

## **Wildlife Features as part of new development – Guidance Note**

### **1.0 Purpose of the note**

- 1.1 This is a guidance note, it is not planning policy nor is it a Supplementary Planning Document. Its purpose is to provide developers and interested parties with an understanding of how the Council will encourage developers to meet the expectations in the National Planning Policy Framework with regard to Swift Boxes, other Bird Boxes and measures related to other threatened species.
- 1.2 Full Council at its meeting on the 15 July 2025 agreed a motion supporting the development of guidance and eventually planning policy on swift bricks in new development. The note was presented to Planning Committee on the 4 December 2025.

### **2.0 Policy Context**

- 2.1 In general terms, every local planning authority has a statutory duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of the planning process. Planning policy at both a national and local level strongly supports the need to protect and conserve biodiversity and to seek enhancements, including measures to extend existing and support new or isolated habitats.
- 2.2 This approach runs alongside the requirements to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain on the vast majority planning application which was introduced in 2024.
- 2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out at Paragraph 187 the following:  
*“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*  
  
*d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;”*
- 2.4 Core Policy 12 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure in the Amended Core Strategy (Adopted March 2019) sets out that the District Council will:  
  
*“Seek to secure development that maximises the opportunities to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and geological diversity and to increase provision of, and access to, green infrastructure within the District”*

### **3.0 The Case for Action**

- 3.1 Bats and several species of bird (e.g. swifts and house martins) are dependent on our buildings for breeding sites but the capacity for our buildings to provide such sites is disappearing across the UK. This comes at time when the population of

Swifts is declining rapidly and in 2021 Swifts were added to the red list of UK Birds of Conservation Concern<sup>1</sup>. Whilst the scientific reasons for this decline are complex and not clear<sup>2</sup> one thing we have the opportunity to do is to ensure that there are sufficient safe nest sites for swifts to reduce losses at nest sites to help mitigate drivers of change in population numbers.

- 3.2 A key factor in the loss of nest sites is modern building design where the need for low or zero carbon construction has led to new building techniques, materials and designs which create airtight barriers. As a result, species that traditionally use our buildings are unable to find resting, nesting or roosting sites.
- 3.3 Loss of nest sites also occurs when buildings and their roofs are repaired or altered. For example, swifts return year after year, not just to the same building, but the same small gap or space in the same building. This might be a gap under the eaves, soffit or bargeboard, or a space at the end of guttering or a gap under the tiles or in the pointing. Once filled in, it can result in a pair of Swifts failing to breed that year, as they are very reluctant to move to alternative sites even if they are available.
- 3.4 Bat populations in the UK have experienced significant changes over recent decades, with some species showing signs of recovery while others remain in decline. One major challenge is the decline in suitable roost sites. The demolition of older buildings, increased use of artificial lighting, and the trend toward airtight, energy-efficient homes have all contributed to a decline in accessible roosting spaces<sup>3</sup>. These changes make it harder for bats to find the stable microclimates they need for breeding, hibernation, and shelter, underscoring the urgent need for bat-friendly design in new developments.
- 3.5 All bat species in the UK have been observed using buildings for roosting, though some depend on them more heavily than others. Each species tends to choose roosting spots within buildings that mimic the conditions found in their natural roosts<sup>3</sup>. For example crevice-dwelling bat species (often hidden from view) such as common and soprano pipistrelle will often roost beneath roof tiles, while roof-void dwelling bats such as Leisler's and Daubenton's bat prefer to roost on exposed timbers within loft voids.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N et al. (2021) *The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain*. British Birds 114: 723-747. Available online at: <https://britishbirds.co.uk/content/status-our-bird-populations>

<sup>2</sup> Finch, T, Bell, J R, Robinson, R A, & Peach, W J. (2022) *Demography of Common Swifts (Apus apus) breeding in the UK associated with local weather but not aphid biomass*. Ibis. 165 (2) pp. 420-435

<sup>3</sup> Bat Conservation Trust (2018) *Bats in Buildings* [Online]. Available from: <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bats-in-buildings>

- 3.4 Hedgehogs are native and widespread across the UK. They require a mixture of habitats for foraging, nesting and mating, and a connected landscape. Rural hedgehogs are currently rapidly declining, with at least half lost from Britain since 2000<sup>4</sup>. They appear to be faring better in urban than rural areas, with those populations stabilising and potentially improving<sup>5</sup>. They are one of the few animals able to happily live alongside us, seeming to prefer gardens and amenity grassland habitats. Enhancing and connecting urban and suburban areas will help this struggling species to survive.

#### **4.0 Examples of Wildlife features as part of new development**

##### **4.1 Nest Bricks & Boxes**

There are many different types and models of species-adapted nest boxes and “bricks” readily available on the market. Nest bricks designed specifically for Swifts have the advantage that they will be used not only by Swifts but also by House Sparrows, Starlings, Blue Tits and Great Tits. These nest bricks are inconspicuous, simple to install and do not require ongoing maintenance. Swifts are communal nesters and there should be at least two bricks or boxes in close proximity.

<p><b>Swift Brick</b> &lt;Insert picture of a swift brick&gt;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best option for new build development</li> <li>• Durable and will not be damaged by weather</li> <li>• As they are integral, they cannot easily be removed</li> </ul> <p>More information is available on the Swift Conservation website: <a href="#">Swift Conservation Homepage</a></p>
<p><b>Nest Boxes</b> &lt;Insert picture of a nest box&gt;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Option for retrofitting on existing buildings</li> <li>• Not all existing buildings are suitable depending on height and orientation</li> </ul> <p>More information is available on the Swift Conservation website: <a href="#">Swift Conservation Homepage</a></p>

##### **4.2 Bat Boxes**

<sup>4</sup> Wembridge, D., Johnson, G., Al-Fulaij, N & Langton, S. (2022) *State of Britain's Hedgehogs 2022 Report*

<sup>5</sup> People's Trust for Endangered Species & British Hedgehog Preservation Society. (2019). *Hedgehogs and development: Guidance for developers* [Online]. Available from:  
<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/leaflets/Developers-Leaflet.pdf>

Bat boxes are artificial roosts designed to encourage bats into areas where there are few roosting sites. There are various designs of bat box from wooden boxes you can make yourself to external ready-assembled boxes and even integrated bat boxes that can be built into walls. Different bat species need different spaces. The Bat Conservation Trust has produced a [Bat Box Information Pack](#) which provides details on the different options they fall into three types:

<b>Integrated bat boxes</b>  <insert picture >	Integrated bat boxes can be matched and built into the walls and facade of a building. They have the advantage of offering a secure, permanent space for bats with little maintenance and potentially better thermal properties. These should be the preferred type for new development.
<b>Wooden External Boxes</b> <insert picture>	Wooden bat boxes are usually cubic or rectangular, with a grooved 'bat ladder' and a narrow entrance slit at the bottom. They can be nailed to trees or walls.
<b>Ready-made external bat boxes</b>  <insert picture>	There are a number of ready-made external bat boxes suitable for buildings and trees that can be purchased. These boxes can be wooden, however there are an increasing number of more durable options.

#### 4.3 *Hedgehog Routes & Habitats*

In order to ensure that new development can accommodate hedgehogs the British Hedgehog Preservation Society has produced guidance for developers called [Hedgehogs and Developers](#) which sets out various elements to consider;

- **Connectivity:** Consider connectivity of the landscape, enabling ground-dwelling species such as hedgehogs to move around freely. Boundaries and barriers within and surrounding the development, including fencing, railing and gates, should be made permeable e.g.:
  - through the use of fence panels with 13 x 13 cm holes at ground level (hedgehog holes)
  - leaving a sufficient gap beneath gates
  - leaving brick spaces at the base of brick walls
- **Planting:** Include hedgerows for defining property boundaries where feasible and have a diverse mix of native shrubs to encourage invertebrates.

- Habitat: Include areas scrub and deadwood to provide shelter for hedgehogs.

## **5.0 How the NPPF requirement will be implemented in Newark & Sherwood**

- 5.1 The Council will seek to ensure that new development addresses the requirement set out in Paragraph 187 and Core Policy 12, by encouraging the inclusion of bird boxes/bricks and bat boxes where appropriate.

What's expected in new development:

- The provision of a proportionate number of swift (or other bird species) and bat bricks integrated into buildings where appropriate; or
- The provision of a proportionate number of externally mounted swift (or other bird species) and bat boxes where integrated swift or bat bricks are not possible.
- Locational requirements

### Bird bricks/boxes

- Swift bricks and bird boxes can be positioned on a west to east facing aspect (avoiding southern aspects as this will be too warm for developing eggs and chicks). Consideration should be provided for west facing aspect if there is potential to be exposed to driving rain.
- Boxes should be approximately 5 metres or more above ground level and ideally will be sited close to the eaves or bargeboards. In larger buildings optimal height will depend on the design of the building and the surrounding area.
- Ideally avoid siting bricks directly above windows to avoid potential conflict with residents.
- Avoid siting bricks where predators (such as domestic cats) can perch or climb.

### Bat boxes

- Bat boxes can be positioned in a in a south-west, south or south-east facing direction (avoiding north facing aspects).
- Boxes should be installed at a height of 4-6m and entrances must be free from vegetation and unobstructed.
- Ideally site boxes away from artificial light sources.
- Use untreated wood for any handmade boxes.
- Avoid siting bricks where predators (such as domestic cats) can perch or climb.

- 5.2 The Council will work with developers to secure the most appropriate solution for each development site. The securing of bird boxes and bat boxes will be by an appropriate planning condition:

*“A. The approved development shall not commence until bat box and swift/bird nest box plan has been submitted to, and been approved by, the local planning authority. The plan is to show the type and location of the proposed boxes, and details for fixing these into place.”*

*“B. Photographic evidence of the installed boxes to be submitted to, and approved by, the local planning authority to fully discharge the condition.”*

- 5.3 There is also an opportunity to secure the inclusion of bird boxes/bricks and bat boxes in the extension of existing buildings. This may be more limited by building orientation and other design restrictions however where appropriate the Council encourages such inclusion. Such bricks/boxes will be secured by the condition as set out in paragraph 5.2.

- 5.4 Provision for hedgehog routes and habitat will be required as part of major residential housing developments (e.g. 10 or above).

What's expected as part of new development:

- Developers should indicate in planning applications their approach to hedgehog routes through the site and how they will be constructed.
- Where appropriate identify potential habitat locations for hedgehogs.

- 5.5 The Council will work with developer to secure the most appropriate solution for each development site. The securing of hedgehog routes will be by an appropriate planning condition:

*“A. The approved development shall not commence until a hedgehog highway plan has been submitted to, and been approved by, the local planning authority. The plan is to show the hedgehog route and type and location of the proposed interventions, and details for fixing these into place.”*

*“B. Photographic evidence of the installed route, habitat and features to be submitted to, and approved by, the local planning authority to fully discharge the condition.”*

- 5.6 If you have any questions about the implementation of this guidance note please contact: [planning@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk](mailto:planning@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk) [nick.law@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk](mailto:nick.law@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk) and [hayley.hurst@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk](mailto:hayley.hurst@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk)