



The power of partnerships:
building homes for nature

Working to build homes where nature can thrive





Nature in crisis

Nature is in crisis. Over recent decades, the abundance and distribution of many species in the UK has fallen, with an astonishing 58% of UK species monitored for the *State of Nature* report decreasing in abundance since the 1970s¹.

Nature loss has been driven by a range of factors, including more intensive land management, urbanisation, pollution, loss of wetlands, invasive non-native species, and changes to woodland management¹. Climate change is a significant threat and is already having a considerable impact on the distribution, abundance and ecology of UK wildlife.

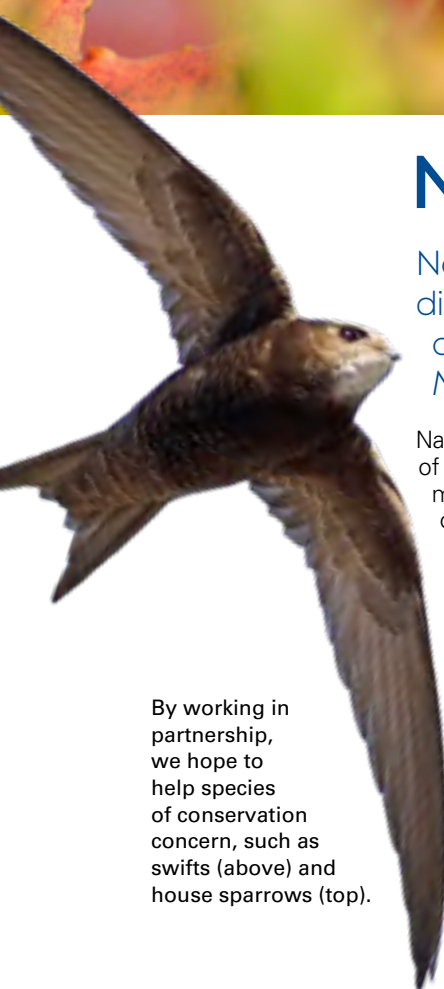
Yet we know that spending time in nature can benefit our mental and physical wellbeing. In a 2020 YouGov survey of adults in England on behalf of the RSPB, 79% of people agreed that the COVID-19 outbreak had highlighted the need for more accessible nature-rich green space near to people's homes and 81% agreed they had felt happier whilst, or after, spending time visiting nature².

The loss of nature has impacts on all of us and we must make changes now to secure a greener future for generations to come.

The RSPB inspires everyone to give nature a home and works together with organisations and businesses, such as Barratt Developments PLC, for a world richer in nature.

Barratt Developments PLC has committed to playing its part, becoming the first major UK housebuilder to set science-based emission reduction targets. The business has also pledged to create a net positive impact for ecology and biodiversity across all new developments that it progresses through planning from 2020 onwards.

Together we are working towards a brighter future for nature.



By working in partnership, we hope to help species of conservation concern, such as swifts (above) and house sparrows (top).

“Through our partnership with Barratt Developments PLC, we have a remarkable opportunity to enable wildlife to thrive alongside the health and wellbeing benefits nature can also provide in creating homes for people. It is vital that the housebuilding industry acts to mitigate the climate crisis and nature can help provide some of the solutions required. By coming together in partnerships such as this we can all work to make sure that we live more in harmony with the wildlife around us.”

Beccy Speight, RSPB Chief Executive





Spending time in nature can benefit our mental and physical wellbeing.





A partnership with purpose

Businesses and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) need to work together to address the environmental challenge we face, and take action to secure our natural heritage.

The RSPB-Barratt partnership brings together the experience of the UK's largest conservation charity and the UK's largest housebuilder to show how new homes and communities can help nature thrive.

With the Government target of building 300,000 new homes in England each year, we are working to find new and innovative ways to enhance biodiversity on developments. This involves designing landscapes that support wildlife, as well as inspiring homeowners to play their own part in nature's recovery and showing the wider housebuilding sector the way to a more sustainable future.

Since our partnership began in 2014, we've been learning from each other and exploring how to build new homes and developments in a way that provides benefits for wildlife and people.

A partnership of this nature is bold and challenging in equal measure. We must constantly strive to do more, but always in the knowledge that our vision for truly nature-friendly developments will take time to become reality.

There is still much to do, but we've made some great steps forward in four key areas:

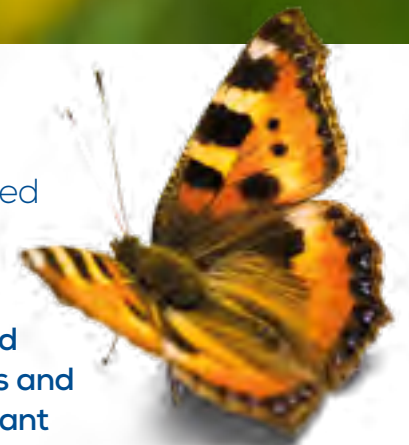
- Raising the bar for nature-friendly housing.
- Leading the way at the flagship Kingsbrook development in Buckinghamshire.
- Supporting communities to help nature thrive.
- Influencing Government and industry support for nature's recovery.

"At Barratt, we are committed to building high quality homes and communities where people want to live – and to being the UK's leading national sustainable housebuilder. It is vital that we do what we can to protect the natural environment and encourage nature to thrive.

Living amongst nature has proven benefits for people's physical and mental wellbeing. We believe that installing wildlife-friendly elements and promoting biodiversity should be integral to new housing development.

Our partnership with the RSPB has helped us to drive up biodiversity standards on our developments and to lead the industry in supporting and protecting nature."

David Thomas, Barratt Developments PLC Chief Executive



The RSPB-Barratt partnership is ensuring there are homes and green spaces for wildlife and people.



Raising the bar for nature-friendly housing

Barn owls (right) and skylarks (below) are regular visitors to the Barratt development in Great Denham, Bedfordshire.

Nature is facing more and greater pressures, and we must protect it. We can do this by designing new housing developments so that they retain, enhance and create new wildlife habitats.

Barratt has made sure nature is a priority by employing a Group Head of Biodiversity, a Biodiversity Co-ordinator and a Senior Landscape Architect, who work with the RSPB to make nature-friendly changes. Together, the teams have helped advise on landscape designs, where to install swift nest boxes, and put policies in place to improve outcomes for biodiversity.

To help Barratt raise the bar for nature-friendly housing, the RSPB and Barratt worked together to produce a guide which sets out how to select sites for development that have lower pre-existing ecological value, the vital importance of environmental assessments, and how to bring nature into landscape designs. The RSPB also provides landscaping design advice to an ever-increasing number of developments to enhance the greenspaces for wildlife.



Case study

The David Wilson and Barratt Homes development in Great Denham near Bedford created a large parkland for play and exercise, alongside existing hedgerows, ditches and mature trees, enhanced with additional planting and ponds. The RSPB advised on managing the grassland areas, such as creating no-mow zones for wildflowers to flourish and attract butterflies and bees. Providing regularly mown paths has reduced disturbance, allowing skylarks and meadow pipits to breed and barn owls to hunt.

“Protection of biodiversity starts at the very beginning of creating a development, when we look at where to build. Considering the value of wildlife on every site at this early stage helps us to make informed decisions, and also helps our designs by knowing what can be incorporated and what should be avoided from impact at all costs.”

Helen Nyul, Group Head of Biodiversity, Barratt Developments PLC







Wildlife-friendly show home gardens

Gardens are important spaces for people to interact with nature. They provide much-needed homes for wildlife, such as hedgehogs, whose numbers have fallen by around one third in towns and cities since 2000³.

Wildlife such as azure damselflies (above) and hedgehogs (below) can thrive in nature-friendly gardens.

Barratt policy requires that every development must have a wildlife-friendly garden in the show home complex, designed in accordance with criteria set by the RSPB.

Features in these wildlife-friendly gardens include native hedgerows, nectar-rich plants, ponds, log piles and hedgehog homes. In fact, all Barratt developments must have hedgehog highways from 2021 onwards to

allow hedgehogs to roam and find food and shelter. The garden designs also avoid the use of invasive, non-native plants, as they can have detrimental impacts on native wildlife and habitats.

The gardens show how spaces can be beautiful and functional for people, and provide shelter and food for wildlife at the same time.

Case study

The show home garden at Spinney Fields, Warwickshire, was designed to attract a range of wildlife by providing nectar-rich plants, a pond, bird and bat boxes, a bug hotel and various other features, and cost just 5% more than a standard show home landscaping scheme. It was designed collaboratively by Nicholsons and the RSPB, and led to the adoption of wildlife-friendly gardens across all Barratt developments.



“Our wildlife-friendly show home gardens help demonstrate our commitment to giving nature a home and serve as inspiration to our customers about how taking small actions within their own gardens can contribute to positive impacts for wildlife.”

Helen Natrass, Regional Marketing Manager, Barratt West Region



Providing swift bricks

Swifts are remarkable migratory birds. They spend the winter in Africa and return to Europe in spring to breed. An evocative feature of our summer skies, these birds can often be seen in groups flying low over the rooftops on balmy evenings. Sadly, their numbers are in decline, with a population decrease of 41% between 2008 and 2018⁴.



More than 2,000 special nest boxes for swifts are being built in to Barratt homes, with many more to come.

Working with Manthorpe Building Products and Action for Swifts, we created a nesting box for swifts that can be built into the brickwork of new properties.

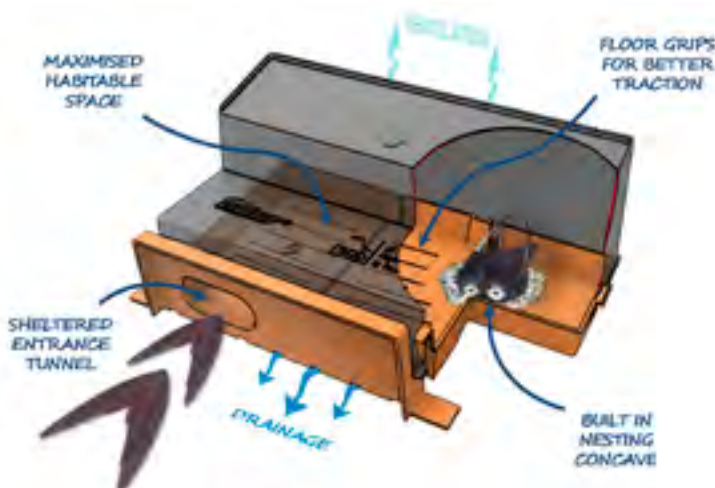
As a result, more than 2,000 swift nesting bricks are being installed in Barratt Developments up and down the country, with plans to install at least 2,000 more by 2023.

While it can take swifts several years to discover new nesting sites, there are already records of house sparrows and swifts nesting in Manthorpe nesting bricks. We look forward to the day when swifts become new residents in Barratt homes across the country.

“At Barratt Homes Bristol, we’re incredibly proud of our partnership with the RSPB and the actions we can take to give nature a home. Bristol is one of 10 swift cities where we’re focusing our efforts on providing homes for these special birds.

The Manthorpe brick is quick and easy to install within the home and will provide nesting opportunities for years to come.”

David Bond, Technical Director, Barratt Homes Bristol



Case study

Some of the first Manthorpe swift bricks were installed on a Barratt David Wilson development at Kingsbrook in Aylesbury back in 2016. Since then, over 400 have been installed, with around 500 more planned for future phases of the development. Whilst swifts haven't yet taken up residence, house sparrows have been spotted using the bricks to build nests and raise their young.





Leading the way at the flagship Kingsbrook development

In 2011, Barratt and David Wilson Homes (North Thames Division) teamed up with the RSPB and Aylesbury Vale District Council (now Buckinghamshire Council) to pioneer a nature-led approach to volume building of new homes at a new development on the outskirts of Aylesbury.



When complete, this development, called Kingsbrook, will be more than 60% greenspace and wildlife habitats (excluding gardens), with a 100 hectare nature site managed for wildlife and people.

With wildflower verges, pocket parks, and sustainable drainage solutions that use surface water run-off to create wetland wildlife habitats, Kingsbrook breaks the mould. It is one of the foremost examples of how volume housebuilding can work with and for nature, and the Government featured it in its 25-year Environment Plan as an exemplar of nature-friendly development.

“Kingsbrook is delivering 2,450 new homes, along with three new schools and additional community infrastructure, and has won a number of national awards for our partnership with the RSPB.

Even with the development only one third complete, the green space and wildlife initiatives have already shown their value in attracting customers and wildlife alike. The conservation and ecological enhancement is not limited to the green areas around the development, but extends into the built environment to include hedgehog highways, bird and bat boxes, native planting and wildlife-friendly gardens. We also use bespoke marketing literature and show residents the measures they can take to give nature a home.



Kingsbrook’s commercial success undoubtedly owes much to these initiatives, which also contributed to Aylesbury’s attaining Garden Town status in January 2017.”

Jo Alden, Technical Director at Barratt and David Wilson Homes North Thames



Supporting communities to help nature thrive

A key ingredient of our vision for nature-friendly developments is to engage homeowners directly and show them the benefits of living with and acting for nature.



We aim to inspire people to give nature a home in their outdoor spaces and communities.

There are an estimated 24 million gardens in the UK, covering an area of around 4,330 square kilometres⁵ – an area about the size of Somerset – highlighting the potential for individuals to transform the landscape for wildlife and, ultimately, for their own benefit too.

We have already published homeowner guides full of advice and support on creating wildlife-friendly gardens and spaces, but now we are going further.

Nature on Your Doorstep is a £1 million three-year RSPB project, sponsored by Barratt, that aims to inspire a mass audience across the UK to do great things for nature in their gardens, outdoor spaces and local communities.

The ambition of the project is to help more people act for nature on their doorstep, bring communities together online and where they live to share their experiences and ultimately create more havens for wildlife and people.

The project is underpinned by engaging communications that will motivate a mass and diverse range of audiences to get involved, no

matter what their gardening experience or the size of their outdoor space.

Four key areas of the project are:

- Developing an online space packed full of inspirational hints and tips, how-to guides, step-by-step videos and seasonal gardening advice.
- Building and growing an online community that connects and inspires.
- Undertaking robust user-experience research and social science to understand and address the reasons why people do or don't engage in wildlife-friendly gardening behaviour.
- Testing potential on-the-ground interventions and, ultimately, a community empowerment model that supports people to move from individual to community action.

To find out more, visit:

rspb.org.uk/natureonyourdoorstep



“Gardens can provide a crucial lifeline for struggling species – familiar birds such as the house sparrow (left) have seen their numbers halve in the last 40 years, while 28 species of urban butterflies are down 69% in three decades. But seven out of eight households in Britain have a garden, and that is a huge patchwork of potential homes for nature. To that hungry butterfly, or that weather-beaten bird looking for a place to roost, just one garden can make all the difference. If we all work together to transform our gardens, we can truly revive our world.”

Adrian Thomas, RSPB wildlife gardening expert



Influencing and advocacy for nature-friendly housing

The Barratt-RSPB partnership aims to influence and inspire other housebuilders, planners and decision-makers to support and implement nature-friendly housebuilding practices more widely.

The partnership's influencing and advocacy work has included:

- Writing a joint RSPB-National House Building Council (NHBC) guide, *Biodiversity in new housing developments: creating wildlife-friendly communities*⁶. Aimed at the housebuilding sector, the guide draws on the partnership's experience in describing how new developments can protect and enhance biodiversity and benefit people. The team is actively promoting this guide to the industry through a series of webinars.
- Designing and promoting the Manthorpe swift brick to make it easier for all housebuilders, developers and private individuals to implement this nature-friendly, cost-efficient innovation.
- Hosting visits from MPs, ministers and civil servants to see the results of our work at Kingsbrook and elsewhere. RSPB Parliamentary Species Champion for swifts, Kerry McCarthy MP, visited Barratt Homes' St Matthias development, where she installed a swift nest brick in one of the new homes.
- The RSPB and conservation partners pushing to secure real and significant gains for nature from development within the [Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#), using the RSPB-Barratt partnership as an example of how a large volume housebuilder can build with wildlife in mind.
- Kingsbrook featuring as a good practice case study for nature-friendly housing development in the RSPB's response to the Government's 2020 Planning White Paper (Planning for the Future), which proposed significant changes to the planning system in England.

- Consulting each other in our response to the British Standards Institution (BSI) consultation on biodiversity net gain, advocating for more rigorous definitions and assessments to make net gain easier to understand and achieve.

"I've been a swift champion since 2014 and, while the plight of our swifts is higher on the agenda than ever, there is still a lot of work to do before we can be assured about their future. That is why the work that is happening at Kingsbrook with the RSPB and Barratt is so important.

It is fantastic to see that there are housebuilders doing what they can to bring nature back into our lives and make development a positive thing for nature."

Kerry McCarthy, MP and RSPB Parliamentary Species Champion for swifts



The RSPB-Barratt work for species such as swifts (left and above) has been noticed by MPs and Ministers.



Great team, great communications

With any partnership of this scale and complexity, it is vital to have the support of dedicated, expert teams on both sides and to build a trusting, open relationship.



Barratt's in-house biodiversity team works closely with the RSPB's technical advisors to ensure the conservation objectives of the partnership are met, whilst our respective marketing and communications professionals combine their creativity to drive awareness and engagement.

and on our websites. RSPB members and supporters have been able to read about the work at Kingsbrook, including an article in the RSPB's *Nature's Home* ⁷ magazine – distributed to around 1 million people.

We also celebrate our achievements more widely via talks at industry conferences and via the trade and consumer media.

For example, through webinars and a new Biodiversity section on the Barratt intranet, we educate employees and contractors about building with nature in mind. Colleagues can also access topical blogs, latest partnership updates and RSPB volunteering opportunities via the company intranet.

The partnership has also achieved a number of high-profile awards, including:

- a Corporate Engagement award for best sustainable programme
- a prestigious RSPCA animal hero award
- The Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) Big Biodiversity Challenge – Spinney Fields Wildlife Garden
- What House? silver award in the Best Partnership Scheme category – Kingsbrook
- Nature of Scotland 'Business' award – Riverside Quarter Development
- Next Generation Innovation Award – Manthorpe swift brick.

For Barratt customers, the partnership comes to life through interpretation in the wildlife-friendly show home gardens, through welcome packs for new residents



A bright future

As we enter the next phase of our partnership to 2023, we will continue to expand our existing initiatives and find new opportunities to protect and enhance wildlife.

For example, we will build on what we have already started: collaborating to design and implement nature-rich landscaping on at least one site in every Barratt division, ensuring all show homes have wildlife-friendly gardens, inspiring thousands of people to create wildlife havens on their doorstep, and sharing our insights and experience to influence government and industry.

We are also looking at new ways to maximise how a development can benefit nature and create landscapes that are resilient to a changing climate, as well as helping people experience nature and the associated health and wellbeing benefits.

This includes looking at how Barratt can eliminate the use of peat from supply chains, as peat extraction destroys precious habitats and releases carbon. We will continue to create landscape designs that support species in need of conservation action and work together to understand how biodiversity net gain can help to increase quality, nature-rich habitats that will also help to mitigate the impacts of climate change for people and wildlife.

The scale of the ecological and climate crisis we face demands that we constantly strive to do more. It will undoubtedly take time, energy and ambition on both sides, but both Barratt and the RSPB are committed to working together towards truly nature-friendly developments.



Partnership work in the future includes looking at how Barratt can eliminate the use of peat from supply chains to help peatland birds such as the golden plover (above).

¹ *State of Nature 2019* rspb.org.uk/our-work/state-of-nature-report/

² *Recovering together*: a report of public opinion on the role and importance of nature during and in our recovery from the Coronavirus crisis in England, RSPB, 2020. rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/recovering-together-report/recovering-together-report_nature-and-green-recovery_rspbyougov_june-2020.pdf

³ *Hedgehog Street – How many hedgehogs are left?*, British Hedgehog Preservation Society and The People’s Trust for Endangered Species. hedgehogstreet.org/about-hedgehogs/how-many-hedgehogs-are-left/

⁴ *The State of the UK’s Birds 2020*. bto.org/our-science/publications/state-uks-birds/state-uks-birds-2020

⁵ The Wildlife Gardening Forum and, Davies, ZG, Fuller, RA, Loram, A, Irvine, KN, Sims, V and Gaston, KJ, 2009. A national scale inventory of resource provision for biodiversity within domestic gardens. *Biological Conservation*, 142(4), pp.761-771.

⁶ *Biodiversity in new housing developments: creating wildlife-friendly communities* nhbcfoundation.org/publication/biodiversity-in-new-housing-developments-creating-wildlife-friendly-communities/

⁷ Neighbourhoods for Nature, *Nature’s Home* magazine, 2018. rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/nature-home-kingsbrook.pdf



To find out more about the Barratt-RSPB partnership, please get in touch.

Websites:

www.rspb.org.uk/Barratt-developments

www.barrattdevelopments.co.uk

Email:

For conservation enquiries, contact

conservation-advice@rspb.org.uk or biodiversity@barrattplc.co.uk

For corporate-charity partnership enquiries, contact

corporate.partnerships@rspb.org.uk

Working to build homes where nature can thrive



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