

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION cont.

Clearing out the box

Where a polebox is erected as temporary alternative provision at a development site (for perhaps a year) clearing out the box is unlikely to become an issue. However, if the box remains in place for more than one nesting season it may. As the box fills up with nest debris its effective depth is reduced and so it gradually becomes less safe for emerging young. After four or five broods of young have been produced (normally after about four years) the nest debris should be removed. Boxes used by Jackdaws will fill rapidly with sticks and should be cleared out yearly. When clearing out nest debris it is advisable to wear gloves and a dust mask. It's usually best to clear out nestboxes in November, December or January (but please try to avoid flushing birds out during severe weather conditions). Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence to disturb breeding Barn Owls.

Safety

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



Positioning requirements - for Barn Owl nestboxes on poles

- Pole boxes should be erected at a height of not less than 4 metres above ground level.
- A substantial pole is needed - not less than 150mm diameter (normally 6m long with 1.5m underground and 4.5m in height). Never erect a box on a pole in use (with overhead wires attached).
- Barn Owls are NOT woodland birds and will not usually enter dense woodland. The pole should be isolated, sited in open ground and ideally in an area of rough tussocky grassland.
- 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 cont.

Essential design requirements - for Barn Owl nestboxes on poles

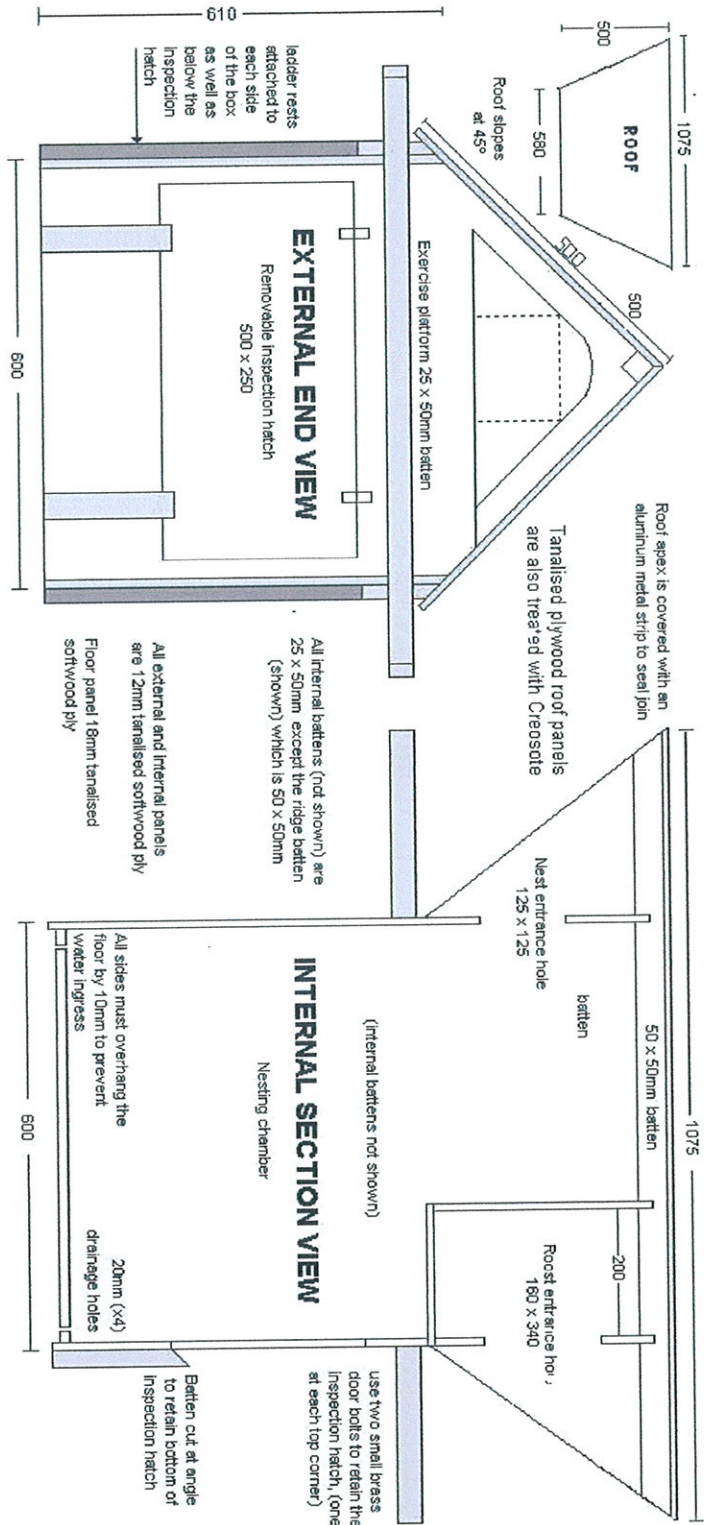
- Entrance hole: minimum size 100mm x 100mm, optimum size 100mm x 125mm, maximum size 150mm x 150mm.
- Floor area of nest chamber: absolute minimum 0.2m². Good size range 0.3 to 0.4m².
- Depth from bottom of entrance hole to nest must be not less than 460 mm.
- There must be an external platform below the entrance hole that allows ample room for an entire brood of young birds to exercise and await food deliveries; thus the danger of young birds falling (before fledging) must be minimised. External platform size should be approximately 0.125m² or larger.
- 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 should 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 applied by heat or adhesive (not nailed or pierced in any way). Very steeply sloping roofs may not need covering but any apex join must be permanently waterproofed.
- A flat or slightly sloping roof that provides additional exercise space for the young is advantageous.
- 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.
- Should be substantially constructed yet light enough to permit safe erection using normal lifting equipment. Normal pole-box weight range is 18-30kg. Any pole box under 13kg is probably not substantial enough.
- Should not be constructed from tropical hardwood unless the timber is certified as sustainably grown (FSC Approved).
- Within the box, a separate entrance hole into a small compartment so as to provide a secluded roosting space for an adult owl can be advantageous. (However, it should be designed so as to minimise the chances of this inferior cavity being used for nesting by Barn Owls).
- 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.

You can view the construction of a polebox [here](#).

You can view a polebox being erected [here](#).

ALTERNATIVE PROVISION cont.

POLEBOX DESIGN



BARN OWL TRUST POLE BOX DESIGN.

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

The platform is made in two parts. After the box has been erected the platform halves simply slide onto the box and the outer extended battens (already attached to one half of the platform) are screwed to the other half. To facilitate this, the box has ladder rests on both sides. Please note that the light grey shaded battens in this diagram are flat and level with the bottom of all the other timbers. This effectively gives the tray an edge that is easy for young birds to grip.

Drawing NOT to scale

all dimensions are millimetres

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 0.4m², ideal size is 1m² (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

