97a-117 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 8AN

# Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy

Prepared in Respect of Condition 25 of
Reading Borough Council's Planning Application 221324

August 2025

| Quality Management | |
|---|---|
| **Client:** | Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley) |
| **Project:** | 97a – 117 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 8AN |
| **Report Title:** | Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy |
| **Project Number:** | ECO-6560 |
| **File Reference:** | 6560 BES vf6 ALB/KK/DS |
| **Date:** | 05/08/2025 |

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Aspect Ecology have been commissioned by Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley) to assist with the preparation of information to discharge planning conditions relevant to ecology. The proposals are for redevelopment of the site to provide 60 dwellings with associated landscaping, parking and access. The site received planning consent from Reading Borough Council in February 2023 (Application ref: 221324) which is subject to a number of conditions.

1.1.2 A number of the conditions for the planning consent relate to ecology, one of which (Condition 25) requires the preparation of a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and states:

Condition 25: *'Prior to the occupation of the development, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include integral bird and bat boxes, tiles or bricks on new buildings and native and wildlife friendly landscaping, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed as approved.'*

## 1.2 Purpose of the Report

1.2.1 This document sets outs the biodiversity enhancements that will be incorporated within the development scheme to satisfy Condition 25 of the planning consent (ref: 221324). This report should be read in conjunction with the Ecological Appraisal dated August 2022 and Bat Survey Report dated October 2022, prepared by Aspect Ecology.

# 2 Site Description and Proposals

## 2.1 Site Description

2.1.1 The site is located in central Reading, Berkshire. The site is bound by Caversham Road (A329) to the west, commercial buildings to the south as well as some residential to the north and east.

2.1.2 A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was completed in June 2022 and the site was noted to predominantly comprise buildings and hardstanding, with scattered scrub and some invasive species. None of the habitats within the site form an important ecological feature and the site is of limited interest for protected species with no evidence of roosting bats recorded, albeit some of the buildings provide nesting opportunities and Feral Pigeon were recorded roosting in the buildings.

## 2.2 Proposals

2.2.1 The proposals are for redevelopment of the site to provide 60 dwellings with associated landscaping, parking and access. The proposed redevelopment of the site also includes native hedgerow and shrub planting, as well as ornamental planting.

# 3 Biodiversity Enhancements

## 3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The re-development of the site provides an opportunity to incorporate a number of ecological enhancements for the benefit of local biodiversity, thereby making a positive contribution towards Priority Habitats and Species listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act, and the objectives of Reading Borough Council's EN12 Biodiversity and Green Network policy. This report details the creation and establishment of native hedgerow and shrub planting. In addition to the proposed habitat creation which will provide opportunities for a variety of different faunal species, a number of species-specific features will be created to provide additional opportunities for bats, birds and Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus,* at the site. These ecological enhancements are set out in Section 3.2 below.

3.1.2 The locations of the proposed bat boxes have been determined with due regard to the Proposed Private Lighting Layout plan produced by Williams Lighting Consultants Ltd (ref: WLC907-PRV-1300-001), so as to minimise the risk of lighting dissuading bats from adopting the boxes, notwithstanding that given the urban environment the boxes are likely to attract more light-tolerant species. Reference to the Lighting Layout shows that none of the bat boxes will be positioned close to any proposed lighting columns and the illuminance levels at the proposed bat box locations will be <0.5 lux. A warm white colour temperature (2,700K) will be used for the lighting, which accords with best practice guidance on minimising the effects of artificial lighting on bats (BCT/ILP Guidance Note 08/23). Accordingly, the Lighting Layout will ensure a suitably dark environment for the bat boxes.

3.1.3 Birds do not exhibit the same sensitivity to artificial lighting at night as certain bat species and, as such, the positions of the bird boxes relative to proposed lighting columns is not an important consideration. In any event, none of the proposed locations of the bird boxes lie adjacent to the new lighting columns.

3.1.4 The River Thames lies over 200m from the site and will not be affected by the proposed lighting of the site.

## 3.2 Faunal Enhancements and Management Operations

<u>Bats</u>

3.2.1 A total of six bat boxes, utilising Bird Brick Houses Ltd Standard Bat Box, or similar, will be installed/incorporated into a number of the new buildings on site (see Plan 6550/EEP1 for locations and see Appendix 6560/1 for specifications). The integrated bat boxes will provide new roosting opportunities for bats in the area, such as Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus,* Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and *Myotis* species, of which Soprano Pipistrelle is a Priority Species. To maximise their potential use, the bat boxes will be installed no lower than 3m from ground level. The boxes will be sited in sheltered, wind-free areas that are exposed to sun for part of the day, facing a south-easterly or south-westerly direction. Bat boxes will be located at a distance from any lighting fixtures, doors and windows so as not to disrupt potential use of the boxes. Photographs of the installed bat boxes and a corresponding letter detailing installed enhancement features will be supplied to the Local Planning Authority once build-out has been completed.

3.2.2 *Management.* Bat boxes are constructed from durable, rot-proof and predator-proof materials, and can be expected to last 25 years or more. The model described above is

maintenance-free however, an annual (visual) inspection will be undertaken to ensure boxes remain secure and identify the need to repair, replace or reposition any boxes.

3.2.3 Should any adjustments/repairs/replacement of bat boxes be required, a suitably qualified and licensed ecologist should be consulted to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation as bats may be present throughout the year and must not be disturbed.

Birds

3.2.4 A total of twenty-nine bird boxes will be erected on buildings to provide additional nesting opportunities for birds including Priority Species House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*. New bird boxes incorporating Manthorpe Swift Bricks, Bird Brick Houses Standard Bird Box and Sparrow Terrace Box, or similar, will be installed within the site (see Plan 6560/EEP1 for locations and Appendix 6560/1 for specifications). To maximise their potential use, the bird boxes will be installed at a minimum height of 3m such that they are not subject to predation by cats or liable to vandalism. The bird boxes will be sited in sheltered, wind-free areas, facing in a northerly direction. When affixed to new buildings the bird boxes will not be located directly above any windows and/or doorways. Photographs of the installed bird boxes and a corresponding letter detailing installed enhancement features will be supplied to the Local Planning Authority once build-out has been completed.

3.2.5 *Management.* All of the bird boxes are constructed from durable, rot-proof and predator-proof materials, and can be expected to last 25 years or more with no maintenance required. However, an annual (visual) inspection will be undertaken to ensure boxes remain secure and identify the need to repair, replace or reposition any boxes. Any works to bird boxes should be undertaken in the autumn or winter months (i.e. outside March to August inclusive) when they are least likely to be in use.

Hedgehogs

3.2.6 To maintain connectivity throughout the site for Hedgehog and to allow access to suitable foraging habitat contained within residential gardens, small holes (13cmx13cm) will be created within garden fences or under gates towards the site boundaries (see Plan 6560/EEP1 for locations and Appendix 6560/2 for specifications).

3.2.7 *Management*. Hedgehog access points require no specific maintenance. However, an annual monitoring inspection will be undertaken to identify the need to repair or replace any access points, as necessary.

## 3.3 Timetable for Implementation

3.3.1 Integrated bat and bird boxes and hedgehog gaps in fences will be provided during the construction period. All biodiversity enhancements will therefore be provided prior to the full occupation of the phase.

## 3.4 Habitat Enhancements and Management

Native Hedgerow Planting

3.4.1 A section of native hedgerows will be planted at the south of the site, incorporating fruit and nut bearing species including Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Wild Privet *Ligustrum vulgare,* Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Wayfaring Tree *Viburnum lantana,* and Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus.* Hedgerow planting

will enhance on-site foraging opportunities for a range of fauna, as well as likely increasing invertebrate biomass and diversity compared to the existing habitat types, and therefore increase foraging resources for bats.

3.4.2 *Management.* Hedgerows are to be closely monitored at each maintenance visit to ensure that they are upright, firm, stable and in good health.

3.4.3 Any dead, dying or defective hedgerow planting shall be replaced in the following dormant winter period to maintain the vitality and dense structure of the hedgerow.

3.4.4 Once established, the hedgerows will be regularly trimmed on a rotational basis every two or three years in late winter (outside of bird nesting season of 1st March to 31st August inclusive) and allowed to incrementally increase in height. Any gaps will be re-planted with native species. This should provide a dense, well-structured and diverse hedgerow that maximises production of fruit- bearing shrub species.

Ornamental Planting

3.4.5 Ornamental planting is proposed throughout the site, incorporating species that listed on the Royal Horticultural Societies' Plants for Pollinators database and are of known value to pollinating insects such as Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Bay Laurel *Laurus nobilis*, English Lavender *Lavandula angustifolia 'Hidcote'*, Oregon Grape *Mahonia x media 'Charity'*, Butchers-broom *Ruscus aculeatus*, Japanese Skimmia *Skimmia japonica 'Rubella'*, Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus 'Otto Luyken'* and Rosemary *Rosmarinus offcinalis*.

3.4.6 *Management.* Areas of ornamental shrub planting will serve a primary function as amenity features. As such, shrubs will require regular cutting to around 1.2m in height to maintain this function, albeit ecologically sensitive management will be encouraged wherever possible. Any dead, dying or defective planting shall be replaced in the following dormant winter period.

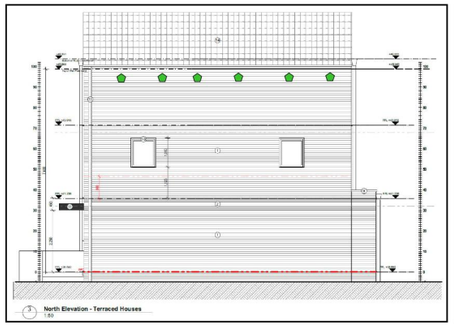
Native Shrub

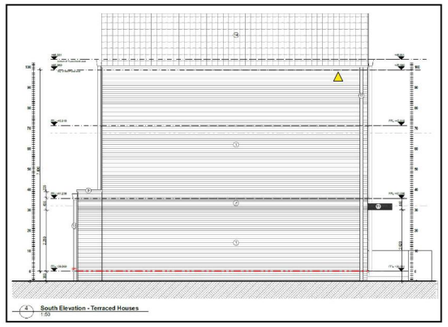
3.4.7 The new native shrub planting at the south of the site will provide additional foraging habitat. Dense planting will also provide potential refuge for small mammals and in the long term, this habitat could provide new nesting opportunities for birds. Species such as Common Dogwood, Common Hazel, Wild Privet, Blackthorn, Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*, Wayfaring Tree and Guelder Rose.

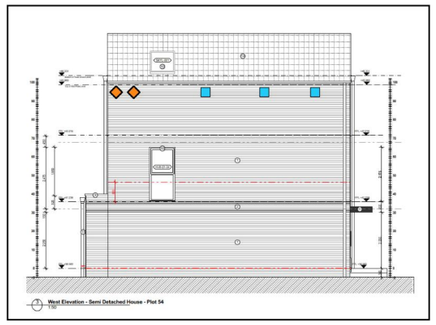
3.4.8 *Management.* In the first two years following planting, shrubs are to be closely monitored at each maintenance visit to ensure that they are upright, firm, stable and in good health. Any dead, dying or defective shrub planting shall be replaced in the following dormant winter period to maintain the vitality of the shrub. No substantial works to woody vegetation, other than trimming of minor growth, will take place during the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive).

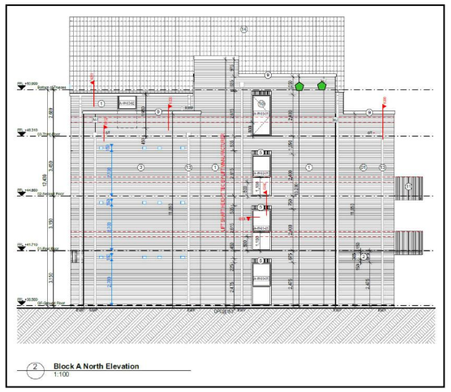
# Plan 6560/BES1:

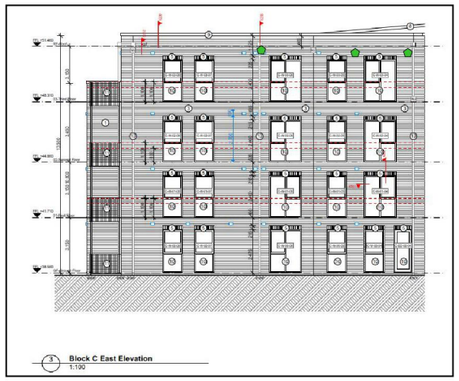
## Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

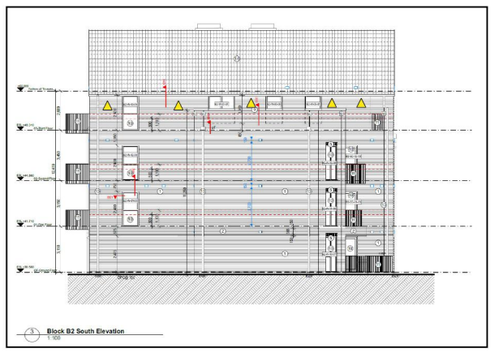






Key:

- Site Boundary
- Native Shrub Mix
- Native Hedgerow
- Bird Brick Houses Ltd Sparrow Terrace Box (or similar)
- Bird Brick Houses Ltd Standard Bat Box (or similar)
- Manthorpe Swift Bricks (or similar)
- Hedgehog Cut Out
- Bird Brick Houses Ltd Standard Bird Box (or similar)

aspect ecology
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|---|---|
| Carters, Caversham Road, Reading | PROJECT |
| Biodiversity Enhancement Plan | TITLE |
| 6560/EEP1 | DRAWING NO. |
| H/JP | REV |
| August 2025 | DATE |

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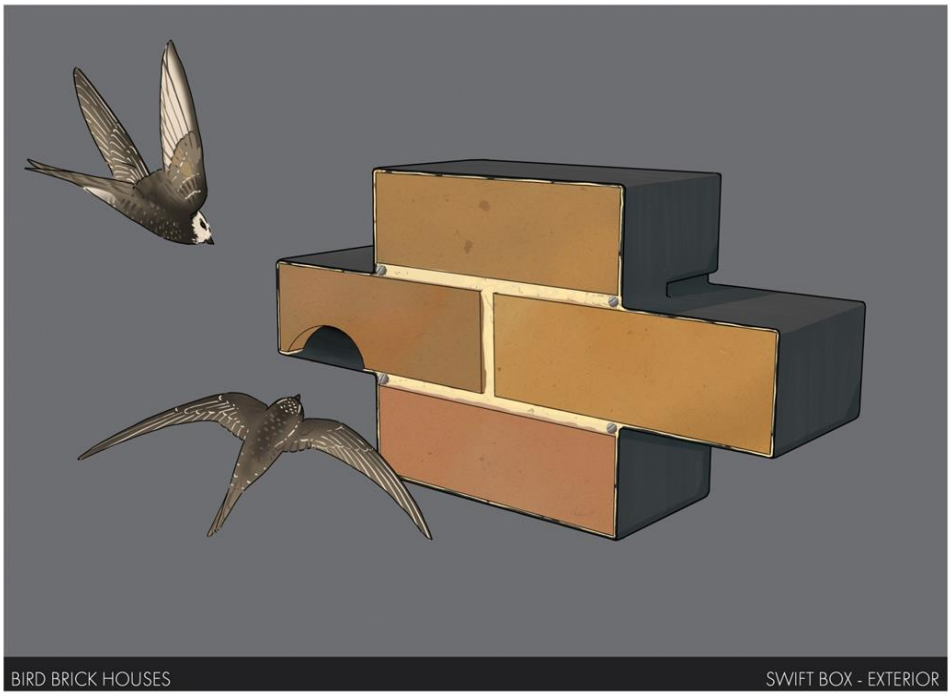
# Appendix 6560/1:

Bat and Bird Box Specifications

Bird Brick Houses®

# Integral Bird and Bat Box Specification



## Standard Bird Box

***Standard Bird Box fitted with brick slips in stretcher bond***

Main body is 100% recycled polypropylene, real brick slips (brick supplied by customer or from our stock) bonded to the removable front with a mix of wall-tie adhesive and tile adhesive. Retaining screws are stainless steel. Two drainage holes are located in the base.

Standard Options

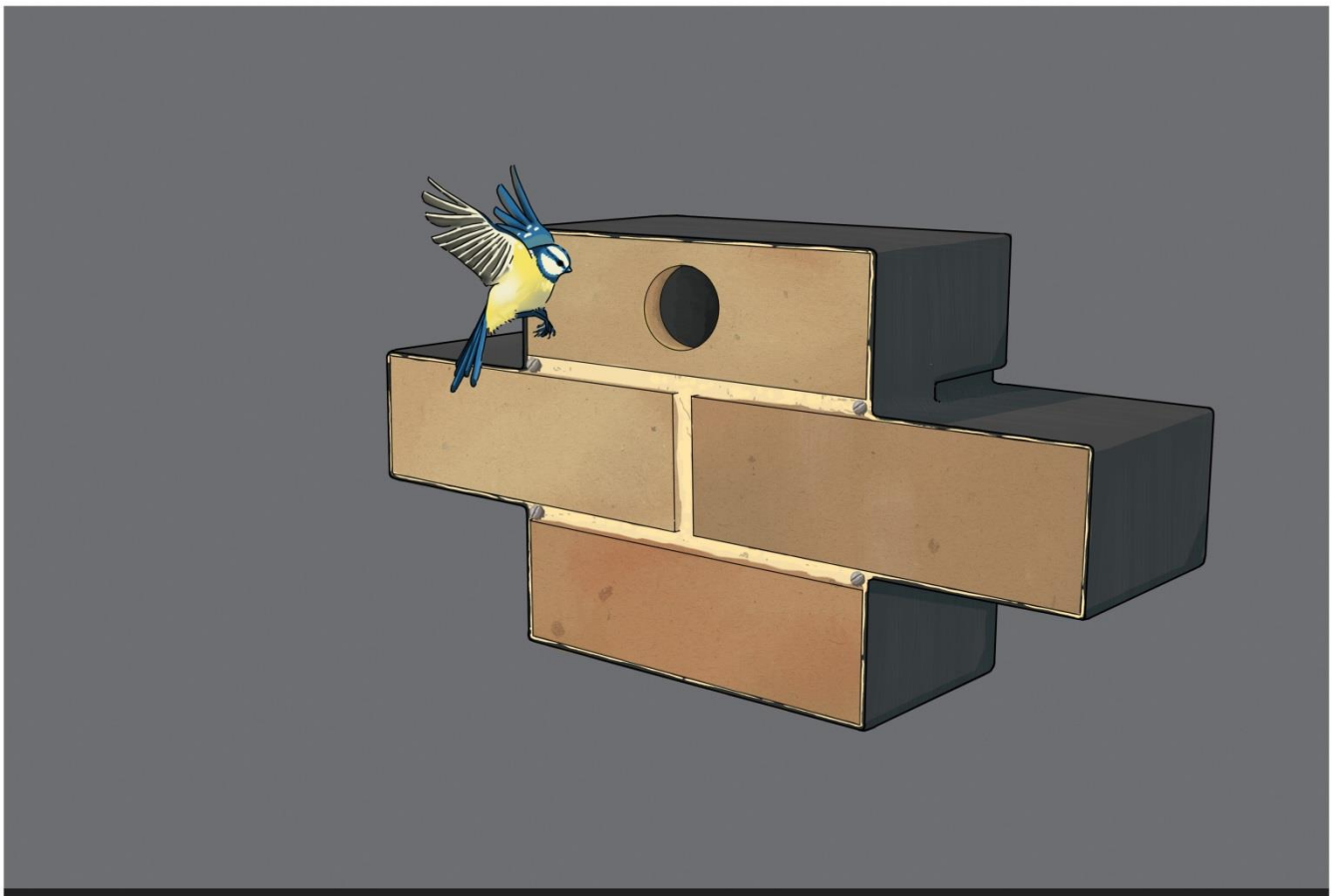
The Bird Box is suitable for most buildings in brick (stretcher bond, Flemish bond, Soldier), render, weather boarding; stone and flint. Boxes for render and stone are supplied with a stainless steel mesh ready for finishing on site.

Note: soldier bond is available; boxes are modified by Bird Brick Houses. Adaptation of the box would reduce length to 225mm.

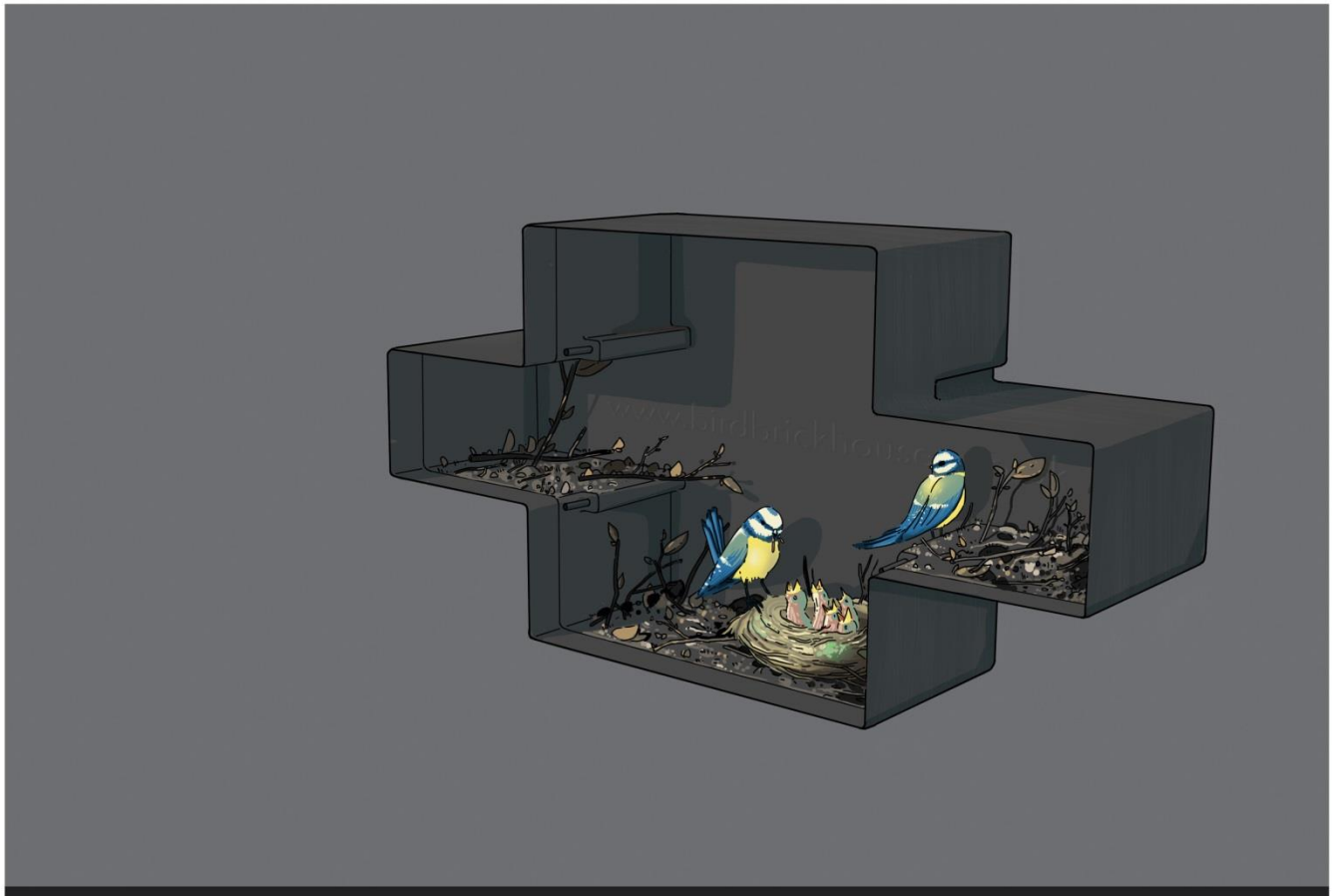
***Flemish bond, Standard Box***

***Soldier Bond Box***

- Manufacturer: Bird Brick Houses Ltd.
- Web: www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk
- Tel: 01323 488732
- Product reference: Bird Box
- Type: Standard box suitable for House sparrows, Tits, with a 36mm aperture. Same box applies for Redstarts and Starlings with a 48mm aperture.
- Size 440L x 227H x 125D



BIRD BRICK HOUSES STANDARD BOX - EXTERIOR



BIRD BRICK HOUSES STANDARD BOX - INTERIOR

**Standard Bat Box**

***Bat Box fitted with stretcher bond brick slips***

Main body is 100% recycled polypropylene, real brick slips (brick supplied by customer or from our stock) bonded to the removable front with a mix of wall-tie adhesive and tile adhesive. Screws retaining the front are stainless steel. The base has two drainage holes. The main baffle and the internal lining is timber.

Standard Options

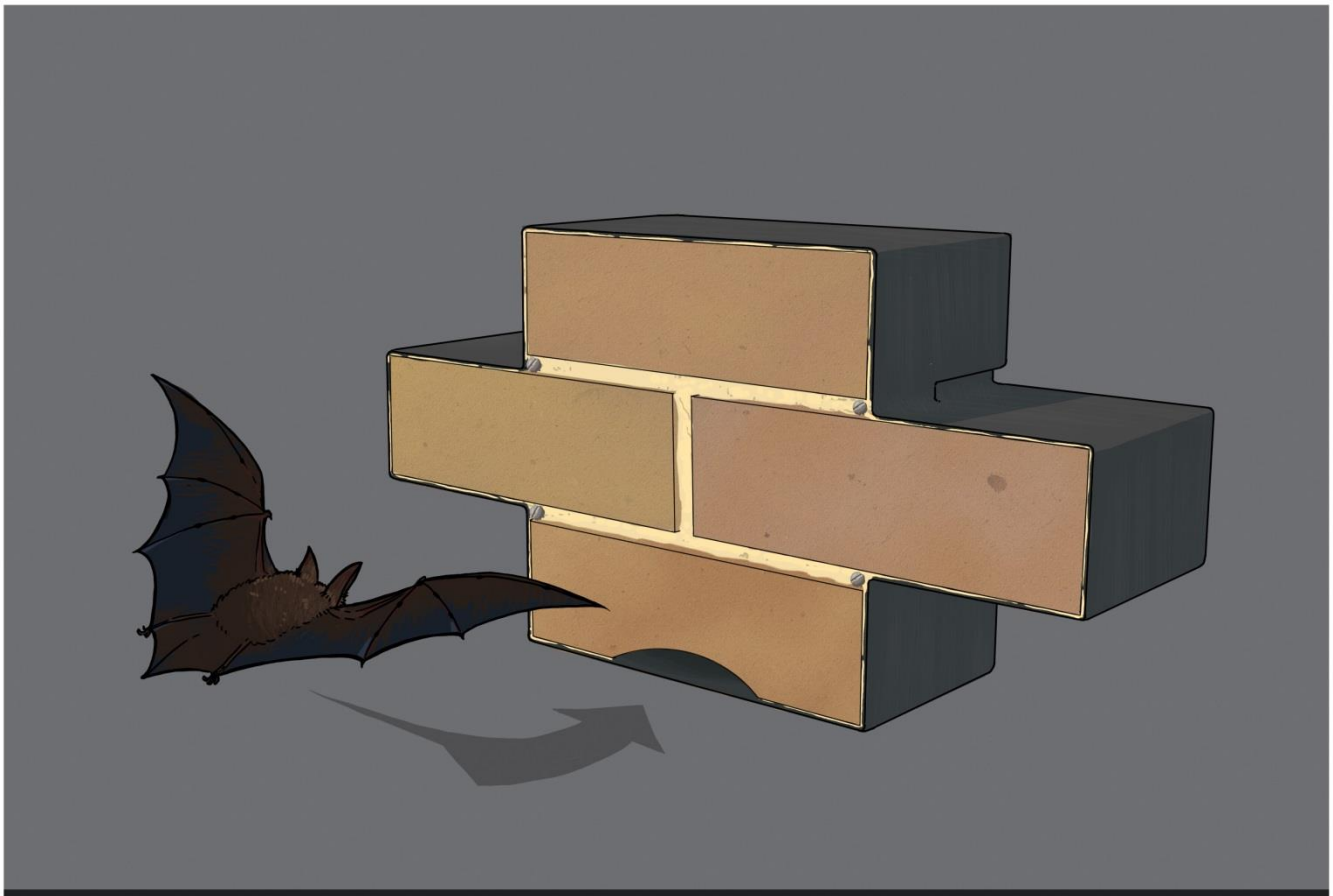
The Bat box is suitable for most buildings in brick (stretcher bond, Flemish bond), render, weatherboarding, stone and flint. Boxes for render and stone are supplied with a stainless steel mesh ready for finishing on site.

***Bat box, internal***

***Bat Box with stainless steel mesh fronted larve for render, stonework etc***

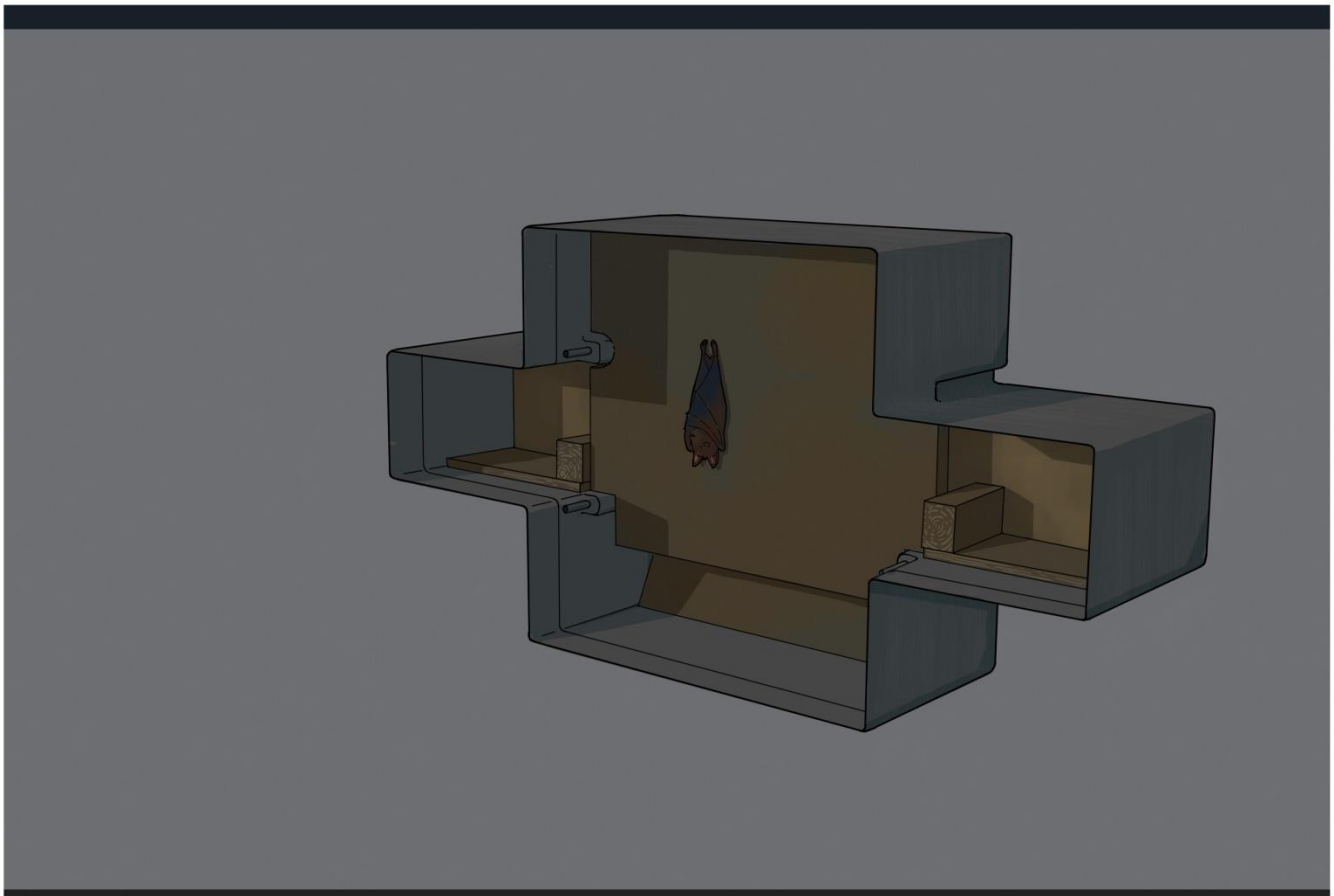
Manufacturer: Bird Brick Houses Ltd.

- Web: www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk
- Tel: 01323 488732
- Product reference: Bat Box
- Type: Standard Bat Box
- Size 440L x 227H x 125D



BIRD BRICK HOUSES

BAT BOX - EXTERIOR



BIRD BRICK HOUSES

BAT BOX - INTERIOR

## Sparrow Terrace

***Sparrow Terrace fitted with brick slips***

Main body is 100% recycled polypropylene. Real brick slips (brick supplied by customer or from our stock) are bonded to the removable front with a mix of wall-tie adhesive and tile adhesive. Retaining screws are stainless steel. Two drainage holes are located in the base of the box.

Standard Options

The Sparrow Terrace Box is suitable for most buildings in brick (stretcher bond, Flemish bond), render, weather boarding, stone and flint. Boxes for render and stone are supplied with a stainless steel mesh ready for finishing on site.

***Sparrow Terrace Box with stainless steel mesh fronted larve for render, stonework etc.***

- Manufacturer: Bird Brick Houses Ltd.
- Web: www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk
- Tel: 01323 488732
- Product reference: Sparrow Terrace Box
- Type: Terrace box is suitable for House Sparrow, Tits with a 36mm aperture, fitted with a divider in the centre of the box creating two nesting compartments. Divider made from 100% recycled plastic.
- Size 440L x 227H x 125D

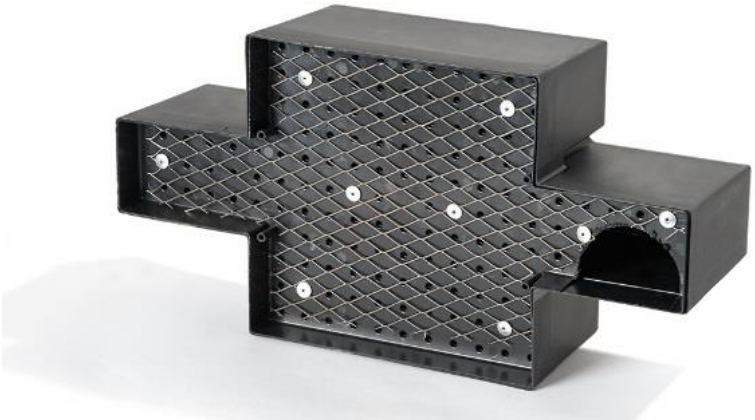
**Swift Box**

***Swift Box fitted with brick slips***

Main body is 100% recycled polypropylene, real brick slips (brick supplied by customer or from our stock) bonded to the removable front with a mix of wall-tie adhesive and tile adhesive. Screws retaining the front are stainless steel. Two drainage holes are located in the base of the box. Internal nest cup fitted.

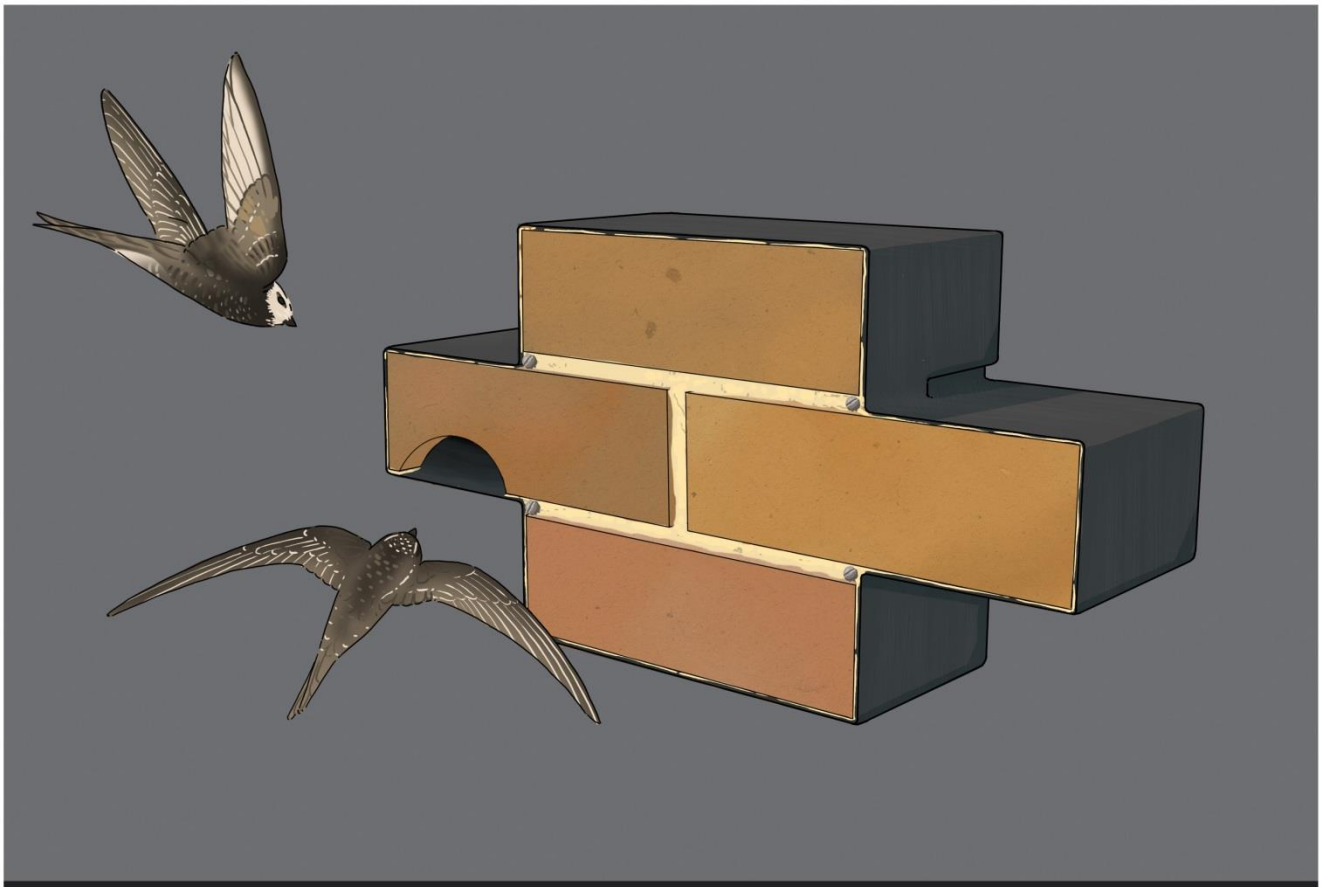
Standard Options

The Swift Box is suitable for most buildings in brick (stretcher bond, Flemish bond), render, weather boarding, stone and flint. Boxes for render and stone are supplied with a stainless steel mesh ready for finishing on site.

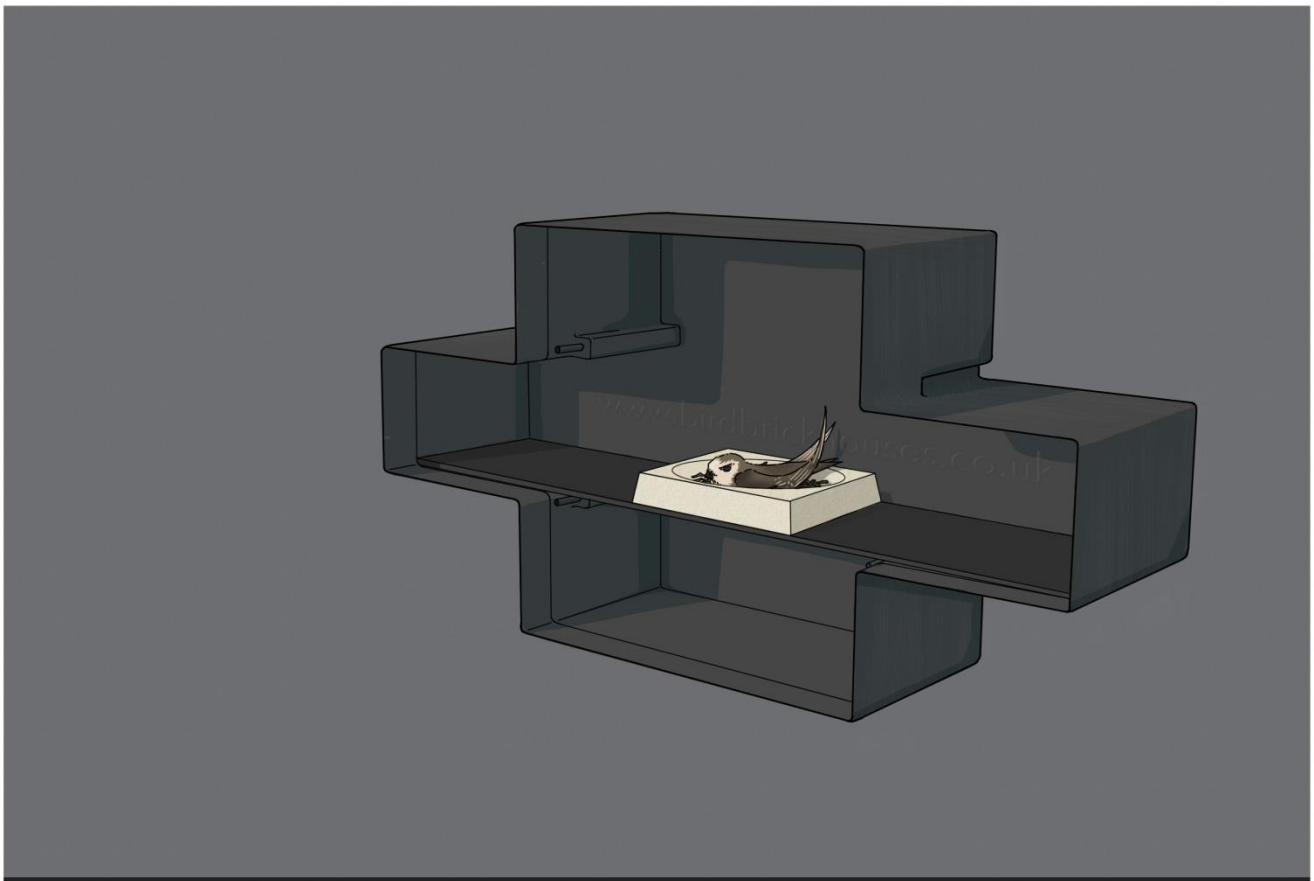


***Above: Swift Box with stainless steel mesh fronted larve for render, stonework etc.***

- Manufacturer: Bird Brick Houses Ltd.
- Web: www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk
- Tel: 01323 488732
- Product reference: Swift Box
- Type: Swift box suitable for swifts. Aperture is a crescent, 72mm wide, 30 mm high.
- Size 440L x 227H x 170D. Depth is variable depending on requirements. From 125mm to 170mm depending on cavity.



BIRD BRICK HOUSES SWIFT BOX - EXTERIOR

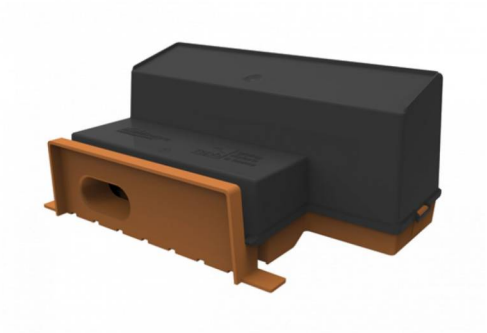


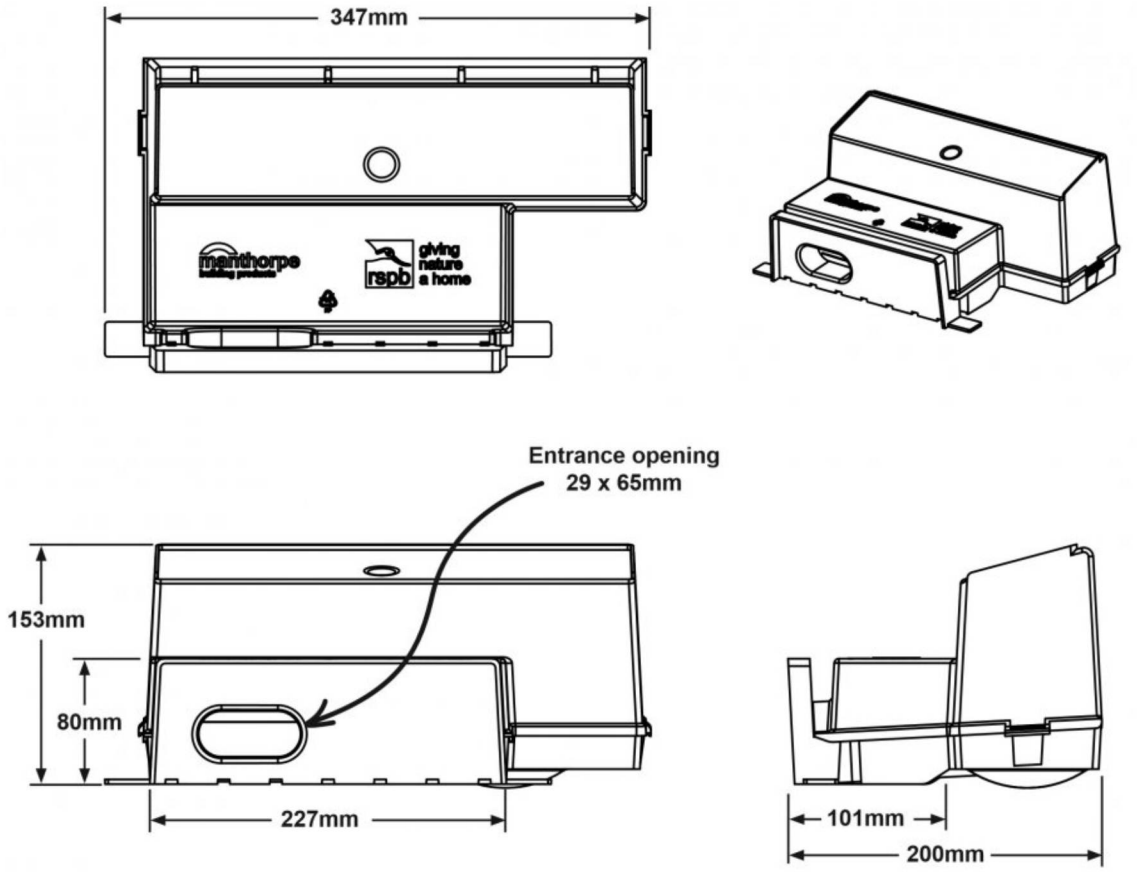
BIRD BRICK HOUSES SWIFT BOX - INTERIOR

# Manthorpe Swift Box

The design of this box enables it to be incorporated within the brickwork whilst the visible part of the nest box takes the space of a single brick. The entrance hole should be positioned at least 5m above the ground and sited to ensure unobstructed access for birds entering or leaving the box. Available in a range of colours to match the surrounding masonry.

*Dimensions: 153mm (h) x 347mm (w) x 200mm(d). Weight 0.71kg*





# Appendix 6560/2:

## Hedgehog Cut Outs

# Hedgehog Cut-out Installation

Hedgehog Cut-out Installation

Postioned at the corner of the screen fence to connect neighbouring gardens. Generally, there should be 2 per garden, one each side to provide Hedgehog access and prevent entrapment.
Cut a 130mm x 130mm square hole in the bottom of the garden fence or wall, with the Hedgehog Highway by Timloc (or similar) as a guide. Line up the Hedgehog Highway with the hole and secure in place with screws.

Hedgehog Highway by Timloc



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