floor of nesting area must be not less than 460mm.
- Interior must remain dry during prolonged heavy rain coming from any direction.
- Human access for easy clearing-out of nest debris is essential (probably once every 3-4 years or less).
- Measures aimed at reducing the chances of entry by other species (such as Jackdaws) are to be encouraged provided that they do not significantly reduce the box's suitability for Barn Owls.
- Should be substantially constructed and well-insulated against condensation and noise.
- Should not be constructed from tropical hardwood unless the timber is certified as sustainably grown (FSC).
- Hipped roofs, and pitched roofs where optimal siting of the access is through the roof rather than the wall/gable end, will require the use of a specially built miniature dormer or owl-hole 'tile'.
- Where the access is in a vertical structure such as a wall or gable end, there should be an external landing platform or perch below the entrance hole to facilitate the Barn Owls' arrival and departure.
- Owners of buildings with permanent provision in the roof space should also be aware of the following subjects: foraging habitat requirements, the need for clearing out debris so as to maintain internal depth, what to do if a young Barn Owl is found and human safety issues. See barnowltrust.org.uk



CONSERVATION OF HABITATS AND SPECIES REGULATIONS 2010

LICENCE ISSUED UNDER REGULATION 53(1) IN RESPECT OF CERTAIN EUROPEAN PROTECTED SPECIES:

This licence authorises acts that would otherwise be offences under the above legislation

Any request for information in this licence will be considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as appropriate.

Wildlife Licensing Unit
Natural England
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6EB.

Natural England Ref: **EPSM2011-2956** **Suffix: B**

Natural England, in exercise of the powers conferred on the Secretary of State by Regulation 53 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, is satisfied that:

there is no satisfactory alternative and the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

This licence is granted for the purpose of **Over-riding Public Interest**

To: Name in full: **Mr John Shephard**

Company Name: .

Address: **Thirley Cotes Farm, Harwood Dale, Scarborough, .**

County: **North Yorkshire** Postcode: **YO13 0DR**

To (authorised actions):	By means of (method):
Capture. Disturb. Transport. Damage or Destroy Breeding Place. Damage or Destroy Resting Place. .	**By hand. Exclusion by one-way door or valve. Destructive search by soft demolition. . . . . .**

Species Group: Bats

The Max No	Of the following species: Common Name (Latin Name):
5	Brown Long Eared bat: Plecotus auritus
20	Common Pipistrelle bat: Pipistrellus pipistrellus
3	Natterer's Bat: Myotis nattereri

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

NYMNPA

20/04/2018

Project Work Consented:				
Conversion of redundant farm buildings to form 4 no/ holiday letting units				
At Location:	**Thirley Cotes Farm** **Thirley Cotes Farm** **Harwood Dale** **Scarborough** **North Yorkshire** **YO13 0DR** OS Grid Ref: **SO975950**			
between the dates of:	**18/05/2011**	and	**30/09/2013**	inclusive:
This licence is granted subject to the licensee, including servants and named agents, adhering to the terms and conditions specified below and to the activities agreed in the Method Statement between the licensee and Natural England. The Method Statement for the mitigation scheme is appended to this licence. The following person is authorised to act on behalf of the licensee:				
Consultant Name:	**Mrs C Johnson (Wold Ecology Ltd)**			
Consultant Address:	**Well House, Cliburn, Penrith, , Cumbria, CA10 3AL**			

Signature:	C Gregory	Date:	18/05/2011

(for Natural England on behalf of the Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)

Important Advice:

- **This licence authorises acts that would otherwise be offences under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Any departure from the terms or conditions of the licence will be an offence against that Act;**
- **This licence conveys no authority for actions prohibited by any other legislation;**
- **This licence can be modified or revoked at any time by the Secretary of State or Natural England, but this will not be done unless there are good reasons for doing so. The licence is likely to be revoked immediately if it is discovered that false information had been provided which resulted in the issue of the licence. Any person who provided a false statement or information to obtain this licence is guilty of an offence and may be liable to prosecution;**
- **Bodies corporate and their directors/secretaries are liable for offences under the 2010 Regulations.**

Licence Conditions

1. The licensee is responsible for ensuring that operations comply with all terms and conditions of the licence.
2. While engaged in the activities to which this licence applies the Licensee shall make a copy of the licence available for inspection on each site where the activities are taking place, and shall produce it on demand to any constable or an officer of Natural England.
3. No agent of the Licensee shall carry out any of the activities to which this licence applies unless authorised in writing by the licensee, appointing them the Licensee's agent. The agent shall make a copy of the authorisation available for and shall produce it on demand to any constable or officer of Natural England.
4. The licensee must submit a written report of actions taken under licence, even if no action is taken, and sent to the Natural England officer at the address shown on the top of the report form, to arrive not later than 14 days (two weeks) after the expiry of the licence. Failure to make reports may result in the licence being revoked and/or the refusal to grant subsequent licences.
5. A person authorised by the licensee shall provide him/her with such information as is within his/her knowledge and is necessary for the Report, which the licensee is required to make to Natural England.
6. The Licensee shall permit an officer of Natural England, accompanied by such persons as he/she considers necessary for the purpose, on production of his/her identification on demand, reasonable access to the site for monitoring purposes and to be present during any operations carried out under the authority of this licence for the purpose of ascertaining whether the conditions of this licence are being, or have been, complied with. The Licensee shall give all reasonable assistance to an officer of Natural England and any persons accompanying him/her.
7. The licensee, including servants and named agents, must adhere to the activities and timescales agreed in the Method Statement between the licensee and Natural England.
8. All activities authorised by this licence, and all equipment used in connection herewith shall be carried out, constructed and maintained (as the case may be) so as to avoid cruelty, unnecessary injury or distress to any species covered by this licence.
9. Methods used in connection with the execution of this licence must comply with the relevant published 'mitigation guidelines', unless otherwise agreed with Natural England and specified in the Method Statement pertaining to this licence.

Special Conditions:

None

Great crested newt licences only.

10. The ecologist named on this licence is authorised to appoint such persons in writing to enable them to handle Great crested newts for the specific task of relocating animals from pitfall traps and/or artificial refugia (e.g.carpet tiles) either to the opposite side of the exclusion fencing or to the receptor site, as appropriate. Those appointed persons will be classed as assistants and will only be covered by this licence if they have received appropriate training which includes the handling and welfare of the species. Such persons, who may be 'site staff' or 'field workers', are not required to hold individual Great crested newt licences and may work unsupervised. Persons appointed as assistants by the ecologist named on this licence will be required to produce on demand their written authorisation to a police constable or an officer of Natural England.
11. The ecologist named on this licence shall be responsible for all activities of the persons they have appointed in connection with this licence, as referred to in condition 10, and must provide Natural England with a list of those persons appointed and notify it of any changes to that list.

Recommendations (Bat Licences only)

a). Natural England advises that where any individual is likely to come into contact with a bat in the operation of this licence, they should ensure that they wear suitable clothing and gloves and have been vaccinated against European Bat Lyssavirus (EBL).

18 May 2011
Our Ref: EPSM2011-2956 B

To: Mr John Shephard
Co. Name: .
Address: Thirley Cotes Farm
Harwood Dale
Scarborough

County: North Yorkshire
Postcode: YO13 0DR

Christian Gregory
Natural England
Wildlife Licensing Unit
First Floor, Temple Quay
House, 2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6EB

Dear Mr Shephard

CONSERVATION OF HABITATS AND SPECIES REGULATIONS 2010
LICENCE APPLICATION IN RESPECT OF CERTAIN EUROPEAN PROTECTED SPECIES

SITE: Thirley Cotes Farm, Thirley Cotes Farm, Harwood Dale, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO13 0DR

I refer to your application for a licence in respect of the above site. Please find enclosed licence numbered:

EPSM2011-2956 B

It is essential that you read the conditions of the licence and make it available on site for inspection.

If there are any changes to the works detailed in the agreed Method Statement you should inform us as soon as possible. Such changes will likely require a modification to the licence and will need to be agreed by us before a modified licence can be issued.

To help, please send us one copy of the revised Method Statement on CD, by email if less than 5MB in size or alternatively three paper copies (see the note below for specific requirements*). This must be sent to the Wildlife Licensing Unit, not a Wildlife Adviser.

Covering Letter

A modification submission should include a covering letter outlining the changes required and providing justification for the alterations. Please ensure the licence reference number is included in the covering letter to ensure the modification is processed as quickly as possible.

In addition, the following information must be provided either in the covering letter or, in the case of Great crested newt applications, on the cover sheet of the Method Statement itself:

A summary of progress with the licensed development/ operation;

A summary of the animals captured/ disturbed during the licensed works so far;

A summary of the changes to the licensed Method Statement and other documents;

Describe any implications for the 'favourable conservation status' of the species licensed as a result of the changes proposed.

Changes to the Method Statement

Changes must be identified using one or more of the following methods:-

Underline new text/strikeout text;

Use different font colour;

Block- coloured text, or all of the above.

The modified Method Statement must include:

An updated timetable which shows any changes to the programme and allows sufficient time for the assessment of the modified Method Statement by Natural England.

Updated maps, diagrams and figures, as appropriate.

Any further documents needed to support the application, including any discussed with the Wildlife Adviser or Senior Licensing Officer assessing the application.

***Please note: Method Statement requirements below.**

Method Statement for Bats, Dormouse and other EPS (excluding Great crested newts).

For bat, dormouse and EPS (excluding Great crested newt) licence modifications (or resubmissions following a minded-to-refuse), please submit Document 2 (Delivery Information), together with any photos, maps and plans relevant to the Delivery Information. You only need submit Document 1 (Background Information) if you have altered anything in this document (for example, licensable activities, further survey information, etc).

Method Statements for Great crested newt.

For GCN licence modifications (or resubmissions following a minded-to-refuse), please submit the Method Statement in its entirety, together with all maps, plans, photos and appendices.

If you have any questions relating to this licence or future European Protected Species licence applications, please take the time to read our document called 'How to get a licence' which can be found at the following link on the Natural England website;

www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/WML-G12_tcm6-4116.pdf

Yours sincerely,

Christian Gregory
Senior Licensing Officer