

Barn Owl Roost - Relocation Plan

This method statement sets out the proposed approach for safely providing an alternative barn owl roosting and nesting provision for the barn owl currently roosting in the Goat Barn.

The plan has been prepared using information from the ecological survey by GS Ecology and guidance published by the Barn Owl Trust.

Site summary from GS Ecology:

'The Goat Barn is used as a barn owl roost. No eggshells or nestling fluff - which are a key indicators of nesting barn owls - were observed inside this building. As such, it is considered most likely that the building hosts a barn owl roost and is not used by nesting barn owls. It should be noted, however, that roosting sites can be as important as nesting sites for barn owls. This is because during the day male and female owls separate, with one of the pair using a roost and the other incubating the eggs.'

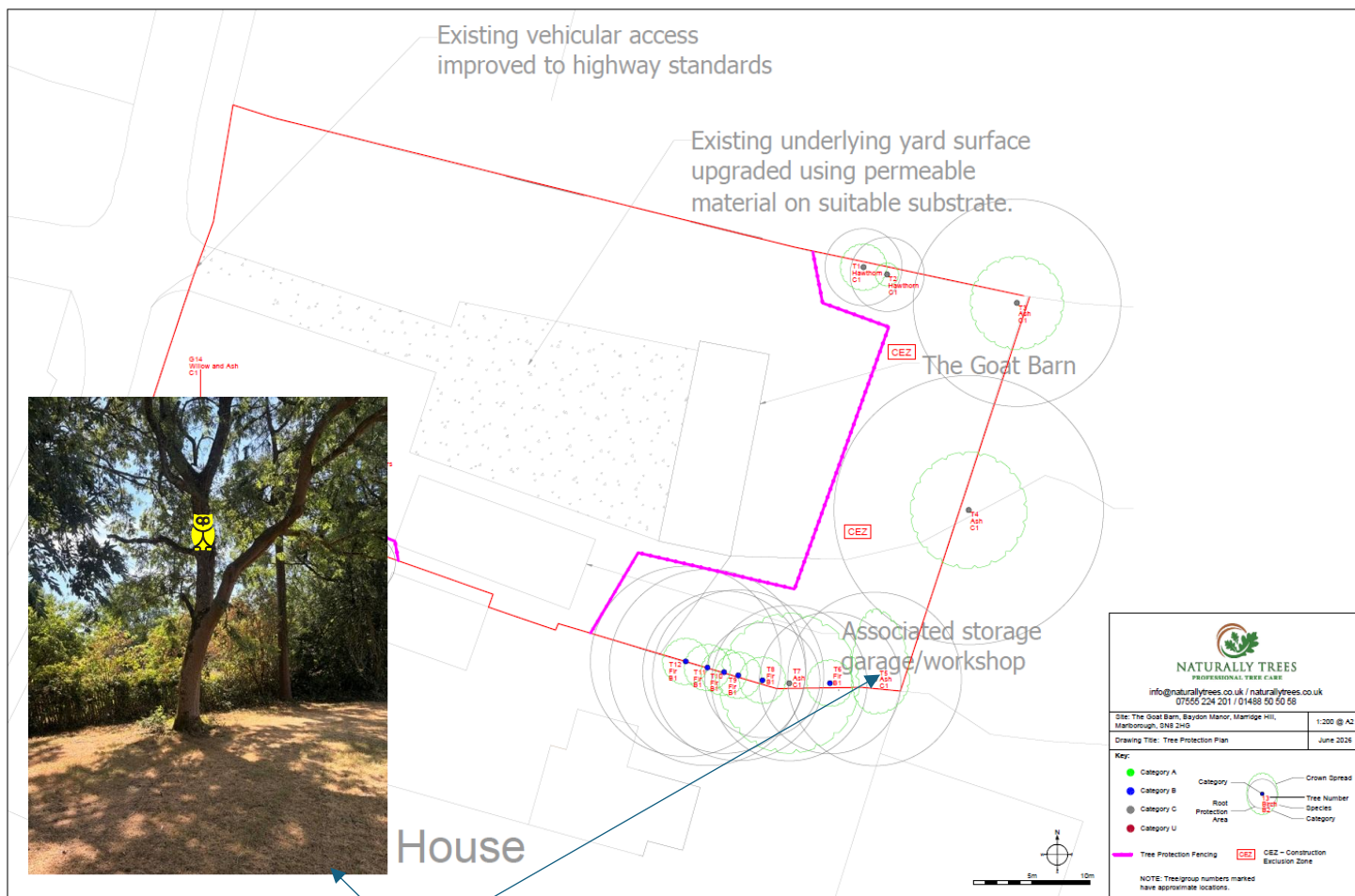
Proposed location of the new box

The plan below shows the current location of the confirmed roost and the preferred location for a tree-mounted nest box, as proposed by GS Ecology in its mitigation plan.



The tree survey by Naturally Trees identifies all trees within the plot. A healthy, mature ash tree has been selected because it has a high canopy, clear sight lines to the hunting ground and a direct visual relationship with the original roost. This tree is identified as 'Ash T5' and:

- 1) sits inside the location area proposed by GS Ecology; and
- 2) sits within the construction exclusion zone and would be protected by tree protection fencing during any works, as recommended by Naturally Trees.



'Ash T5' chosen with:

- Barn Owl Trust supplied tree box and installed by suitably qualified ecologist
- Installed at least 4m up facing away from the prevailing weather condition (NE)
- Clear sight lines from existing roost and known hunting grounds
- Sits within the construction exclusion zone
- Sits within the proposed mitigation area by GS ecology.
- High canopy with limited low branches and open space for access

Picture illustrates NE facing owl box position at 4m.

Tree positioning in plot:

The scale of the tree survey drawing doesn't show the distances between the existing roost, proposed roosting box and easterly boundary fence clearly.

These are;

- 44m from existing roost
- 15m to boundary fence

The positioning can be seen more clearly in the below photograph here with view from under 'Ash T5' 15m from known hunting grounds



Why has this ash tree been chosen?

The Barn Owl Trust advises that an ideal tree should have the following characteristics:

- A mature tree with a thick trunk – **Confirmed healthy ash with strong trunk and high canopy**
- Isolated, in a hedgerow or on the woodland edge – **adjacent to a mature hedgerow on the edge of an expansive hunting ground**
- With a high canopy – **canopy is 7+ metres**
- With few or no low branches – **no low branches below 4m, with a sparse canopy above 4m**
- Where a nestbox can be placed at least 3 metres above ground level – **Nest box can easily be placed 4m above ground**
- Where the nestbox access hole would be visible to a passing owl, even when the tree is in full leaf and seen from a distance – **Ash has a light canopy, even in full leaf (as seen in photos, taken in August). The box is on the direct access route to open grass land, where the owl has been spotted hunting at night**
- Quite close to strips or patches of rough grass land – **rough grassland, grass crops and open pasture is less than 20m away with large amount all around the plot**
- If the box hanging system involves screwing or nailing into a tree, then please choose a dead tree, where possible – **the box will be hung with straps so as not to damage the tree.**

The selected location is considered suitable for the following reasons:

Advice from GS Ecology:

- It is important to note that barn owls are only protected against disturbance whilst at or near a nest containing eggs or young. There is no legal definition of "near" but Natural England's advice states that this normally approximates to within the same building or just outside or, in the case of a tree nest, within approximately 30 metres. – **44m away, however, preferred as within construction exclusion zone to minimise disturbance to the roost.**

Advice from the Barn Owl Trust:

- The location is closest to a current known hunting ground. - **Within the curtilage of existing hunting grounds**
- Barn Owl nest boxes in the UK & Ireland should be placed in open countryside in isolated trees or trees that overlook open habitat. – **Confirmed**
- Avoid urban, suburban, dense forest and high mountain areas. - **Confirmed**
- Sites within 1 km of a motorway or other fast, unscreened main road should be avoided due to road deaths. – **Motorway is 5km away (M4) due North**
- Nestboxes do not need to be placed within rough grasslands as the birds are perfectly capable of 'commuting' across unsuitable habitats before starting to hunt and have very large home ranges – **Surrounded by known hunting grounds**

In summary, this tree and location have been selected because:

- GS Ecology recommended a tree in this location in its mitigation survey.
- Ash T5 is within the curtilage of the proposed barn conversion, approximately 44 metres from the current roost, but is the furthest mature tree from the proposed works and access route.
- The location is expected to experience very little, if any, direct disturbance from vehicles, deliveries or construction activity during the build period.
- The box would face north-east towards the open hunting grounds and away from the prevailing south-westerly wind.

Barn owl box type and proposed installation

Advice from GS Ecology:

'A barn owl nest box is to be installed, under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist on a suitable tree nearby at least 30 days (but preferably longer) before works commence. This will ensure that barn owls have a temporary roosting and nesting site for the duration of the works (the box will remain in place as permanent provision for roosting and nesting site). Figure 5 gives specifications for a barn owl box (pre-made boxes can be bought). and Figure 6 shows the location of the barn owl roost and recommended locations for the barn owl nest box.'

The proposed tree-hung nest box is specifically designed and supplied by the Barn Owl Trust and is considered appropriate for the selected location and tree type. The box would be installed at least 30 days before the commencement of works and at the appropriate time of year, as outlined by the Barn Owl Trust, preferably between November and January.

A link to the proposed box is provided below. **This style and design was also suggested by GS Ecology as part of its mitigation advice.**



[Barn Owl box for trees - Outdoor Nestbox direct from the Barn Owl Trust](#)

Our outdoor Barn Owl box is an incredibly safe home for owlets due to its 460mm (18") drop between the entrance-hole and inside floor. Designed for fixing to an exposed tree trunk, this Barn Owl Nest Box can also be positioned in a tree branch fork provided that the entrance is visible to owls flying past. Durable hand-made from sustainable FSC-approved, pressure treated 9mm plywood and torch-on roofing felt. Sealed, waterproof joints vertical joints.

If planning permission is granted, a suitably qualified ecologist would be instructed to:

- i) check the existing roost for any evidence of nesting;
- ii) install the new roost box at the appropriate time of year and at least 30 days before works commence; and
- iii) carry out any further checks required before works commence.

Conclusion

The proposal provides an evidence-based method for maintaining barn owl roosting during the proposed Goat Barn conversion. The existing building has been identified by GS Ecology as a barn owl roost, with no evidence recorded of active nesting at the time of survey. The selected replacement location, Ash T5, sits within the area recommended by GS Ecology, is protected from the main construction activity, and meets the relevant Barn Owl Trust guidance on tree suitability, visibility, height, proximity to hunting habitat and avoidance of prevailing weather. The proposed box type and installation timing are consistent with the ecological mitigation advice, subject to installation and pre-commencement checks being undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist.