

1 September 2016

Building new homes for swifts and communities

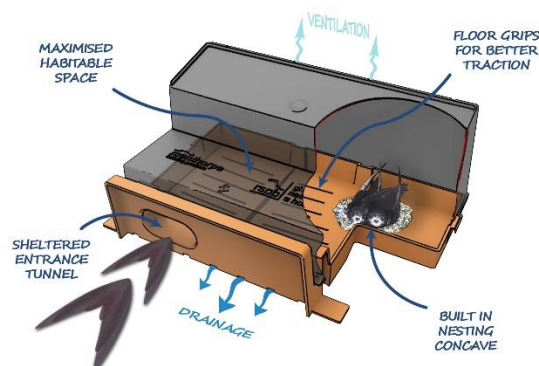
Barratt Developments plc, RSPB and Manthorpe Building Products have come together to give nature a home in Aylesbury by designing and installing new swift nest boxes in a brick format – the first new swift box designed with input from nature experts

- Swift numbers have almost halved in twenty years and new nesting boxes are needed to help numbers recover as they return to the UK to breed every summer
- The first new swift nest boxes have just been fitted at the Kingsbrook development in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, where Barratt Homes is creating over 300 acres of wildlife-rich open space and nature parks. In total up to 900 of the swift boxes will be installed in new homes at Kingsbrook

With swift numbers and nesting sites in decline, the UK's biggest housebuilder Barratt Developments, Europe's biggest nature conservation charity RSPB, and Manthorpe Building Products Ltd have collaborated to create a new swift nest box in a brick format which can easily be fitted in any new build home.

Every year the swift completes a 6,000 mile migration to nest in the UK. However, with falling population numbers there are now less than 90,000 breeding pairs arriving in the UK, down from almost 150,000 pairs just two decades ago. Part of this decline is being linked to a reduction in potential nesting sites.

Providing more nesting sites for swifts has been one of the aims of the partnership between Barratt Developments and RSPB, which launched in 2014 to look at how nature and wildlife could be incorporated into new communities. Working together, they commissioned Manthorpe to develop a new swift nest box design that could be easily installed during construction.



Michael Finn, group design and technical director at Barratt Developments, said: “The bricks are an industry first – they are fully drained, ventilated and are unobtrusive, by matching the

colour of the bricks. They also help nurture chicks by giving them room to stand when they hatch. Crucially too, they are much, much cheaper than any other swift brick on the market, which will help their uptake. We actively want other developers to use the brick so we can all help build swift populations. It's a great example of how we are working together with the RSPB and the wider industry to support nature."

Darren Moorcroft, RSPB's head of species and habitats conservation, said: "The swift is an iconic species, its appearance announces the start of summer as they swoop and soar above our gardens. Sadly like many UK species the swift is in trouble, their numbers have dropped dramatically, putting them at risk of disappearing completely from the UK.

"We are working hard to reverse this decline. In previous centuries builders would often create spaces for swifts, but these techniques have fallen out of practice with modern homes. Our partnership with Barratt Developments has allowed us to share ideas and look at how we can bring this practice back in a way that works for builders, home owners and the swifts."

The first phase of the development, Oakfield Village, will see Barratt build around 500 homes, ranging in size from 2-5 bedrooms, and which are on sale now. Of these, around 180 homes will feature the new swift boxes. Overall Barratt will be building 2,450 new homes at Kingsbrook, together with providing land and financial contributions for 3 new schools, building new community facilities and creating a host of new jobs.

The development is a standout showcase of Barratt Developments and the RSPB working together. In addition to the swift boxes, Kingsbrook will feature the creation of a new wildlife habitat, community orchard, formal and informal parks plus green corridors amongst the homes for wildlife.

Dick Newell, Action for Swifts, said: "If we are to compensate the loss of thousands of Swift nesting places every year due to insulation and roof repairs, we need to deploy thousands of nest boxes. A product like this is a great step forward in making this happen."

Due to the decline of the swift population Barratt Developments and RSPB have agreed that the swift box will be available to other builders and developers.

ENDS

For further information please contact:

Derek Harris, head of public relations

Tel, 020 7299 4873 / e-mail, derek.harris@barrattplc.co.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Barratt Developments PLC sold 17,319 homes in the year to June 2016, confirming it as the biggest housebuilder by volume in Britain. Barratt Group was awarded the maximum five star rating for the seventh consecutive year in the 2016 Home Builders Federation Customer Satisfaction Survey.