



Building wildlife assessment

Complete this form and have it available to provide on request for Countryside Stewardship applications that include:

- **HS1 Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings**
- **HS8 Maintenance of weatherproof traditional farm buildings in remote areas**

Thereafter complete this assessment on a yearly basis to record the annual wildlife inspection.

ASSESSMENT OF SUITABILITY FOR BARN OWL

1. Do barn owls currently breed on the farm? Yes No
Providing alternative roosting and nesting places provides insurance against unforeseen site loss.
2. Is there any evidence of barn owls using the building? Yes No
Chalky white droppings (whitewash), pellets (black, the size of a human thumb) or moulted feathers
Be aware of other raptors (kestrels and little owls) also using the building.
3. Have barn owls been seen on the farm in the last 12 months? Yes No
Sightings of barn owls between the months of September and January may not necessarily be those that are resident and breeding in the area under investigation - may be young barn owls dispersing.
4. Has the farm any historical records (within the last 10 years) of breeding barn owls? Yes No
Barn owls show a high fidelity to their breeding sites and maintain similar home ranges from year to year and through successive generations, resulting in many traditional sites.

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the questions 1 to 4, it may be a requirement to erect a barn owl box as part of the buildings option, subject to the following (see Guidance at end):

5. Is the building at least 1.5km away from a major road or main line railway? Yes No
Traffic collisions often result in the depletion of local breeding populations within 1.5 km of a major trunk road, motorway or main line railway, causing the permanent loss of breeding barn owls within these 3 km wide habitat corridors.
6. Is the building sufficiently high to enable a nest box to be positioned internally? Yes No
Minimum height of 3m required.
7. Does the building allow barn owls permanent access? Yes No
Minimum entrance hole not less than 150mm square, up to open fronted.
8. Does the barn owl have a clear flight path to the building? Yes No
No other buildings or trees etc obstructing access to the building.
9. Within the building can a box be positioned so that barn owls have an unrestricted flight path to its entrance hole? Yes No
Maximising hole visibility is important when erecting a nest box (owls investigate holes not boxes).

10. Is there sufficient rough grassland (raised tussocks with fully/partially collapsed dead grass stems) within say 2km of the building. Yes No

From Barn Owl Conservation Handbook: This can include unmanaged fields, wasteland, ditches, river banks, field margins and road verges:

- For pastoral landscapes: 31-47 hectares or 78km of 4-6m wide margins,
- For arable landscapes: 14-21 hectares or 35km of 4-6m wide margins,
- For mixed landscapes: 17-26 hectares or 43km of 4-6m wide margins.

11. Is the site less than 160m (500 feet) above sea level? Yes No

Only 8% of nests in 1982-85 Barn Owl Survey were above 150m.

12. Is the site free of intense human activity and/or disturbance? Yes No

For example less than 1% breed in towns and cities. Lambing sheds should also be avoided as they are normally used in early spring when owls are most sensitive to disturbance.

Notes:

Persons who intend to approach barn owl nests or view their contents, must possess a licence permitting them to disturb nesting barn owls.

Placing boxes within /on listed buildings and buildings located within conservation areas will require consent from your local authority.

GUIDANCE TO ANSWERS

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the questions 1-4, and 'yes' to questions 5, 6-9 and 12 you are required to erect a barn owl box as part of the option. Ensure you have all necessary licences and consents and keep copies with your agreement documentation.

If the answer is 'no' to question 5 (roads): DO NOT ERECT A BOX

If the answer is 'no' to question 7 (access). CAN PERMANENT ACCESS BE PROVIDED? If not DO NOT ERECT A BOX INSIDE THE BUILDING.

If the answer is 'no' to either question 8 and 9 (flight paths) and also 'no' to question 2. DO NOT ERECT BOX INSIDE THE BUILDING, UNLESS THE FLIGHT PATH CAN BE IMPROVED.

If the answer is 'no' to question 10 (rough grassland), but barn owls have been recorded (questions 1-4), ERECT A BOX.

If the answer is 'no' to question 11 (height above sea level), but barn owls have been recorded (questions 1-4), ERECT A BOX.

If the answer is 'no' to question 12 (disturbance), but barn owls have been recorded (question 2), ERECT A BOX.

If the answer is 'no' to any of the questions 6, 7, 8 or 9, ERECT A BOX ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING with a clear flight path. Boxes facing roughly south-east provide the best solution (entrance sheltered from prevailing winds). Firstly, obtain any necessary consent from the local planning authority. A box could also be placed on a nearby tree or on a pole (minimum height 3m) but could not be funded as a requirement of the building option.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

This guidance will help successful breeding of barn owls but does not form part of the requirements for the options.

Barn owl mortality and the scope for reducing it:

- a) Chicks falling from nests: Ensure owl boxes conform to the latest design criteria from The Barn Owl Trust, including minimum 460mm from bottom of entrance hole to the nest floor and provision of an exercise platform - unfortunately not all commercially available boxes provide these measures.
- b) Drowning: Ensure all water containers (cattle troughs, water butts, etc) are made safe using purpose made floats. The Barn Owl Trust routinely makes safe water containers within 200m of nest sites.
- c) Possible predation in nest by rats, squirrels and cats: Ensure any stored materials i.e. bales do not allow easy access for mammalian predators to a box site.
- d) Rodenticides: Use strictly in accordance with best practice.

ASSESSMENT OF SUITABILITY FOR KESTREL

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| 1. Do kestrels currently breed on the farm? | Yes | No |
| Providing alternative roosting and nesting places provides insurance against unforeseen site loss | | |
| 2. Is there any evidence of kestrels using the building? | Yes | No |
| Active roosts will have fresh white droppings (whitewash), pellets (light grey 20-40mm long) or moulted feathers.
Be aware of other raptors (barn owls and little owls) also using the building | | |
| 3. Has the farm any historical records (within the last 10 years) of breeding kestrels? | Yes | No |
| 4. Have kestrels been seen on the farm in the last 12 months? | Yes | No |
| Kestrels become more sedentary as they get older | | |

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the questions 1 to 4, it may be beneficial to erect a kestrel box, subject to the following (see Guidance at end):

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| 5. Is the building at least 200m from places frequently used by humans? | Yes | No |
| In "The Kestrel" by Andrew Village (1990), he suggests that boxes are most likely to be used if the above applies, but some kestrels can be very tolerant of human activity. | | |
| 6. Is the building open fronted to allow kestrel permanent access? | Yes | No |
| Open fronted or with large permanent openings (usually more than 3 m across), otherwise an external box is a better solution. | | |
| 7. Is the building sufficiently high to enable a nest box to be positioned internally? | Yes | No |
| Minimum height of 3m required. | | |
| 8. Does the kestrel have a clear flight path to the building? | Yes | No |
| No other buildings or trees etc obstructing access to the building | | |
| 9. Can a box be positioned so that kestrels have an unrestricted flight path to its entrance hole and a clear view from the box? | Yes | No |
| Maximising hole visibility is important when erecting a nest box (kestrels investigate holes not boxes). | | |

Notes:

Placing boxes within /on listed buildings and buildings located within conservation areas will require consent from your local authority.

GUIDANCE TO ANSWERS

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the questions 1-4, and 'yes' to questions 5, 6 and 7 it would be beneficial to erect a kestrel box.

If the answer is 'no' to question 5 (human disturbance), but kestrels have been recorded (questions 1-4), A BOX MAY STILL BE ERECTED.

If the answer is 'no' to either question 8 and 9 (flight paths) and also 'no' question 2 DO NOT ERECT A BOX, UNLESS THE FLIGHT PATH CAN BE IMPROVED.

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the questions 1-4, and 'yes' to question 5 but no to question 6 or 7 A BOX MAY BE ERECTED ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING. Boxes facing roughly south-east provide the best solution (entrance sheltered from prevailing winds but warmed by the sun). A box could also be placed on a nearby tree or on a pole (minimum height 3m) but could not be funded as a requirement of the building option.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Kestrel mortality and the scope for reducing it:

- Drowning: Ensure all water containers (cattle troughs, water butts, etc) are made safe using purpose made floats, within say 200m of the building.
- Possible predation in nest by rats, squirrels and cats: Ensure any stored materials i.e. bales do not allow easy access for mammalian predators to a box site.
- Rodenticides: Use strictly in accordance with best practice.

ASSESSMENT OF SUITABILITY FOR BATS

1. Do bats currently roost within any buildings on the farm? Yes No
Bats rarely use the same roosting place all year round as they require different conditions for breeding and hibernating.
2. Are there any historical records (within the last 10 years) of bat roosts on the farm? Yes No
Bats tend to return to the same roosts every year, however, bats may use alternative roost sites if conditions change at their traditional roosting site.
3. Have bats been seen on the farm in the last 12 months? Yes No
Bats may be seen foraging and emerging from/returning to roost sites between April-September in the active season.
4. Is there any evidence of bats using the building? Yes No
Have bats been seen emerging from/returning to the building? Have bats been seen roosting within the building? Is there any evidence of bat droppings? (small brown/black droppings, roughly the size and shape of mouse droppings, which crumble when dry). Is there any evidence of urine staining? Are their feeding remains present e.g. piles of moth wings.
5. Does the building have bat roosting potential? Yes No
Different species have different roosting preferences. Crevice dwelling species tend to be hidden from view, occupying small gaps and crevices in brick work, timbers, under roofing tiles, in tenon and mortice joints etc. Roof void dwelling species and those which require space to fly about before leaving their roosts to forage may be visible on timbers. Both Greater and Lesser horseshoe bats require flying access to buildings.
6. Is the building subject to low levels of disturbance by humans? Yes No
Buildings which are subjected to high levels of disturbance are less likely to be used by bats.
7. Is the building close to good foraging habitat? Yes No
Bat roosts are more likely to be present if there is good foraging habitat in the locality i.e. mature trees, woodland, mature well connected hedgerows, permanent pasture, close to water bodies.
8. Is the building subject to high levels of lighting? Yes No
High levels of lighting will restrict the use of the building by bats.

Notes:

1. Not all species are listed below, only species more likely to be found in buildings.
Crevice dwelling species; include Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius pipistrelle, Brandt's, Whiskered and Alcatheo.
Roof void dwellers; include Serotine, Leisler's and Daubenton's.
Species which require flight space and/or flying access; include Natterer's, Brown long-eared, Grey long-eared, Greater horseshoe and Lesser horseshoe.
2. All species of bat and their breeding sites and resting places (roosts) are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or handle a bat, to possess a bat (whether live or dead), to disturb a roosting bat or sell or offer a bat for sale without a licence. It is an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter, whether they are present or not.

GUIDANCE TO ANSWERS

If the answer is 'yes' to question 4, and you are embarking on any work which may contravene legislation relating to bats, you must ensure you have any appropriate licences, usually by seeking advice from an appropriately qualified ecological consultant.

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the questions 1-3, and 'yes' to questions 5, 6 and 7 then you are required to erect a bat box as part of the option.

If the answer is 'yes' to question 8 DO NOT ERECT A BOX