

Guidance on providing
bat roosting &
Swift Brick features for
new buildings in Leeds

(April 2020)

Special Note to provide details prior to determination

The Council encourages applications to provide all the details for bat roosting features and Swift Bricks (i.e. how many, where, specifications of features) prior to determination. This will avoid the need for the first of the conditions below. Where an application is a Full type this is straightforward and all the details should be shown both in the Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) report and also on a General Layout type drawing – to ensure the housebuilder does not overlook them. Where the application is an Outline type there should be a commitment to providing integral bat roosting and integral Swift Bricks together with an indication of how many (i.e. 50% of units) – and both of the conditions below shall be attached, but the first condition should be discharged as part of a Reserved Matter.

Wording of Conditions

This Guidance has been produced to help achieve high quality biodiversity enhancements where the following conditions have been attached for new or refurbished buildings in Leeds:

Prior to the commencement of development, a Plan by an appropriately experienced ecologist shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA of: integral bat roosting and integral Swift Bricks within buildings. The agreed Plan shall show the number, specification of the bat roosting and Swift Brick features and where they will be located, together with a commitment to being installed under the instruction of an appropriately qualified ecological consultant. All approved features shall be installed prior to first occupation of the dwelling on which they are located and retained thereafter.

Reason: to maintain and enhance biodiversity in accordance with Policy G9, NPPF, and BS 42020:2013.

Following completion of the dwellings and prior to their first occupation, a report from an appropriately qualified ecologist confirming that all integral bat roosting and integral Swift Brick features have been installed as per previously agreed specifications and locations together with photographic evidence shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.

Reason: to demonstrate compliance with Policy G9, NPPF and BS 42020:2013.

Input of an ecological consultant

It is always recommended that an appropriately qualified ecological consultant is appointed to assess the site and types of buildings in order to put forward a scheme that has the highest chance of being successfully used by locally occurring species of bats and birds. Considerations need to include: height of feature; aspect of the building; avoidance of external lighting; no windows or doors below.

It is important that the appointed ecologist can demonstrate that liaison has taken place with the relevant building architect to confirm the specification of bat roosting/bird nesting feature is suitable for the building materials being used. Any such features installed into Listed buildings and other Listed structures must be sensitively designed to not detract from the architectural/cultural features of interest (separate Listed Building consent may be required if the impact is more than *de minimis*).

Integral means installed “into” not “onto”

Bat roosting and Swift Bricks should be built “into” rather than “onto” buildings as the latter would be more likely to adversely affect the appearance of the building and be more prone to being removed by future homeowners. Integral features that are within the fabric of the building are also more durable. Such features placed on trees are more prone to vandalism and involve higher maintenance.

Acceptable Specification

The type of bird nesting feature to be provided should be a type of Swift Brick that sits flush with the external wall surface (numerous different designs are commercially available). Swift Bricks also allow access for Starlings, Blue Tits and House Sparrows.

Although some research suggest a height of 5m is required for Swift Bricks, they have been recorded using heights much less than this, over 3m seems reasonable – together with consideration of a clear drop below and close enough to some shelter from predators such as immediately below eaves.

Such features as Swift Bricks and bat bricks/tubes have an opening from the outside that leads to a self-contained chamber and therefore pose no risk from bats or birds entering the inside of the building.

The following link contains a useful overview of Swift Bricks and has links to a list of suppliers of different designs for a range of building materials http://www.swift-conservation.org/swift_bricks.htm

How many features per development?

The appointed ecologist should be able to advise on what is a suitable number of features but as a broad guide the following is considered appropriate:

- Residential schemes (small and large) a minimum of 50% of new dwelling buildings should have an integral bat roosting feature or Swift Brick i.e. one per two detached houses, one per semi-detached house, a terrace of 10 houses should have a minimum of 5 features (these could all be grouped in one part of the building if appropriate)
- Small block of flats 4-10 features
- Large Building (school, industrial building, hospital etc.) 10-20 features

A higher number of features will encourage builders to get used to installing these features and result in fewer instances of features being “forgotten” i.e. it becomes part of the normal build process.

Where the building material does not easily allow for integral features to be installed the following link has some useful case studies that may be applicable <http://actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk/?m=1>

Examples of swift nesting provision into new buildings. Below left by Teign Housing in Teignmouth, below right Collumpton Library in Devon.



Supply of Swift Bricks and other features

Housebuilders will need to plan ahead and establish procedures with bat roosting feature and Swift Brick manufacturers to produce and deliver sufficient numbers of these features. Many LPAs across the country are requesting 100% or 50% of new buildings are to provide these features, so it will be crucial to establish the type of feature, number and supplier at the outset.

Information for new residents

The LPA encourages housebuilders to provide a leaflet or similar to new homeowners to inform them about the bat roosting or Swift Brick features on their house – this would be a good publicity opportunity for the housebuilder and there could be liaison with a Leeds Swifts and West Yorkshire Bat Group to produce such a leaflet.

Monitoring of features

The second condition refers to the need to submit evidence to the LPA that the features have been installed as per correct locations and orientations/height etc. This should take the form of a written report from the appointed ecological consultant including photos of a number of the features.