



# Historic farm buildings: Extending the evidence base



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## ABBREVIATIONS

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
NCA	National Character Area
GIS	Geographical Information System
HER	Historic Environment Record
HLC Programme	Historic Landscape Character Programme
IoE	Images of England
OS	Ordnance Survey
PAF	Postcode Address File

Despite their historic character, traditional farm buildings are important to the future of the countryside. As well as contributing to its local distinctiveness and historic interest they also represent a major economic asset in terms of their capacity to house new as well as traditional economic activities.

Until now, however, there has been an unhelpful lack of robust evidence about the character and condition of the traditional building stock in different parts of rural England. Without such basic information, informed and sensitive management of change and effective targeting of scarce resources for conservation will not be possible.

Drawing on newly commissioned research, this publication demonstrates how such data can now be collected and analysed at different spatial scales. As well as providing new information on the character and condition of the stock of historic farm buildings and its relationship to the broader landscape, it sheds new light on the re-use of barns and other listed farm buildings for residential and business use.

## KEY POINTS

- Historic farm buildings are a valuable resource in the countryside. They help to define its character and represent a major economic asset in terms of their capacity to accommodate new uses.
- The restructuring of the farming industry means that traditional farm buildings are often more susceptible to change than other types of historic building and sites.
- Informed and sensitive management of change and effective targeting of scarce resources for conservation require a robust evidence base that can provide information on the size, character and condition of the historic farm building stock and how the resource is changing over time.
- This publication summarises the findings of three parallel pieces of desk-based research that provide new information on the character of the historic farm building stock and its relationship to the broader landscape, the extent of conversion of historic barns to residential and business use, and additional information on the condition and re-use of listed farm buildings.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional farm buildings are among the most common types of historic building in the countryside. They are fundamental to its sense of place, its local distinctiveness and its historic interest. They also represent a major economic asset in terms of their capacity to accommodate new uses, bearing in mind that the modern farming industry is usually served by new buildings, often on new sites.

The restructuring of the farming industry and other social and economic processes taking place in the countryside mean that farmsteads and traditional farm buildings are often more susceptible to change than other categories of historic sites and structures. On the one hand, this process of change provides potential threats to the historic interest of these buildings. On the other, it offers real opportunities to give them renewed life in the 21st century and beyond.

In 2002, the then Countryside Agency and English Heritage sponsored a landmark conference, *Rural Regeneration: A Sustainable Future for Farm Buildings*. This was organised by the Historic Farm Buildings Group and looked at the current state of the building stock and its potential for the future. The main conclusion of the conference was that, despite the undoubted historic, scenic and economic importance of historic farm buildings, there is a remarkable lack of basic information on the trajectory of change and the size, character and condition of the traditional building stock.

Without such basic information, informed and sensitive management of change and effective targeting of scarce resources for conservation will not be possible.

The challenge of providing reliable information on the stock of historic farm buildings cannot be underestimated. The high cost of field surveys and site visits means that detailed research has been confined to restricted geographic areas or thematic studies that focus on particular types of farm building. Indeed, the only national survey to record statistically robust data on the size and condition of the historic-farm-building resource took place half a century ago.

As a first step to addressing this information deficit English Heritage and the Countryside Agency commissioned the Countryside and Community Research Unit to investigate the character, management and threats to the listed farm buildings in rural areas in England. The report of this research, *Historic Farm Buildings: Constructing the Evidence Base* (Gaskell and Owen, 2005), showed that a range of existing data sources could be used to construct indicators of change in the condition and use of listed farm buildings at a national and regional scale. For the first time statistically robust national and regional estimates of the structural condition and adaptive re-use of listed farm buildings were produced.

The research found that working farm buildings, as distinct from farmhouses, comprise the largest category of listed buildings at risk. Moreover, they tend to be in a worse condition than other types of building. More than half of all groups of listed farm buildings have been subject to planning applications since 1990 and at least one in five had permission for a change of use, mainly into permanent dwellings. Conversion for employment and business use is far less common, despite policies designed to favour this kind of use.

Despite this work, the evidence base that can be used to describe the character of the whole resource and changes to it (including the estimated 95 per cent of working farm buildings that are not listed) remains poorly developed. In 2006 English Heritage and the Countryside Agency published a policy framework for traditional farm buildings, *Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Traditional Farm Buildings*, which stated that the starting point for future policy must be an understanding of the character, condition

and sensitivity to change of farm buildings and the relationship of farm steadings to the wider landscape (English Heritage *et al*, 2006).

As a next step, English Heritage and the Countryside Agency undertook to work with partners to develop character-based approaches to the evaluation of the farm-building stock. This was on the principle that a greater understanding of the social, economic and environmental value of farm buildings would serve as a positive tool for land-use planning and environmental management. It was also recognised that the enhancement of a robust body of national, regional and local evidence would need the collaboration of all organisations and individuals with an interest in the historic, landscape and economic potential of farm buildings.

A series of research projects was accordingly commissioned to demonstrate how cost-effective and robust data on the historic farm building resource could be collected and analysed at different spatial scales. Using a range of innovative methodologies, the evidence base is now being expanded to cover the whole resource and not just listed farm buildings.

This publication summarises the findings of three parallel pieces of desk-based research that provide new information on the character of the historic farm building stock and its relationship to the broader landscape, the extent of conversion of historic barns to residential and business use, and additional information on the condition and re-use of listed farm buildings. It is not, however, a statement of policy on the conservation and adaptive re-use of traditional farm buildings. English Heritage guidance on this topic is provided by *Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Traditional Farm Buildings* (English Heritage *et al*, 2006).

## FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPE PROJECT

Using historic Ordnance Survey (OS) maps the Farmsteads and Landscape Project has developed a Geographical Information System (GIS)-based methodology for the rapid quantification of the number, form and distribution of historic farmsteads, outfarms and isolated farm buildings. It provides baseline data for the distribution and pattern of historic farmsteads during the late 19th century. The project also quantified the survival of farmsteads by comparing the historic maps with modern OS maps. The methodology has been used to gather baseline and change data for three counties: East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire (discussed in this publication) and is currently being extended across the West Midlands.

## HISTORIC FARM BUILDING PHOTO SURVEY

This work has analysed more than 16,000 photographs of listed working farm buildings taken during the first few years of the 21st century as part of the nation-wide Images of England (IoE) photographic survey. The structure and condition of each building was recorded along with any clearly visible change of use. The research provides statistically robust estimates of adaptive re-use at a range of spatial scales (National, Regional, National Character Area, local authority district and for Protected Areas).

## HISTORIC FARMSTEADS: CURRENT ROLE AND CONTEXT PROJECT

Three linked sub-projects investigated the current use of historic-farm properties using micro-scale land-use and economic activity information. The resulting data were used to determine the number and distribution of historic-farm-building conversions at a range of spatial scales. In contrast to the Historic Farm Building Photo Survey, the work covered both listed and un-listed buildings.

None of these projects are concerned with monitoring the condition, management or use of individual buildings or land holdings. Instead they are designed to provide a picture of change within this historic building stock as a whole, in order to inform policy and practice.

# MAPPING FARMSTEAD CHARACTER: QUANTIFYING THE NUMBER, DISTRIBUTION, CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF HISTORIC FARMSTEADS

## Key points

- The Farmsteads and Landscape Project has developed a rapid and cost-effective method of recording some of the key characteristics of historic farmsteads, outfarms and field barns. OS maps are used to identify key attributes including farmstead name, plan type, date and the degree of change experienced since the late 19th century.
- The mapping of all farmsteads existing in the late 19th century provides the basis for a consistent understanding of inherited farmstead character at a landscape scale. In particular, it demonstrates clear links between landscape character and the date, density and distributions of the plan-form of farmsteads.
- The mapping of farmsteads has greatly increased the ability of local authorities, utilising their Historic Environment Records (HERs), to deliver an informed understanding of the inherited character of the whole historic resource in its landscape context.
- Mapping degrees of change makes it possible to identify those landscapes with the most coherent groups of historic farmsteads, and in turn to target grant aid or inform planning policies and guidance.
- The Historic Farm Building Photo Survey incorporates baseline photographs of listed farm buildings taken as part of the national IoE project along with data from individual list descriptions and English Heritage's Listed Building System.
- By providing photographs of more than 16,000 farm buildings the Historic Farm Building Photo Survey is a robust tool for monitoring change in the condition of listed buildings capable of interrogation at the level of government region, National Character Area (NCA) and local authority district.

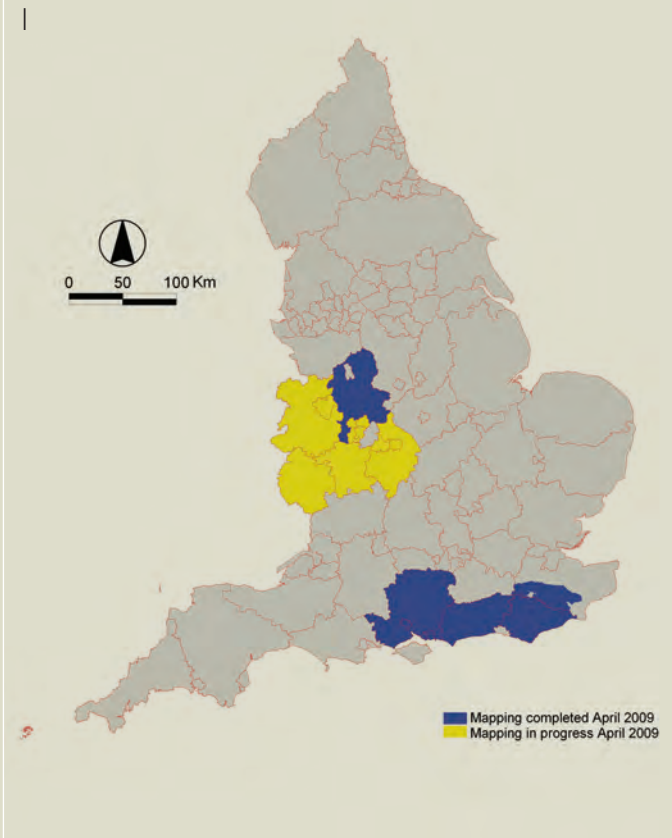
1 Farmsteads and Landscape Project study areas. © English Heritage

2 The mapping of plan types is helping us to understand locally distinctive patterns. The map shows the concentration in the High Weald and Low Weald of dispersed cluster plans. © Crown Copyright All rights reserved English Heritage 2009 Licence number 000394

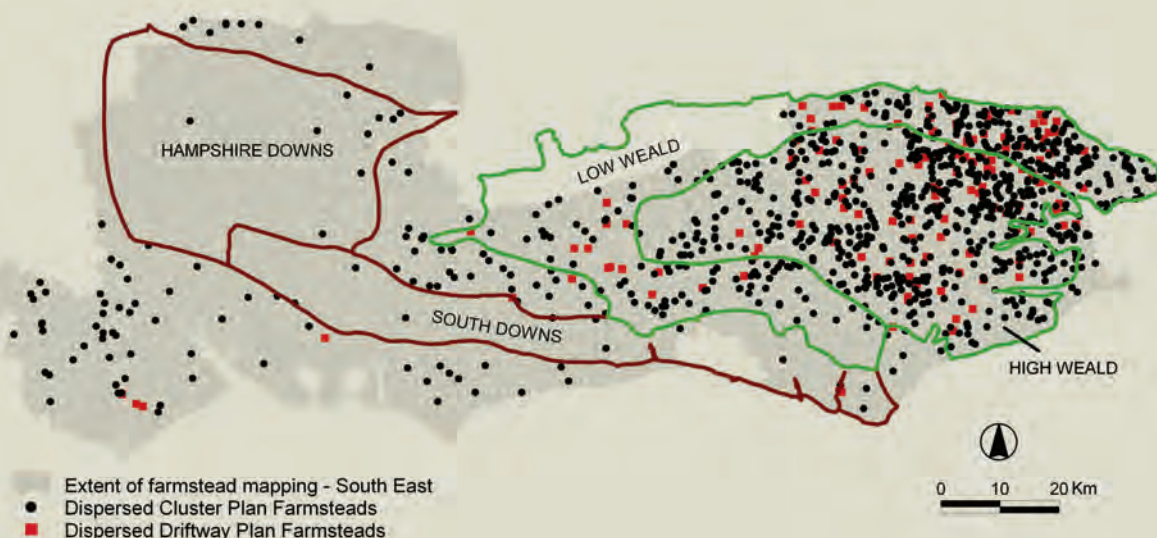
*Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Traditional Farm Buildings* recommends that future approaches to the re-use of historic farm buildings should avoid blanket 'off-the-peg' solutions. Instead, they should be informed by an understanding of regional and local differences in the drivers for change, patterns of landscape and farmstead character, and the sensitivity of the latter to change (English Heritage et al, 2006).

The guidance concluded that if future conservation and planning policy is to be effective then better information on the historic farm building stock is required. This information needs to reflect the whole of the historic farm building stock, not just those structures that are listed. It must also consider farmsteads as an integral part of landscape, in order that land-use planning, land and environmental management can take proper account of their overall historic value and their potential for future change. Local planning authorities are being exhorted through national planning guidance to recognise local distinctiveness and to reflect this in their evidence-based planning guidance and policy.

The first step to improving the evidence base was to identify the size and distribution of the historic-farm-building stock and collect information on the key characteristics and spatial patterning of farmsteads using the framework offered by landscape. Landscape-scale approaches to the definition and mapping of areas and types have recently been developed for two purposes: to allow resources to be targeted to priority areas and features in the natural and historic environment and to inform the sustainable management of change everywhere. Distinct landscape character areas have been formally defined and mapped on a national basis through the NCAs ([www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/landscape/englands/character/areas](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/landscape/englands/character/areas)).



2





These have been used to guide land management, including the targeting of grants under the Environmental Stewardship scheme, and spatial planning including the development of Landscape Character Assessment at county and local authority level. English Heritage and its county-based partners have also deepened our understanding and perceptions of how the present landscape reveals changes over time, and offers a legacy for future change, through the national Historic Landscape Character (HLC) Programme ([www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation)).

## EVIDENCE FROM THE FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPE PROJECT

### UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER

The first step in describing historic farmsteads in their landscape context was the publication in 2006 of a regional series of Preliminary Farmstead Character Statements ([www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment](http://www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment)). Distribution maps indicated that considerable variation in the patterns of survival of listed farmstead buildings was closely linked to the depth, nature and intensity of agricultural and landscape change over time.

English Heritage and Hampshire County Council then commissioned a pilot project to examine methodologies for assessing and describing the character of farmsteads at a local level. Carried out in Hampshire, this developed a methodology for describing farmstead character at a landscape scale (for national, county and local character areas), and recording historic farmsteads using GIS to create a point-data set, the key attribute of which was the farmstead plan – the way the buildings of the farmstead are arranged. The pilot project developed a method for describing farmstead character and demonstrated that it was possible to identify and record the location, date and inherited character of historic farmsteads in relationship to landscape character and type, and the time-depth of the present landscape revealed by historic landscape characterisation.

The methodology was subsequently used across the remainder of Hampshire followed by a study of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which straddles West Sussex, East Sussex and Kent. The mapping of farmsteads in Staffordshire has recently been completed, and is currently being carried out in Shropshire and Worcestershire. Mapping of the remaining counties of the West Midlands region is due to be completed by January 2010 with the support of the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands (Figure 1).

### UNDERSTANDING CHARACTER

*Living Buildings in a living landscape: Finding a future of Traditional Farm Buildings* (English Heritage et al 2006) recommends that future strategies and approaches to re-use must align an understanding of character with sensitivity to and potential for change. This guidance is supported by a set of Preliminary Character Statements, consultative documents that represent an initial attempt to understand the farmsteads of each region in their national and landscape context.

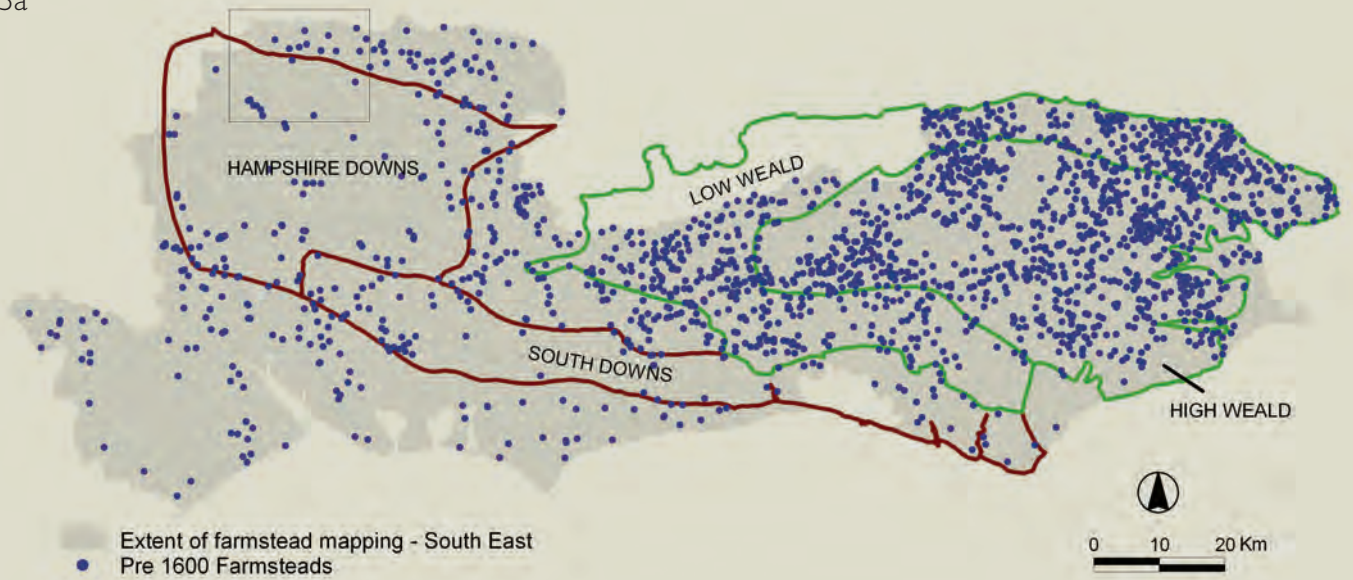
Further refinement is provided by a pilot website (see links on the HELM farmsteads page [www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment](http://www.helm.org.uk/ruraldevelopment)) has been developed with funding from the Hampshire Rural Pathfinder Programme. It represents an initial stage in the development of a web-based framework for informing change and targeting resources, which should be applicable at a national scale and at the same time cheap to produce, amend and update. Guidance has been provided at a national, regional and local level, with headings that can be searched thematically or geographically, and a preliminary glossary of terms has also been provided. The 'Your Area' section provides preliminary guidance for each of the 159 National Character Areas.

These character-based tools are being developed in parallel with an assessment framework for application at an area- and site-based scale. Consideration is also being given to the best way of assisting the cost-effective delivery of planning guidance.

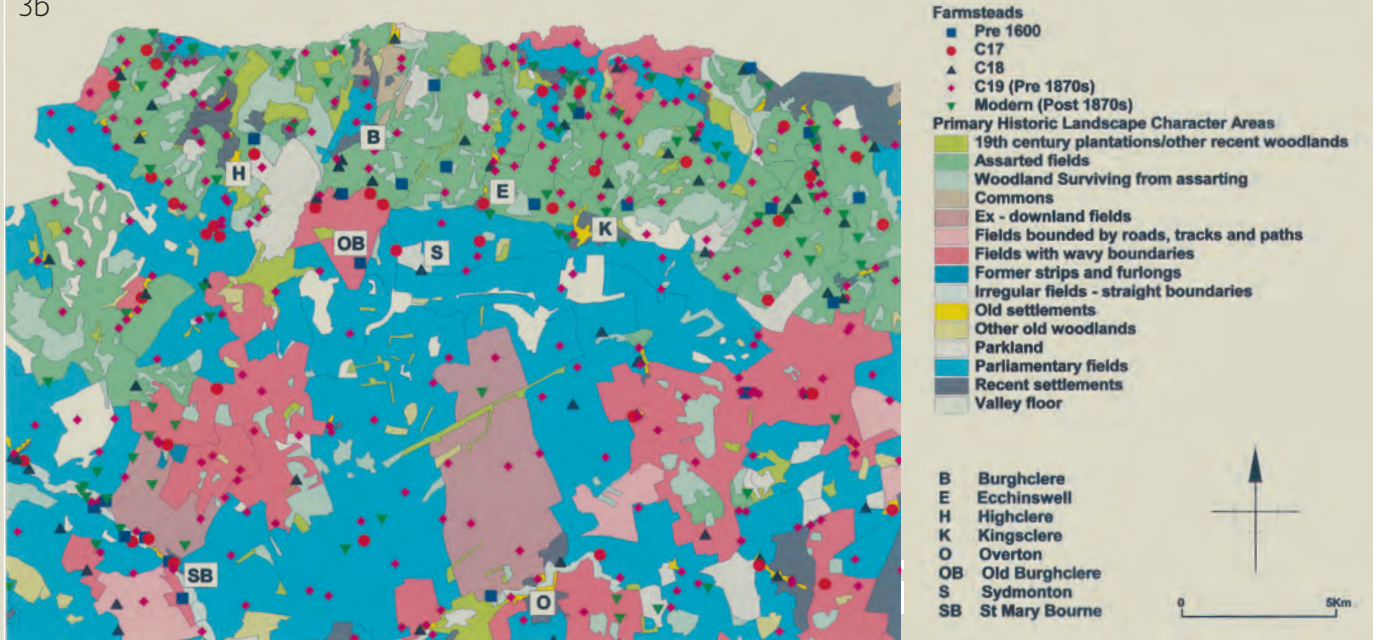
### METHODOLOGY

The farmstead-mapping methodology utilises 2nd edition OS County Series mapping (c1890–1900) to identify farmstead and outfarm or field-barn sites. This 1:2500 survey provides a record of farmsteads close to the end of the final period of development of traditional farmstead forms and the general use of vernacular materials. The key attributes recorded were farmstead name (modern and historic name if different), plan type (see Figure 2), the date of the farmstead based on that of the oldest standing building (utilising listed-building data) and the degree of change experienced since the late 19th century (through comparison between the 2nd edition mapping and modern OS Mastermap depiction). A full description of the methodology is available at [www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation).

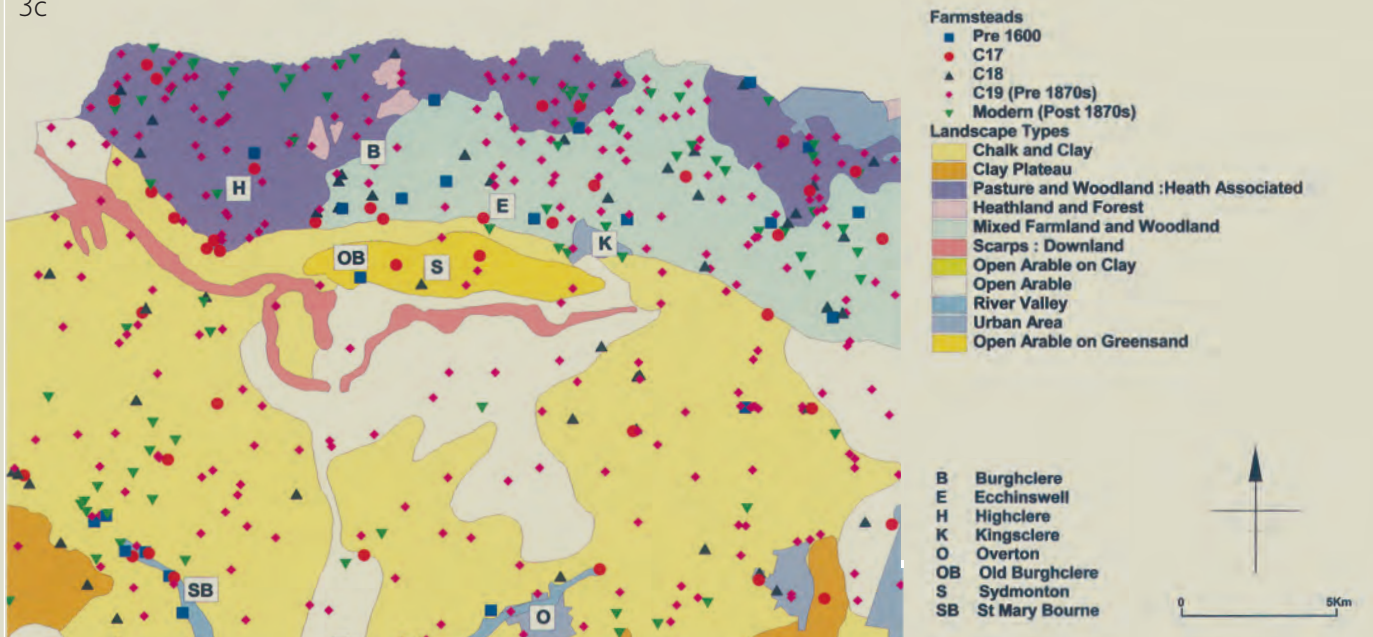
3a



3b



3c





**3a–e** Listed-building data shows that farmsteads retaining buildings from before 1600 are concentrated in areas of predominantly dispersed settlement that were anciently enclosed, in particular the High Weald and Low Weald but also other wood–pasture landscapes in south-eastern of England (Figure 3a). Two detailed maps show farmsteads by date against historic landscape character (3b) and landscape types (3c). These extracts demonstrate the clear divide in farmstead date and density between the assarted landscapes of the clay lowlands of north Hampshire compared to the chalk of the Hampshire Downs to the south. They also show distinct patterns within the Hampshire Downs, with some areas being subject to piecemeal enclosure from the 15th to 17th centuries (fields with wavy boundaries on the historic landscape character map).

Within these areas are farmsteads retaining buildings of at least 17th-century date; typically timber-framed barns, some of which are aisled, stables and granaries with hipped roofs set in loose courtyard arrangements (Figure 3d). The large areas of later enclosure across the downs (historic landscape character Parliamentary fields and open-arable-landscape type) have very few farmsteads that can be dated by the presence of listed buildings (Figure 3e brick and flint farmstead). This means that most of these farmsteads will be unrecorded in HERs. These farmsteads, however, also make an important contribution to the character of the landscape.  
 © Crown Copyright All rights reserved Hampshire CC 2009 100019180  
 © Photographs Bob Edwards 1

This methodology allows the rapid and cost-effective production of an independent data set recording all farmstead sites present in the late 19th century, which can:

- identify the significant characteristics of farmsteads and their relationship with patterns of visual and inherited landscape character
- provide a baseline for mapping change and for extensive and targeted field survey aimed at deepening an understanding of the principal characteristics of farm-building types, including, form, construction materials, state of repair and conversion to other uses.

### MAPPING THE WHOLE RESOURCE

All farmsteads contribute to the quality and local distinctiveness of the landscape, not just those groups of buildings that have been defined as being of special interest. The mapping of all farmsteads existing in the late 19th century provides the basis for a consistent understanding of inherited farmstead character at a landscape scale. In particular, it demonstrates clear links between landscape character and the date, density, distributions and the plan-form of farmsteads.

The subsequent mapping of farmsteads has greatly increased the ability of local authorities, utilising their HERs, to deliver an informed understanding of the inherited character of the whole historic resource. Because the vast majority of historic farmsteads do not include listed buildings they would not otherwise benefit from specialist historic environment input at times when they come into the planning system.

Across the areas mapped, to date 17,365 farmsteads and 4,151 outfarms and field barns have been recorded. Around one-third (31 per cent) of the farmsteads include one or more listed buildings. Although the sites of these farmsteads are likely to have been recorded in local authority HERs holding listed-building data, there is less probability of any useful record of the overall farmstead group to which they belong. The majority of the 11,931 sites that do not include a listed building are unlikely to have been recorded in the local HER. Notwithstanding their unlisted status, these farmsteads require an appropriate response when development proposals come forward, to ensure that their contribution to the landscape is carefully retained, enhanced or recorded.

Mapping within the study areas in the south-east of England demonstrated a very high proportion of farmsteads retaining one or more buildings dating from before 1600. It also showed close correlation

3d



3e



between areas with coherent patterns of medieval fields and early farmsteads (see Figure 3). The character of the High Weald as a landscape of small irregular fields created through assarting – the piecemeal clearance of woodland to create fields, largely completed by the 14th century – is a major factor in its designation as an AONB. The fact that this landscape not only retains a high proportion of its medieval fields but its pattern of dispersed farmsteads with early buildings emphasises its considerable historic significance.

The pilot project in north Hampshire highlighted the value of recording all farmsteads irrespective of designation. Analysis of the farmsteads data against the county landscape types and historic landscape characterisation showed that the open chalk landscapes of the Hampshire Downs had experienced considerable change in the 19th century (mostly through enclosure of former downland or common) and, typically, had a low concentration of farmsteads that included listed farm buildings. Assessment of the context of these farmsteads nevertheless identified them as making an important contribution to landscape character (Figure 3). Similarly, in areas characterised by small farmsteads (often associated with part-time farming or communing) few farm buildings have been statutorily listed or recorded in county HERs. The small buildings of such farms are often highly characteristic of their area and vulnerable to change – and in many cases they occur in areas that are designated as National Parks or AONBs for their high landscape value (Figure 4).

## MAPPING FARMSTEAD TYPES

The variety of farmstead types reflects their past requirements for working buildings, areas for storing and processing crops, places for managing and housing livestock and easy access to routes and tracks. Recording the spatial distribution of farmstead plan types shows how some are highly characteristic of particular landscapes. It also demonstrates that some types of plan have different sensitivity to and capacity for change. For example, in the High Weald and, to a lesser extent, the Low Weald dispersed plan types were identified as strongly characteristic (Figure 2). These farmsteads include types of building common to the wider area but whose dispersed character and frequent association with a local network of ancient routeways (many now public rights of way) mean that there is often public access through the heart of the farmstead. This provides a level of visibility to the buildings that contrasts strongly with inward-facing courtyard-plan farmsteads. In upland areas such as the Peak District,

linear-plan farmsteads where the farmhouse is attached in-line with the working buildings are a strong characteristic of the landscape. In contrast, linear plans are almost entirely absent from the south-east of England.

## FARMSTEAD CHANGE

The mapping of farmsteads provides an opportunity to record the amount of change that has occurred since the baseline 2nd edition OS survey of the late 19th century. Across the areas that have been mapped by the Farmsteads and Landscape Project to date, more than 77 per cent of farmsteads recorded from the 2nd edition maps retain some legible farmstead character (Figure 6). Whether still in agricultural use or with buildings converted to residential or commercial use, these farmsteads are likely to make a positive contribution to landscape character.

Traditional farmsteads subject to the least change (EXT and ALT in Figure 6) are likely to make the greatest contribution to local distinctiveness. This is because they are most likely to have retained their varied styles, building materials and the way that they relate to the surrounding form and patterning of the landscapes within which they developed. In future, the continuing restructuring of farm holdings and infrastructure is likely to bring many working farms in this category into the planning system.

Farmsteads and areas that have been subject to higher levels of change may also offer new opportunities for the enhancement of local landscape character, either through the appropriately designed conversion of existing buildings or, in some cases, the construction of new buildings that take the opportunities offered by local forms and idioms (Figure 5).

Mapping degrees of change makes it possible to identify those landscapes with the most coherent groups of historic farmsteads, and in turn to target grant aid or inform planning policies and guidance. For example, farmsteads in parts of the Staffordshire Peak District show considerably less change than their counterparts in the NCAs that have so far been recorded in south-east England. This may be partly because the linear form of many farmsteads encourages the absorption of ancillary buildings into the main farmhouse. However, field survey has also shown that a high proportion of the medium and larger courtyard-plan farmsteads have retained their historic buildings in agricultural use.



**4** A small earth-built cow house or stable in the New Forest NCA. The small buildings of commoners are both highly characteristic and vulnerable to loss. © Bob Edwards

**6** The buildings of this farmstead in the High Weald have all been converted to domestic use, but they can still be appreciated as part of its distinctive densely wooded historic landscape. © Jan Holubecki

**5** Farmstead survival by NCA. Data sorted by percentage of farmsteads within the two categories of least change. Comparison of historic and modern OS mapping allows assessment of the degree of change as measured by the loss of buildings within farmsteads. The table gives the statistics for farmstead change within the NCAs mapped to date. It shows that farmsteads within the NCAs of

Staffordshire, and the upland part of the county in particular, tend to have been subject to lower levels of change than those of south-eastern England. While the landscapes and farmsteads of these upland areas often reflect relatively late enclosure or reorganisation of the landscape (and thus few listed farm buildings) the data indicate that relatively unaltered farmsteads, often still in agricultural use and set within

their contemporary fields, contribute positively to the character of the landscape. Future management needs to recognise their value to the landscape. Source: Data derived from Farmstead and Landscape Project (courtesy of English Heritage, Hampshire County Council, West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, High Weald AONB, Staffordshire County Council)



- 6**
- EXT** Farmstead is largely unaltered from late 19th century form
  - ALT** Some noticeable change but less than 50% loss of buildings
  - ALTS** Considerable change – more than 50% loss of buildings
  - HOUS** Only the farmhouse survives -all working buildings have been lost
  - DEM** All buildings shown on late 19th century map have been lost but site remains a farmstead
  - LOST** The farmstead site has been completely lost, either through redevelopment to another use (housing etc) or total demolition and removal from the landscape

CCA	EXT	ALT	EXT+ALT	ALTS	HOUS	DEM	LOST	DEM+LOST
South West Peak	55.2	30.7	85.9	3.9	5.0	0.5	4.2	4.7
White Peak	65.3	15.3	80.6	3.2	3.7	0.5	2.8	3.3
Needwood	34.4	41.3	75.7	10.3	8.0	0.7	4.9	5.6
*Potteries and Churnet Valley	39.4	35.8	75.2	6.9	7.8	1.0	8.7	9.7
Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain	26.5	42.4	68.9	13.9	8.9	0.9	7.3	8.2
South Downs	27.1	40.2	67.3	15.5	7.4	1.6	8.1	9.7
Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau	23.1	43.8	66.9	14.9	8.2	1.9	7.2	9.1
Trent Valley Washlands	25.0	39.1	64.1	11.1	7.4	2.7	14.8	17.5
Cannock Chase and Cank Wood	20.5	41.5	62.0	11.5	5.8	2.8	17.9	20.7
Low Weald	21.1	39.7	60.8	19.0	10.5	1.0	8.4	9.4
High Weald	18.3	41.2	59.5	20.7	10.2	0.8	7.4	8.2
Pevensey Levels	15.2	35.4	50.6	22.8	6.3	1.3	19.0	20.3
New Forest	21.7	28.6	50.3	16.1	17.8	3.3	11.9	15.2
Hampshire Downs	18.2	32.0	50.2	21.0	13.1	3.1	12.2	15.3
Romney Marsh	9.3	39.1	48.4	21.7	16.1	0.6	9.9	10.5
South Coast Plain	16.7	29.2	45.9	16.6	10.5	0.8	23.8	24.6
South Hampshire Lowland	14.3	28.5	42.8	15.1	12.6	2.1	26.6	28.7

Farmstead Survival by National Character Area. Data sorted by percentage of farmsteads within the two categories of least change. Green NCAs – Staffordshire; Pink NCAs South East

\* Farmsteads within the Unitary Authority Area of Stoke-on-Trent not included in figures.

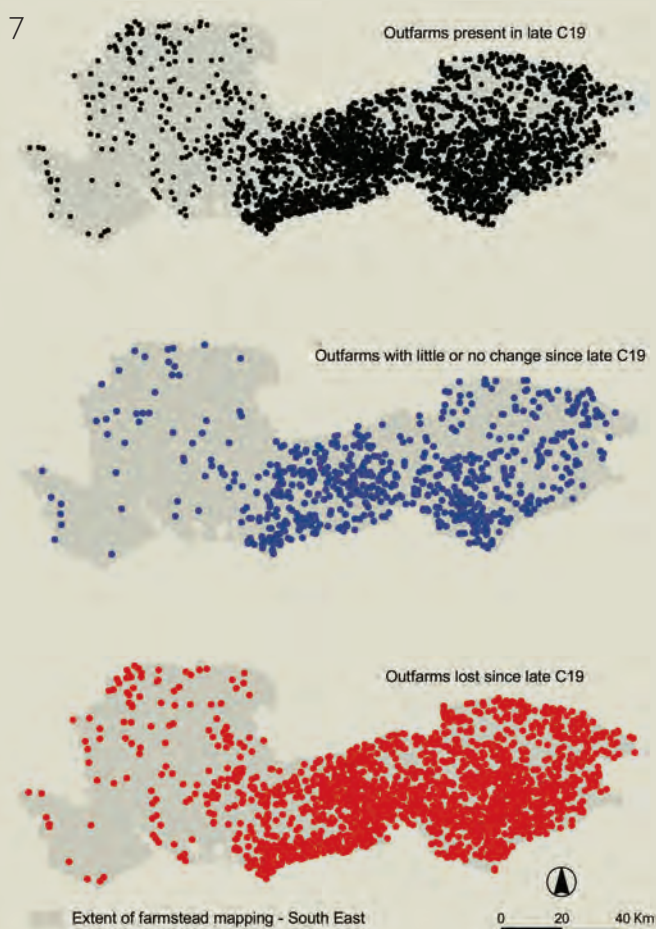
**7** Outfarms and field barns were once a common feature of large parts of the landscapes of the south-east. Comparison of historic and modern OS maps shows that 70 per cent have been completely lost from the landscape since the late 19th century. Few outfarm complexes benefit from including listed buildings and their often-isolated positions can restrict options for alternative uses. Their contribution to the understanding of the development and character of the landscape is not always recognised and few benefit from positive management. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. East Sussex CC – 100019601, 2009 West Sussex CC – 100018485, 2009 Kent CC – 100019238, 2009 Hampshire CC 100019180, 2009

**8** Proportion of listed farm buildings showing structural failure by region. Source: *Historic Farm Building Photo Survey data* (courtesy of English Heritage)

**9** Proportion of listed farm buildings showing structural failure by NCA. Source: *Historic Farm Building Photo Survey data* (courtesy of English Heritage)

**10** Proportion of listed farm buildings showing structural failure by local authority district. Source: *Historic Farm Building Photo Survey data* (courtesy of English Heritage)

**11** Visible change of use of listed farm buildings by region. Source: *Historic Farm Building Photo Survey data* (courtesy of English Heritage)



GOVERNMENT REGION	% DISREPAIR
South West	7.2
South East	8.2
East of England	5.7
West Midlands	18.9
East Midlands	6.1
Yorkshire & the Humber	10.5
North East	13.5
North West	5.4
England	8.9

This is in marked contrast to south-east England, where the amalgamation of holdings has resulted in the complete loss of many farmsteads from the landscape. The two areas with the highest levels of complete loss of farmsteads are both on parts of the south coast, which has been subject to intensive urban expansion. However, areas where traditional farmsteads continue to make an important contribution to landscape character; such as the High Weald, have experienced greater loss of farmsteads loss than the Peak District.

One of the most striking observations of the farmstead-mapping project is the distribution and level of change to which outfarms and field barns have been subject. Although south-eastern England is not now noted for its field barns, these complexes were once a common feature of parts of the region (Figure 7). In Hampshire 75 per cent of outfarms and field barns have been lost since the end of the 19th century and 72 per cent in East Sussex. Few of the remaining buildings are listed but given the extent of loss an argument can be made for closer examination of their suitability for designation or targeted management through agri-environment schemes.

The outputs from the Farmsteads and Landscape Project have a variety of important uses:

- developing and supporting land-use policy including Supplementary Planning Documents
- informing and assisting the strategies of Rural Development Agencies and local authorities with regard to the options for re-use of redundant farmstead buildings
- informing discussions on the sustainability of rural settlements
- assisting the targeting of the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship historic-building-repair option
- assisting landowners, managers and advisers with Farm Environment Plans and applications
- providing the context and understanding for planning and grant aid applications relating to individual farmsteads.



# DISREPAIR: EVIDENCE FROM THE HISTORIC FARM BUILDING PHOTO SURVEY

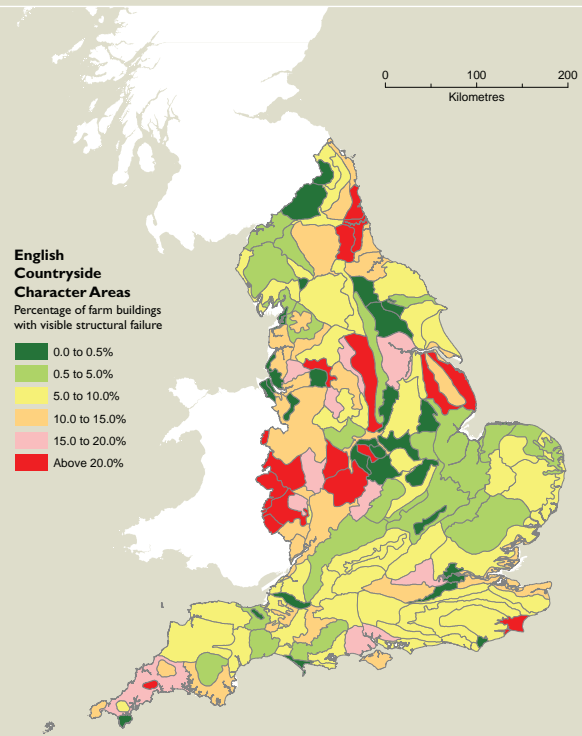
The analysis of OS maps undertaken as part of the Farmsteads and Landscape Project can trace the survival and changing plan of farmsteads through time. However, it cannot tell us about the current structural condition of the surviving working farm buildings. The Historic Farm Building Photo Survey provides an indication of the condition of listed working farm buildings **■**, with the focus being on individual buildings rather than farmstead groups.

## METHODOLOGY

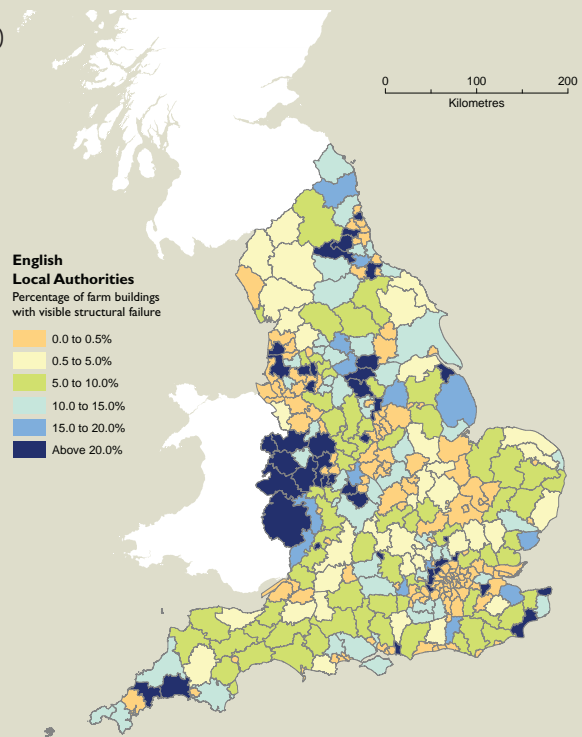
Between 2003 and 2007 English Heritage and (initially) the Countryside Agency commissioned the Countryside and Community Research Unit to undertake a series of desk-based photographic survey projects. The database resulting from these would in turn be used to produce a robust statistical analysis of the nature and condition of the listed working farm building resource at a national, regional and local level and to support its long-term monitoring.

The database incorporates baseline photographs of listed farm buildings taken between 1999 and 2006 as part of the national Images of England project along with data from individual list descriptions and English Heritage's Listed Building System. Photographic analysis was undertaken to record the structural condition of each building along with any visible change of use. By providing photographs of more than 16,000 farm buildings the database is a robust tool for monitoring change in the condition of listed buildings and the frequency of their conversion over time, capable of interrogation at the level of government region, NCA and local authority district.

9



10



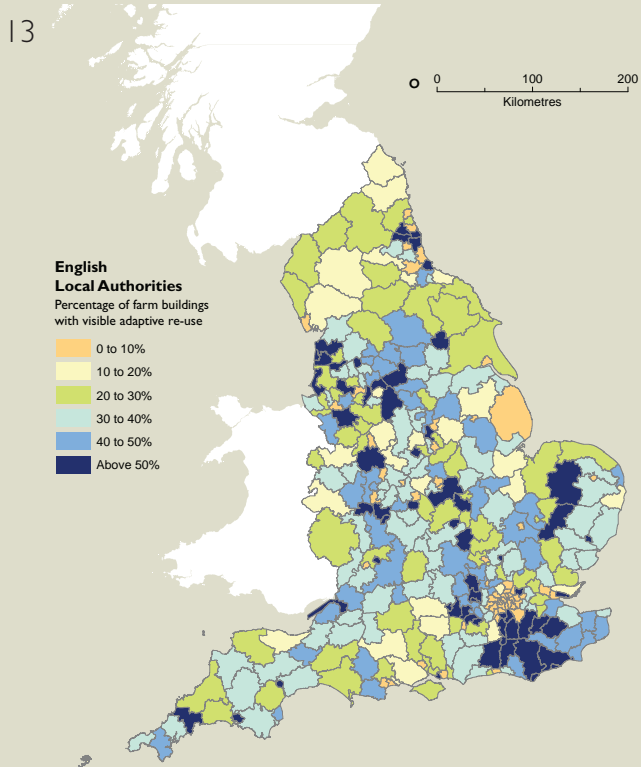
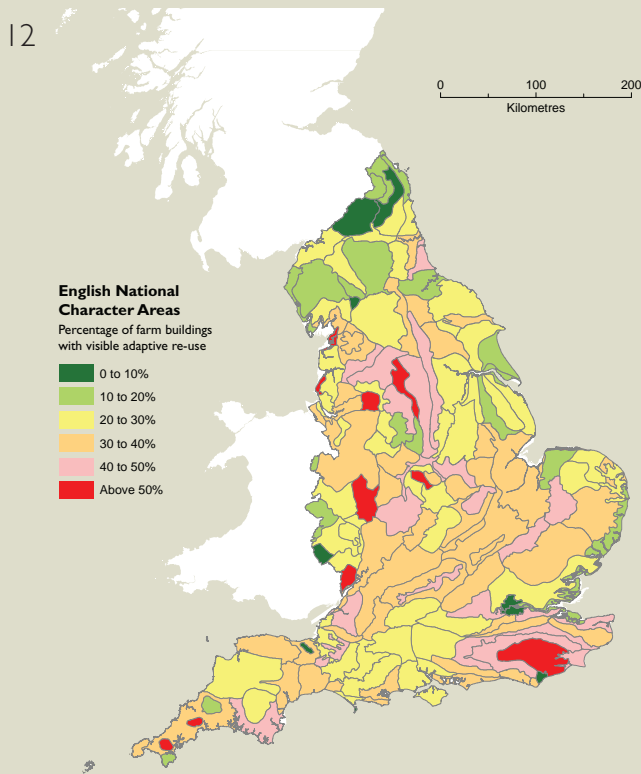
11

	RESIDENTIAL	OTHER	NONE
South West	29.90%	3.20%	66.80%
South East	32.50%	5.70%	61.90%
East of England	27.80%	4.70%	67.60%
West Midlands	27.10%	3.00%	69.90%
East Midlands	30.60%	3.60%	65.80%
Yorkshire & the Humber	35.40%	2.70%	61.90%
North East	19.00%	1.90%	79.10%
North West	26.60%	2.50%	70.90%
England	29.70%	3.90%	66.40%

**■** These are farm buildings excluding farmhouses and other farm dwellings that are principal listed buildings (ie. buildings that are the subject of list entry, rather than buildings listed by virtue of curtilage association).

**12** Proportion of listed-farm building-conversions by NCA. Source: *Historic Farm Building Photo Survey data* (courtesy of English Heritage)

**13** Proportion of conversions of listed farm building by local authority district. Source: *Historic Farm Building Photo Survey data* (courtesy of English Heritage)



## EVIDENCE

In 2001 there were 29,965 listed-building entries that probably contained working farm buildings. Just over half these records (55 per cent) had a matching loE photograph that clearly showed farm buildings. The figures presented in this publication are based on the analysis of 16,588 loE photographs taken up to June 2006 (this supersedes the figures presented in *Heritage Counts* (2005), which were based on 9,271 photographs taken up to December 2004).

At a national level just over 1 in 11 unconverted principle listed working farm buildings (8.9 per cent) showed obvious signs of structural failure based on roof and wall condition. The location of the farm building within the farmstead was an important influence on the level of disrepair. There is a tendency for the walls and roofs of isolated farm buildings to be less well maintained (9.5 per cent in disrepair) than those attached to farmhouses or other farm dwellings (5.4 per cent).

More detailed analysis showed that at a regional level the West Midlands, North-East and Yorkshire and the Humber have a higher proportion of buildings with clearly visible structural failures than the national average (Figure 8). Buildings in National Parks show a rate of disrepair that is significantly lower than the national figure (4.6 per cent) but the difference between AONBs and the national picture was less marked (7.7 per cent). There are also clear variations in the condition of farmstead buildings when the data are analysed at NCA level, with particularly high rates of disrepair in the Welsh Marches, Arden, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield, Manchester Pennine Fringe, Lincolnshire Vale, Wolds and Marches, South-East Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NCAs (Figure 9). At a local authority level there are concentrations of districts with high rates of disrepair in the Midlands bordering Wales, Cornwall, South Yorkshire and in the North-East (Figure 10).



# THE ADAPTIVE RE-USE OF HISTORIC FARM BUILDINGS

## Key points

- The Historic Farm Building Photo Survey provides robust data on the adaptive re-use of listed farm buildings capable of interrogation at the level of government region, National Character Area and local authority district.
- The Historic Farmsteads: Current Role and Context Project has developed a range of rapid and cost-effective techniques to monitor the conversion of both listed and non-listed farm buildings to residential and other uses.
- Together these projects have provided remarkably consistent evidence about type and pattern of change with conversion to residential use being dominant in all areas, despite the existence of planning policies that favour conversion to non-residential uses.

## EVIDENCE FROM THE HISTORIC FARM BUILDING PHOTO SURVEY

One-third (34 per cent) of listed working farm buildings have been visibly converted to non-agricultural uses and the majority of conversions are for residential use (87 per cent of conversions). Working buildings attached to dwellings (44 per cent) are more likely to undergo conversion than those that are isolated (31 per cent). Working buildings were significantly less likely to be converted within National Parks (22 per cent) while AONB designation made no apparent difference to the level of conversion (34 per cent).

At a regional level the South-East and Yorkshire and the Humber have experienced the highest level of conversion (38 per cent in each region), while in the North-East the recorded level of conversion falls to 21 per cent (Figure 11). The frequency of conversion also varies considerably between NCAs (Figure 12). NCAs with high levels of conversion (more than 50 per cent) include Cammenellis, Hensbarrow, the High Weald, Forest of Dean and Lower Wye, Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau, Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield and Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe. When the data are analysed by local authority area (Figure 13), the recorded level of conversion is seen to exceed 50 per cent in 12 per cent of districts. For example, 85 out of 134 entries for Maidstone (63 per cent) show clearly visible signs of adaptive re-use (of which 80 were residential conversions). A further 21 per cent of districts have conversion levels of between 40 and 50 per cent.

## WAYS OF RESEARCHING THE CURRENT USE OF HISTORIC FARMSTEADS

The current social and economic role of historic farmsteads can be determined through analysis of a series of publicly available data sources:

- computational interpretation of business names (included on all non-residential addresses in the Royal Mail Postcode Address File) to infer the nature of economic activity (including standard industrial classification)
- computational matching of occupier names with company names from a database of machine-readable company accounts (for substantial businesses with locations), providing further evidence of the nature of activity
- automated searches of internet sources, such as business directories, to derive information relating to particular properties and interpretation of retrieved material.

The entry point for such searching tends to be present-day postal addresses and so this body of work also entails the use of related methods for matching postal addresses with historic-property names and, where appropriate, entries on the statutory list.

## EVIDENCE FROM THE HISTORIC FARMSTEADS: CURRENT ROLE AND CONTEXT PROJECT

English Heritage and its partners have recently supported innovative work to examine the economic and social role of historic farmsteads and their buildings. A key part of this involves the use of existing computer data sets to develop cost-effective techniques for monitoring the conversion of farm buildings to residential and other uses. In particular, emphasis has been given to improving the evidence base for the conversion of non-listed buildings as a means of supplementing the evidence for listed buildings provided by the Historic Farm Building Photo Survey. Information can also be collected and analysed at the strategic level about the different types of use that converted farm buildings are put to and the socio-economic characteristics of their occupiers. This section draws on the findings from the following three linked sub-projects, each of which exploits natural language programming in tandem with GIS functionality to interpret a range of socio-economic data derived from publicly available Census, postal and internet sources:

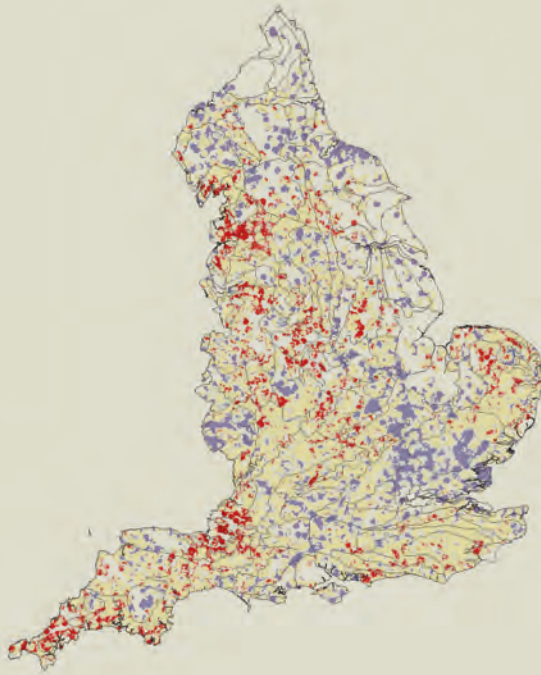
14



- **Countryside Quality Counts.** An assessment of the extent of 'barn' property conversion across the country based on work undertaken as part of the Countryside Quality Counts project supported by Natural England, English Heritage and Defra ([www.countryside-quality-counts.org.uk/pubs\\_landUseChange.html](http://www.countryside-quality-counts.org.uk/pubs_landUseChange.html))

- **Historic Farm Complexes in Current Socio-Economic Context: A Pilot Study.** An assessment for English Heritage of the current use and social role of historic farm buildings in an area stretching through Hampshire to East Sussex

15

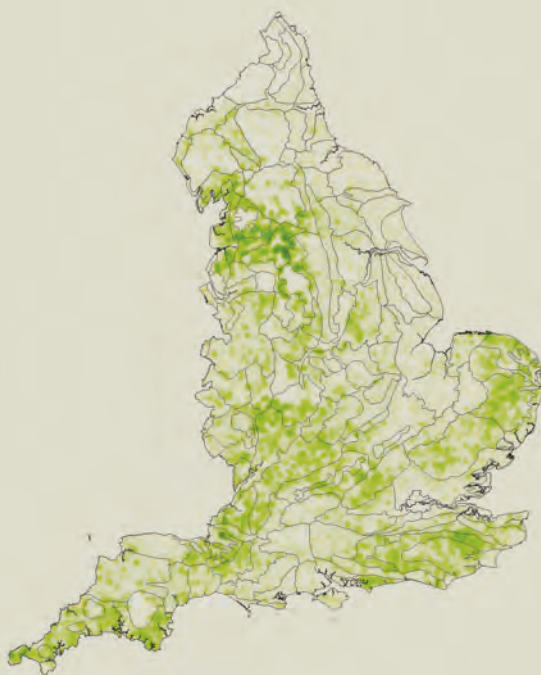


- **Historic Farm Complexes in Current Socio-Economic Context: High Weald.** A more detailed analysis of the current economic use of historic-farm property for the High Weald AONB, expanding on the English Heritage study ([www.highweald.org/uploads/currentsocioeconomiccontexthistoricfarmsteads.pdf](http://www.highweald.org/uploads/currentsocioeconomiccontexthistoricfarmsteads.pdf)).

## BARN CONVERSION

Desk-based computational approaches allow rapid assessment of the pace at which agricultural buildings are being converted to other uses and allow a rapid and cost-effective method of ascertaining their current use. The Countryside Quality Counts project used this approach to analyse Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF), a comprehensive listing of postal addresses developed for mail-delivery purposes. Farm buildings in agricultural use or that have been abandoned do not have postal addresses. On conversion to provide residential or business accommodation, however, they do. Such converted property is frequently dubbed '... Barn,' and the number of properties so named can stand as a proxy measure for the stock of converted barns, whether listed or unlisted.

16



Barns are often the largest buildings on the farmstead and are generally the most suited, due to their overall proportions, for adaptive re-use that results in the acquisition of a postal address. Using a computational grammar, property names such as 'The Barn,' 'The Old Barn,' 'Highstones Head Barn,' are tracked by this indicator, while names such as 'Common Barn Farm,' 'Barn Cottage' or 'Barn Again Bistro' are excluded. Buildings identified by this indicator might be described as (postally) 'addressable barns' (Figure 14). Clearly, use of this procedure will not identify all farm-building conversions, as not all conversions have names of this form. However, increases in the stock of addressable barns over time provide evidence of the pace of conversion affecting the



entire historic resource. This can be tested by field survey and matching to the results of the Historic Farm Building Photo Survey.

## RESULTS

Work for the Countryside Quality Counts project, using the increase in number of 'addressable barns' as a proxy, suggested that in rural areas the stock of converted barns expanded by 39 per cent between 1998 and 2003 (Figure 15). Moreover, between 2003 and 2008, this vigorous pace of conversion activity appears to have been maintained. By the end of 2008, across England as a whole, there were 28,700 'addressable-barn' properties, more than double the corresponding figure ten years previously (13,900). All but 3.3 per cent were in residential use.

In principle, variation in the extent of the implied conversion activity from place to place might be expected to reflect the scale and type of the historic resource on the one hand and local housing-market conditions on the other. It appears, however, that over the last decade the credit-fuelled housing boom provided conditions particularly favourable to conversion across most of England. Variation in levels of conversion activity appears simply to reflect variation in the inherited character and adaptability of the historic resource itself.

The amount of conversion indicated by the proxy is broadly in step with the geographical distribution of listed barns. In particular, it highlights the high numbers of addressable 'barn' properties in areas of traditional wood-pasture (Figure 16). The highest densities are found in the Pennines (eg South Pennines and Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe NCAs extending to the Morecambe Coast and Lune Estuary NCA). Other traditional wood-pasture areas with high densities of addressable barns include East Anglia (South Suffolk and North Essex, and South Norfolk and High Suffolk NCAs) and the Weald (High Weald, Low Weald and Wealden Greensand NCAs). Figure 15 shows that conversion activity since 1998 has simply intensified the pattern of geographic differentiation (at least at NCA level).

Divergences are found, however, between the geographical distributions of addressable-barn conversions and those of the overall stock of listed barns, as evident in Figure 16. For example, numbers of addressable-barn properties in Hertfordshire and Essex are smaller than might be predicted simply on the basis of the total population of listed barns. Elsewhere, problems of poor accessibility may explain relatively low levels of conversion in parts of Herefordshire (eg Black Mountains and Golden

**14** An addressable barn: Grade II-listed Ashley Manor Barn (Cotswold NCA) in 2006 after conversion. © Peter Bibby

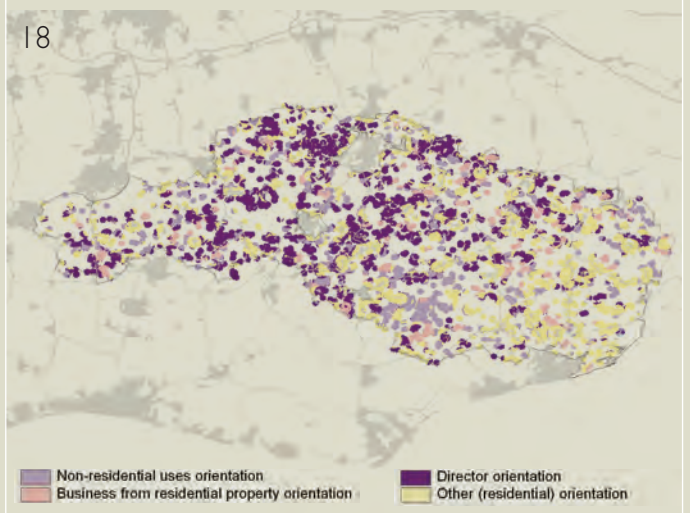
Cornwall, this appears to reflect both market pressure and the character of the stock itself. © Peter Bibby

**15** National distribution of addressable barns 1998 – 2008. © Peter Bibby

**17a+b** An unlisted barn adjoining the Grade II-listed farmhouse at Fir Trees Farm, Goosnargh (Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill NCA) in 1999 before conversion (17a © Peter Bibby) afterwards in 2008 (17b). © Mr David Blaylock, courtesy of Images of England

**16** Divergence between addressable barns and listed barns. Numbers of addressable barns in Hertfordshire and Essex are smaller than might be expected simply on the basis of the numbers of listed barns. Problems of poor accessibility may explain relatively low levels of conversion in parts of Herefordshire. Where numbers of addressable barns are substantially higher than might be expected, such as Avon and much of

**18** Current role of historic-farm property: High Weald AONB. Within the High Weald AONB there is a significant amount of home-based business activity and professional home-working associated with historic farm property. © Peter Bibby



Valley NCA). Where the number of 'addressable barns' is substantially higher than the overall population of listed barns might predict (such as in the Severn and Avon Vale NCA, and much of Cornwall), this appears to reflect both market pressure and the character of the stock itself. This is clearest in the Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill NCA in Lancashire, where the density of 'addressable barns' is at its highest. Here, small linear farmsteads incorporating unlisted stone barns are particularly well suited, in terms of capacity, to residential conversion (Figure 17).

### **THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ROLE OF HISTORIC-FARM PROPERTY**

Desk-based computational methods have also been used to develop a broad understanding of farmstead character, distribution and survival, and to explore the current social and economic role of historic farmsteads and their buildings in more detail. This pilot study examined the entire resource of historic farmsteads in Hampshire, East Sussex and West Sussex together with that part of Kent within the bounds of the High Weald AONB. This time, however, the starting point for the computational work was not the stock of addressable property, but the database of historic farmsteads created as part of the Farmsteads and Landscape Project. This includes the name and grid reference of the farm, its type and date and the extent of its historical survival.

The most striking conclusion of this work was that just over half of historic-farm properties with postal addresses are now in residential use (53 per cent), with nearly all the rest remaining in agricultural occupation (39 per cent). The extent to which historic-farm property has been put to non-residential use outside the agricultural sector is extremely limited.

In this swathe of south-east England historic-farm property is nevertheless highly prized for homes. The prices secured for dwellings associated with historic features were substantially above those of other property within a 10-kilometre radius.

The evidence shows not only that market forces have favoured residential over non-residential uses, but also that the rate of transfer to residential use has been substantial over the past decade. The increase in postally addressable barn-conversions over the period was equivalent to more than four-fifths (80 per cent) of the entire stock of listed barns. This extremely high rate of conversion needs to be understood in relation

to housing and lifestyle preferences, to the amount of local new-build housing provision and to the strength of the regulatory planning framework, which together have clearly provided a robust stimulus to development. Although the annual flow of addressable conversions is equivalent to no more than 1 per cent of new building, it can have much more significant effects in some highly regulated contexts. Thus in the Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill NCA, addressable barns constitute almost 5 per cent of the entire dwelling stock (outside urban areas and towns).

Another key factor is property values. In parts of the South-East study area there is a close match between areas where historic-farm properties attract the highest prices and very high rates of conversion. In principle, this allows high-cost schemes subject to stringent controls through listed-building consents, planning conditions or planning agreements to effectively secure the conservation of historic features. In other regions, subject to less favourable pricing regimes, there may be reduced potential for securing high-quality conversions.

Finally, computational work on adaptive re-use suggests (albeit only for economically favoured areas) how high residential demand for historic-farm property can unlock the resources needed for its satisfactory maintenance. Recent change in the countryside has resulted in a pattern of residential differentiation in which the economically strong occupy rural environments of high landscape quality. This is often associated with the development of a new 'rural economy' involving high levels of enterprise and professional home working – one for which the attractiveness of locally distinctive buildings and landscapes plays a key part (Figure 18).

### **THE RELATIONSHIP OF EVIDENCE FROM THE HISTORIC FARMSTEADS: CURRENT ROLE AND CONTEXT PROJECT AND THE HISTORIC FARM BUILDING PHOTO SURVEY**

The Historic Farmsteads: Current Role and Context Project, using the 'addressable-barn' proxy measure, and the desk-based Historic Farm Building Photo Survey of listed farm buildings have yielded remarkably consistent evidence about patterns of conversion (Figures 12 and 15). In addition, both sources of data show that conversion to residential use is the dominant trend in all areas despite the existence of planning policies that favour conversion to non-residential uses.



# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONCLUSIONS

Since the publication of *Historic Farmsteads: Constructing the Evidence Base* (Gaskell and Owen, 2005), considerable progress has been made in developing cost-effective methods for collecting robust information on the size, distribution and character of the historic-farm-building stock as a whole.

The Farmsteads and Landscape Project has developed and tested a method for recording the distribution of historic farmsteads. This allows the production of independent data sets recording all farmstead sites present in the late 19th century, which can in turn be used to identify the significant characteristics of farmsteads and their relationship with patterns of visual and inherited landscape character. This mapping of the predominant characteristics of all farmsteads can then be used to inform policy development, the preparation of development proposals and the targeting of scarce rural-development resources. The method also creates a baseline that can be used to monitor change over time and to provide a robust framework for targeted research into the nature and extent of change in different locations and at different spatial scales.

The Historic Farm Building Photo Survey has been expanded from 3,000 photographic records in 2003 to more than 16,000 in 2007. By providing photographs for more than half of all listed working farm buildings the database provides a robust basis for monitoring change in the condition of buildings and the frequency of their conversion over time. This information can in turn help to determine the impact of existing policies for the management of historic farm buildings and to inform future policy development.

The Historic Farmsteads: Current Role and Context Project has developed a desk-based computational method that can provide valuable insights into the way in which historic farm buildings are being converted across the whole country. Innovative techniques are also being used to provide additional information on how those who occupy historic farmsteads are contributing to their local communities and economies.

The combined outputs from these research projects are expanding the evidence base on the historic farm building stock and have the potential to generate robust data on the size of the resource and the nature of change taking place at a range of spatial scales.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The three research projects have demonstrated that it is possible to enhance the historic farm building evidence base through the use of a range of cost-effective desk-based techniques without the need for large-scale and resource-intensive field surveys. To further enhance the evidence base and its value to policy-makers the authors make the following recommendations:

- **Integration of the data sets.** The usability of the evidence base would be increased if the information from the three research projects were integrated. This would also help to place our knowledge of the listed-building stock in the context of the broader resource of historic farm buildings. All the data are geo-referenced and can thus form the basis of an integrated system of management. The development of such a system will enhance the opportunities for relevant policy analysis.
- **Extend the Farmsteads and Landscape Project to provide national coverage.** This would provide baseline farmstead data with which to monitor the nature and rate of change in the countryside. The results obtained to date demonstrate that the mapping of farmsteads can provide important information about the distribution, character and survival of farmsteads and their relationship with and contribution to the character of the landscape.
- **Produce Farmstead Character Statements for all NCAs.** One of the most important outputs of the mapping projects should be the dissemination of this newly acquired knowledge and improved understanding of the relationship between farmsteads and landscape. One method that has been developed is the production of Farmstead Character Statements related to NCAs.

## Recommendations Continued ▼

- **Enhance the evidence base on the adaptive re-use of historic farm buildings using the methods developed by the Historic Farm Building Photo Survey and the Historic Farmsteads: Current Role and Context Project.** The baseline provided by the photographic database can be used as a framework for targeted re-surveys to build up a picture of changes taking place in areas subject to different forms of development pressure. The desk-based computational methods can be developed in three ways. First, it would be possible to apply the techniques used to explore the current use and role of particular buildings in parts of the South-East and the West Midlands to the country as a whole. Secondly, it would be possible to expand the range of sources used to provide further attributes of current use. Finally, there is an opportunity to use such approaches to target samples for field-based work.

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