

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

