

KENT FARMSTEADS GUIDANCE

PART 2 PLANNING CONTEXT



THIS COMPRISES PART 2 OF THE KENT FARMSTEADS GUIDANCE

The Kent Farmsteads Guidance aims to inform and achieve the sustainable development of farmsteads, including their conservation and enhancement. It can also be used by those with an interest in the history and character of the county's landscape and historic buildings, and the character of individual places. Traditional farmstead groups and their buildings are assets which make a positive contribution to local character. Many are no longer in agricultural use but will continue, through a diversity of uses, to make an important contribution to the rural economy and communities.

PART 1 FARMSTEADS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

This sets out the aims and purpose of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance and is divided into two sections:

1. a **Site Assessment Framework** which will help applicants identify the capacity for change and any issues at the pre-application stage in the planning process, and then move on to prepare the details of a scheme.
2. **Farmsteads Summary Guidance** which summarises the planning context and the key principles to inform the sustainable development of farmsteads – understanding their character, significance and sensitivity to change.

PART 2 PLANNING CONTEXT

This sets out the national and local policy context, and summarises recent research on farmsteads.

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The Kent Farmstead Guidance is the result of collaboration between English Heritage, Kent County Council and the Kent Downs AONB. It also builds on pilot work developed by English Heritage and the High Weald AONB. It has been revised further following consultation with key stakeholders in Kent. The revision has also integrated the result of the Kent Farmsteads and Landscapes Project, which represents the completion of rapid mapping of farmsteads supported firstly by the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee and then by English Heritage. The text was prepared by Jeremy Lake of English Heritage, with contributions from Bob Edwards and James Webb of Forum Heritage Services (substantially to Parts 5 and 6), & publication layout by Diva Arts.

PART 3 KENT FARMSTEADS CHARACTER STATEMENTS

Fully-illustrated guidance on the character and significance of Kent farmsteads, for use in individual applications and detailed design work, for the preparation of area guidance and for those with an interest in the county's landscapes and historic buildings. The guidance is presented under the headings of: Historical Development, Landscape and Settlement, Farmstead and Building Types and Materials and Detail.

PART 4 CHARACTER AREA STATEMENTS

These provide summaries, under the same headings and for the same purpose, for the North Kent Plain and Thames Estuary, North Kent Downs, Wealden Greensand, Low Weald, High Weald and Romney Marsh.

PART 5 KENT FARMSTEADS DESIGN GUIDANCE

This provides illustrated guidance on design and new build, based on the range of historic farmstead types. It is intended to help applicants who are then considering how to achieve successful design, including new-build where it is considered appropriate and fitted to local plan policy.

PART 6 RECORDING AND RESEARCH GUIDANCE

This summarises the main issues to consider when undertaking more detailed recording of a site, with a case study and research questions to guide the survey and assessment process.

PART 7 GLOSSARY

This is a glossary of terms to aid the user.

NOTE. THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE IN ALTERNATIVE FORMATS AND CAN BE EXPLAINED IN A RANGE OF LANGUAGES. PLEASE CALL KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'S REGENERATION & ECONOMY'S PROJECT SUPPORT TEAM ON 01622 221866 FOR DETAILS.

1 NATIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

The planning system is a process that aims to manage change within our urban and rural areas for the benefit of society as a whole. The constraints and opportunities for development in rural areas are set out in national and local planning policy. This guidance is set within the context of national legislation planning guidance and Local Planning Authorities' Local Development Plans.

Change within farmsteads is nothing new. Over the centuries, new types of steading and buildings have been developed, older farmsteads have been moved to new sites or abandoned and buildings have been adapted to different uses. Since the 1950s traditional farm buildings have become increasingly redundant, and farmers have required industrial-style sheds and large concreted working areas, often with new points of access, in order to minimise labour costs and meet animal welfare standards. In parallel, a growing demand for characterful rural housing has made historic farm buildings increasingly attractive targets for residential conversion. In coming years these trends are likely to accelerate further in response to the diversification of farm businesses, the growth of larger farming units and the complementary market for smaller hobby-farm units amongst dual-income households. The pace of change will vary from place to place, depending on patterns of redundancy and dereliction; farm income; the broader social and economic character of rural areas; the flow of traditional farm buildings into the property market; and the relative demands for economic and residential conversion. This demands an informed and flexible approach to the change of use of historic farmsteads, so that they can be retained as distinctive elements of the rural landscape.

English Heritage's policy statement (2006)¹ made recommendations for future policy and decision making:

- Promote positive means of managing change which align an understanding of the characteristics of historic farmsteads with their potential for and sensitivity to change, at the building, farmstead and landscape level.

1 English Heritage/Countryside Agency 2006. *Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Traditional Farm Buildings* [\[1\]](#)

- Avoid standard 'off-the-peg' solutions that do not take account of regional and local diversity and circumstances. There should be more emphasis on the quality of design, both traditional and contemporary, including appropriate detailing, materials and craftsmanship and the setting of buildings.

Such an approach is fundamental to the objectives of sustainable development in seeking to balance social, economic, environmental and cultural priorities. It accords with national planning policy and guidance which makes identification, protection and enhancement of the historic environment a strategic priority that should be included in Local Development Documents (LDDs). Such understanding can inform future change and inspire high quality new development that aims to conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area. It is significant in this context that Matthew Taylor's *Review of the Rural Economy and Affordable Housing* (2008²) recommended that consideration be given to 'how planning policy might allow additional small-scale business, workspace and residential developments (particularly affordable rural housing projects) to be delivered sustainably in rural areas' noting that 'the adaptive reuse of otherwise redundant historic buildings could and should play a significant role in delivering this.'

2 Taylor, M 2009. *Living, Working Countryside. The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing* [\[2\]](#). Department of Communities and Local Government. See also Department of Communities and Local Government, 2010. *Government Response to the Matthew Taylor Review. Updated Implementation Plan*.

THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK, 2012

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It states (paragraph 6) that 'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development' and that the policies contained within it (in paragraphs 18-219) 'taken as whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system'. Economic, social and environmental improvement should be sought jointly and simultaneously (paragraph 8). Pursuing sustainable development, therefore, involves seeking improvements to the quality of the historic environment (paragraph 9). The 12 key principles set out in paragraph 17 include to:

- take account of the different roles and character of different areas
- seek to secure high quality design
- recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside
- conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance

Paragraphs 126-141 contain detailed policies for the historic environment, including heritage assets, including under paragraph 131:

- 'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take
- account of:
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage
- assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'(paragraph 131)
- 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the

significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. '(paragraph 132)

Elsewhere the Policy Framework stresses the importance of understanding local character and distinctiveness in determining planning applications, in plan-making and in decision-taking, as well as local economic and community circumstances. Of particular relevance:

- Supporting a prosperous rural economy. 'Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development'. Plans should promote sustainable growth through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings, support rural diversification, tourism and leisure, and promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities (paragraph 28)
- Design Policies. Policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments 'respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation' (paragraph 58)
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. In determining planning applications, local authorities should expect new development to 'take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption.' (paragraph 96)
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. '... opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged..' (paragraph 118)
- Plan Making: Using a Proportionate Evidence Base. 'Each local planning authority should ensure that the Local Plan is based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area.' (paragraph 158)
- Plan Making: Historic Environment (paragraphs 169-170) 'Local planning authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the

significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment. They should also use it to predict the likelihood that currently unidentified heritage assets, particularly sites of historic and archaeological interest, will be discovered in the future. Local planning authorities should either maintain or have access to a historic environment record.'

- 'Where appropriate, landscape character assessments should also be prepared, integrated with assessment of historic landscape character, and for areas where there are major expansion options assessments of landscape sensitivity'. (paragraph 170)

Key definitions used in the NPPF

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Historic environment record: Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.

OTHER RELEVANT POLICY AND GUIDANCE

CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES, ENGLISH HERITAGE, 2008

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/conservation-principles>

This offers an approach to making reasonable and transparent decisions about change to places, and the balancing of the protection of the historic environment with the economic and social needs of communities in all areas, based upon a clear understanding of their value. It states that (4.1) 'Change in the historic environment is inevitable, caused by natural processes, the wear and tear of use, and people's responses to social, economic and technological change' and that (4.2) 'Conservation is the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations.'

THE SETTING OF HISTORIC ASSETS. ENGLISH HERITAGE GUIDANCE, 2011

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/setting-heritage-assets/>

This document sets out English Heritage guidance on managing change within the settings of heritage assets, including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas, and landscapes.

'Setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. This depends on a wide range of physical elements within, as well as perceptual and associational attributes, pertaining to the heritage asset's surroundings. Each of these elements may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the asset, or be neutral. In some instances the contribution made by setting to the asset's significance may be negligible: in others it may make the greatest contribution to significance.'

THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION, COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2000

<http://www.coe.int/EuropeanLandscapeConvention>

This came into force in England in 2007 and promotes a dynamic view of landscape as the framework for delivering place-making, spatial planning and agricultural policy – enshrined in its definition of landscape as 'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'

3 SUMMARY OF TRADITIONAL FARMSTEAD CHARACTER AND SURVIVAL IN KENT'S LOCAL AUTHORITIES

This section summarises the character and survival of farmsteads for each of the local authority districts in Kent, based on the mapping of farmsteads from the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps of around 1900 and modern maps.

Introductory text summarises how each local authority relates to the National Character Areas (NCAs) that are introduced in PART 1 (HISTORIC FARMSTEADS CHARACTER AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK). Part 4 (Character Area Statements) provides full descriptions for each of these NCAs.

Farmstead plan types notes any broad distinctions between the major plan types of courtyard and dispersed plan farmsteads which are introduced in pages 6-9 of PART 1 (HISTORIC FARMSTEADS CHARACTER AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK).

Recorded date notes the percentage of recorded farmsteads that:

- have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse (county average 24.5%)
- have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings (county average 7.8%)

Survival notes the percentage of recorded farmsteads that:

- survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form (county average 46.6%)
- have been lost from the landscape (county average 11.4%).

The loss of field barns and outfarms is also noted (county average 82%). For further details on survival see pages 10-12 of PART 1 (HISTORIC FARMSTEADS CHARACTER AND ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK).

ASHFORD

Ashford cuts across six NCAs; the North Downs, Wealden Greensand and Low Weald with smaller areas within the High Weald and Romney Marsh. The northern end of the borough takes in a very small part of the North Kent Plain.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant representing 64.1%, with dispersed plan types concentrated within the Wealden landscapes of the district and comprising 32.4% of the recorded total. Loose courtyard plans form 40.1% of recorded farmsteads with small-medium scale examples concentrated in the Low Weald and High Weald.

Recorded date 36.9% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse, a very high proportion by county standards. 7.4% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A high proportion (54.2%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. 14.1% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 80.1% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

CANTERBURY

Canterbury District is almost equally spread across the North Kent Plain and North Downs NCAs.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant, representing 84.9%, with dispersed plan types comprising 14.0% of the recorded total. Medium to large-scale loose courtyard plans are the predominant plan type representing 41.8% of recorded farmsteads.

Recorded date 29.1% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 7.9% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A low proportion (35.9%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form (county average 46.6%). 22.1% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 89.7% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

DARTFORD

Dartford is mostly within the North Kent Plain NCA with small areas extending into the Greater Thames Estuary to the north (mostly urban) and the North Downs in the south-east.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant, representing 81.6%, with dispersed plan types comprising 16.3% of the recorded total. Loose courtyard plans formed 29.6% of recorded farmsteads, mainly medium scale types (buildings to two or three sides of the yard). Regular courtyard plans formed 38.8% of recorded farmsteads, predominantly regular multi-yard plans (28.6%).

Recorded date 18.4% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 2.0% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival An extremely low proportion (19.4%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. 23.5% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 97.3% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

DOVER

Approximately two thirds of Dover District lies within the North Downs with the northern third within the North Kent Plain NCA.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant, representing 85.5%, with dispersed plan types comprising 13.3% of the recorded total. Loose courtyard plans are predominant, forming 36.2% of recorded sites.

Recorded date 27.1% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 9.5% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings. Farmsteads with both a 17th century or earlier house and working are concentrated in the north-west of the district.

Survival A low proportion (38.5%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. 19.5% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. A relatively high proportion (72.6%) of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

GRAVESHAM

Gravesham lies primarily within the North Kent Plain and North Downs with a small part of the north of the district within the Greater Thames Estuary NCA. There are few farmsteads within the Greater Thames Estuary.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant, representing 89.7%, with dispersed plan types comprising 10.3% of the recorded total. Medium-scale loose courtyard plans and regular multi-yards are predominant.

Recorded date 27.7% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 4.4% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A low proportion (32.4%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. Survival rates are higher within the North Downs than the North Kent Plain. 17.6% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 90.2% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

MAIDSTONE

Maidstone District is roughly equally divided between the North Downs, Wealden Greensand and Low Weald NCAs. A very small part of the district extends into the High Weald.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant, representing 66.1%, with dispersed plan types being more significant than in other districts and comprising 30.6% of the recorded total. Loose courtyard plans (32.0%) are predominantly small-medium in scale with working buildings along up to 3 sides of the yard. Dispersed plans are highly characteristic of the Low Weald and High Weald.

Recorded date 43.4% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 8.8% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A high proportion (56.1%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. 10.9% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 76.8% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

MEDWAY

Medway lies within the Greater Thames Estuary, North Kent Plain and North Downs NCAs, the latter, southern part of the district mostly being urban.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant, representing 85.0%, with Dispersed plan types comprising 12.5% of the recorded total. Medium scale loose courtyard plans (2 -3 sides) represented 31.2% of recorded farmsteads.

Recorded date 14.6% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 3.3% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A low proportion (27.9%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form reflecting generally high levels of change within the Greater Thames Estuary and North Kent Plain NCAs. 16.3% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 92.0% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

SEVENOAKS

Sevenoaks cuts across five NCAs, the main areas being the North Downs, Wealden Greensand and Low Weald with smaller areas extending into the North Kent Plain to the north and the High Weald to the south.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant representing 74.1% with dispersed plan types being more significant than in other districts and comprising 24.6% of the recorded total. Small-medium scale loose courtyard plans with working buildings on one or two sides of the yard and dispersed plan types are concentrated in the Wealden landscapes of the district. Regular U-plans are also a feature of the Wealden landscapes.

Recorded date 34.2% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 9.2% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A high proportion (53.2%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form across the district but there has been a greater level of change in the northern part of the district (North Kent Plain and North Downs NCAs) than in the Wealden landscapes of the south of the district. 14.6% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 86.2% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

SHEPWAY

Shepway primarily lies within the Romney Marsh and North Downs NCAs with a small area within the Wealden Greensand NCA.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant representing 73.8% with dispersed plan types (which were a feature of Romney Marsh) being more significant than in other districts and comprising 25.0% of the recorded total. Medium scale loose courtyard plans with working buildings to two or three sides of the yard are characteristic.

Recorded date 19.6% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 2.4% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A low proportion (31.6%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. There has been a very high level of change within the Greater Thames Estuary and a high level of change within the North Kent Plain within the district. 24.0% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 91.9% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

SWALE

Swale consists of three NCAs; Greater Thames Estuary, North Kent Plain and the North Downs.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant representing 85.4% with dispersed plan types comprising 12.6% of the recorded total. Loose courtyard plans formed 44.4% of recorded farmsteads, these being mostly those with working buildings to

two or three sides of the yard, the latter being concentrated within the North Downs. Dispersed cluster plans were common across the district but now survive in higher numbers in the North Downs compared to Romney Marsh.

Recorded date 38.5% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 9.6% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A low proportion (36.4%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. The level of change is higher in the Romney Marsh area than in the north of the district. 18.1% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 82.3% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

THANET

Thanet District lies entirely within the North Kent Plain NCA.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant representing 95.9% with Dispersed plan types comprising 4.1% of the recorded total. Medium-large loose courtyard plans are common (2 – 4 sides) together with regular multi-yard plans. Dispersed plans are uncommon.

Recorded date 19.3% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 16.6% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A low proportion (35.2%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. 14.5% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 82.1% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING

Tonbridge and Malling lies primarily within the Wealden Greensand and Low Weald NCAs with a small area extending into the North Downs and a very small section within the High Weald.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant representing 75.4% with Dispersed plan types being more significant than in other districts and comprising 23.7% of the recorded total. Regular courtyard plan types are predominant (42.3% of recorded sites), 19.2% of these being multi-yard plans.

Recorded date 32.2% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 7.3% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival A high proportion (51.9%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. 11.5% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 86.0% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Tunbridge Wells Borough lies almost entirely within the High Weald NCA with a small part of the northern edge of the Borough extending into the Low Weald and two very small areas of the Romney Marsh within the Borough to the south-east.

Farmstead plan types Courtyard plan farmsteads are predominant representing 51.2% with dispersed plan types being more significant than in any other districts and comprising 42.6% of the recorded total. Dispersed plan types formed 42.6% of recorded farmsteads and small-medium scale loose courtyard plans (1 and 2 sides) form 25.5% of recorded sites.

Recorded date 45.3% of recorded farmsteads have a 17th century or earlier listed farmhouse. 8.2% of recorded farmsteads have one or more 17th century or earlier listed working buildings.

Survival An exceptionally high proportion (60.7%) of farmsteads survive with more than 50% of their late 19th century form. 9.9% of recorded farmsteads have been lost from the landscape. 72.1% of outfarms and field barns have been lost from the landscape.