

# Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

## Bird Boxes

*Leicestershire County Council Planning Ecology Service  
November 2014, minor amendments September 2022*

Bird boxes are often required as a planning condition. The condition MUST specify which broad type of nest-box is required, and how many of each.

### Types include

- Sparrows and starlings, to be fixed to the property
- Small hole-nesting birds (tits, etc) to be fixed to trees or buildings
- Large hole-nesting birds (e.g Woodpecker) to be fixed to trees
- Robins, wrens etc.: open fronted boxes in undergrowth
- Owl and Kestrel boxes, to be fitted to trees or to buildings
- Swifts, Swallows and House-martins, to be fixed to property, internal or external

**Fixing the boxes** depends on the species the box is intended for. There is a wealth of guidance available from the British Trust for Ornithology, The Royal Society for Protection of Birds, the Barn Owl Trust and the Swift Conservation Trust. Boxes must be sited in accordance with the guidelines set out by these organisations. A summary is given below, plus references and weblinks.

**To discharge a planning condition**, householder/developers should submit a plan showing locations of nest-boxes, with the type clearly identified. Either a statement from an ecologist endorsing the correct installation or a photograph of the boxes in situ should be provided.

### Guidelines for each type of bird-box

Boxes for **sparrows or starlings** should be fixed two to four metres up a tree or a wall. Unless there are trees or buildings which shade the box during the day, face the box between north and east, thus avoiding strong sunlight and the wettest winds. Make sure that the birds have a clear flight path to the nest without any clutter directly in front of the entrance. Tilt the box forward slightly so that any driving rain will hit the roof and bounce clear. House sparrows and starlings will readily use nestboxes placed high up under the eaves. Since these birds nest in loose colonies, two or three can be sited spaced out on the same side of the house. Keep these away from areas where house martins, swallows and swifts normally nest.

Open-fronted boxes for **robins and wrens** need to be low down, below 2m, well hidden in vegetation. Those for spotted flycatchers need to be 2-4m high, sheltered by vegetation but with a clear outlook.

**Woodpecker** boxes need to be 3-5m high on a tree trunk with a clear flight path and away from disturbance.

**Small hole nesting bird-boxes** should be two to four metres up a tree or a wall. Unless there are trees or buildings which shade the box during the day, face the box between north and east, thus

avoiding strong sunlight and the wettest winds. Make sure that the birds have a clear flight path to the nest without any clutter directly in front of the entrance. Tilt the box forward slightly so that any driving rain will hit the roof and bounce clear.

**Swift, swallow and house martin** boxes should be positioned under the eaves, away from any windows and out of the direct sun, wind and rain. A small, removable shelf, 25 cm wide, about 2 metres beneath the nest site will catch any droppings. Swift boxes can also be built inside a roofspace, with external entrances – see Swift Conservation Trust for ideas

**Owl and kestrel boxes on trees** should be located either on isolated farmland trees or at the edge of woodland, overlooking open land. Tawny owl boxes are best positioned within woodland. All species require good visibility from the nest and a clear flight path to it. Ideally face the box south-east, but most importantly it needs to face away from prevailing wind direction.

**Barn Owl boxes in barns and buildings:** site the entrance hole into the building on the side with the least disturbance, with direct access to an open area of good habitat. Fix it as high up as possible.

## References

C de Feu (2005). Nestboxes. BTO

<https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u15/downloads/publications/guides/nestbox.pdf>

RSPB website:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/nestboxes/>

Barn Owl Trust. Nestboxes for use in Barns & Other Buildings.

<https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-nestbox/barn-owl-nestboxes/>

Swift Conservation Trust Choosing & Installing Swift Nest Boxes & Bricks. [https://www.swift-conservation.org/Leaflet\\_1\\_Swifts\\_Nest-boxes\\_at\\_Your\\_Home-small.pdf](https://www.swift-conservation.org/Leaflet_1_Swifts_Nest-boxes_at_Your_Home-small.pdf)

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