TABLE 1: FEATURES IN FARM BUILDINGS REQUIRED BY SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

Species	Typical nest sites	Alternatives
Barn owl 	Barn owls were so valued for rodent control that many barns were built with small windows to allow them access. Barn owls will nest on internal ledges and floors above rafters.	Buildings can continue to provide nesting and roosting sites for the barn owl after conversion, through an owl window and loft. Behind the window, board off an area beneath the apex of the roof to provide a floor area of not less than 90 cm by 90 cm. A half partition allows the nesting female more protection. Access to the loft needs to be maintained to enable it to be cleaned out every few years. A large box inside upper roof space of buildings or high on an external wall may also be used, but suitable perches will need to be constructed where absent. Boxes can also be located on poles sited within field boundaries.
Kestrel 	Uses open access through loft gable window or similar. Nests on internal ledges and sills, usually in proximity to window.	Window and loft or large box, high on external wall.
Swallow 	Relies heavily on access to farm buildings for nesting sites as it feeds on insects over the open countryside, particularly in association with grazing livestock. Nest sites are traditional and, provided the food supply has not changed, the same nests or sites are used from one year to another, frequently by the same two birds. Prefers outbuildings that provide dark ledges or rafters.	Maintain access to the inside of buildings wherever possible. Swallows can enter a building through a very small gap (5 cm high by 7 cm wide) and need very little light. Maintain ledges/beams where present or provide shelving, high in the building specifically for nesting platforms.
House martin 	Nests under eaves of suitable buildings between 5 and 10 m above ground.	House martins cannot build nests on plastic or metal surfaces, so lining eaves with suitable materials such as wooden planks will provide a nest building opportunity.
Spotted flycatcher 	Builds small cup nest on wall protected by climber (eg ivy) or wall shrub.	Open-fronted box placed under climber (eg ivy) or wall shrub.
Starling 	Nests behind soffits and fascias. Also, inside chimneys and between wall cavities.	Nestbox, hole 45 mm. Box to be about 25–30 cm deep.
House sparrow 	Nests behind soffits, fascias and holes in brick/stone work. Also nests under roof tiles and ridges.	Nestbox, hole 32 mm. Nests in loose colonies; several boxes near to each other will benefit.
Tree sparrow 	Nests behind holes in brick/stonework and under roof tiles and ridges.	Nestbox, hole 28–32 mm
Bats 	Houses and buildings (both old and modern). Will roost under eaves, tiles, flashings, and in lofts, cavity walls, crevices, and sub-terrain sites such as cellars and icehouses.	Maintain access to existing sites. If bats are present, or if there is a roost, a Habitats Regulations licence is required before any work is undertaken. This licence will require a bat survey, which will determine what can be done. Any chemical treatment to a bat roost will also require permission. Do not use surface coating or timber treatments that are toxic to wildlife. Permethrin and Cypermethrin are least harmful to mammals and any permission may specify the requirement to use such a chemical. Some species will use bat boxes, but these cannot be used to replace normal roosts.

Internal or external nestbox. Small holes on the outside of a building giving access to a larger open space provide opportunities. Internal boxes can be located behind fascias and soffits. During re-pointing, leave gaps with access to existing nest sites un-pointed.

Providing nest sites alone will not support local populations. Feeding habitat in the surrounding area is also vital.

Illustrations by M Langman, bat photo by C Gomersall (rspb-images.com)