

WEST MIDLANDS FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPES PROJECT: PLANNING TOOLS REPORT

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THIS REPORT IS MADE AVAILABLE IN WORD SO THAT IT CAN BE READ WITH THE OTHER PRODUCTS OF THE WEST MIDLANDS FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPES PROJECT. IT WILL BE ILLUSTRATED AND UPDATED WITH CASE STUDIES AS THE RESULTS OF THE PROJECT AND SIMILAR APPROACHES ELSEWHERE IN ENGLAND (FOR EXAMPLE IN APPROACHES TO DESIGN AND NEW BUILD IN KENT) ARE APPLIED TO INFORM POSITIVE AND FORWARD-LOOKING PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE.

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INTRODUCTION

Historic farmsteads, where the farmhouse and some or all of the working buildings are located, are integral to the rural landscape, communities and economy of the West Midlands. Farmsteads, and in particular traditional farm buildings of 19th century or earlier date, make a fundamental contribution to *local distinctiveness* and a *sense of place*, through their varied forms, use of materials and the way that they relate to the surrounding landscape and settlement. Structural changes in the farming industry have required farmers to construct new buildings that economise on labour and conform to animal welfare regulations, and the future of historic farm buildings is increasingly dependent on finding a use for which they were not originally intended.

Future change in historic farmsteads is inevitable if they are to be retained as a distinctive part of the rural landscape. This can be achieved in ways which are based on an understanding of variations in the character and significance of farmsteads, and their sensitivity to and potential for change. The guidance and evidence provided by the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project will help to inform the development of locally specific planning policies and guidance, which can be used by planners, historic environment professionals, architects and surveyors, and applicants. This report summarises the policy background and the key issues driving farmstead change and their impacts. It goes on to set out Planning Tools for informing future change to historic farmsteads which sustains and, where appropriate, enhances their contribution to local distinctiveness and landscape character. The Planning Tools comprise:

- an *Area Assessment Framework* for use in spatial planning, delivery and land management; and
- a *Site Assessment Framework* for identifying key issues at the earliest possible stage when adaptive reuse or new build are being considered in the context of an individual historic farmstead.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF THE WEST MIDLANDS FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPES PROJECT

The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project (see www.english-heritage.org.uk/wmidlandsfarmsteads) is a collaborative project, led by English Heritage in partnership with the region's county and metropolitan councils and with the support of Advantage West Midlands. For the first time at a regional level the Project has:

1. Mapped and described the locations and characteristics of all farmsteads, their change over time, and how they relate to the landscape.
2. Described the present day role of historic farmsteads in the West Midland's economy.
3. Developed a set of planning tools to inform spatial planning, land management and economic development.

The Planning Tools Report is designed to be used alongside the key products of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project which comprise the following:

The Project has produced:

- *The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project: Summary Report*, which summarises the results of the whole project and sets out policy and land use implications, and recommendations and next steps for further work.
- *Illustrated Farmstead Character Statements* that outline the historic character and present day role of historic farmsteads for the whole region and the 26 National Character Areas that fall within or astride it. These bring together the results of all this work, combined with the results of extensive survey work and other available information.
- *A Farmstead Use Report* which provides a detailed statistical analysis of the patterns of farmstead use across the West Midlands, and their social and economic role.
- *A Planning Tools Report*. Tools for informing change at an area and site-based scale, in the form of an *Area Assessment Framework* for use in the development of planning guidance and land management, and a *Site Assessment Framework* for identifying key issues at the earliest possible stage when adaptive reuse or new build are being considered in the context of a historic farmstead.

1 POLICY AND EVIDENCE BACKGROUND

1.1 *The Drivers for Change*

The future maintenance of the great majority of traditional farm buildings is now dependent on a new role outside agriculture. Since the 1950's historic farmsteads and their buildings have changed in response to two key developments:

- *The modern agricultural industry.* The enlargement of farms, the need to maximise production whilst saving on labour costs, allow access for new machinery, or to comply with animal welfare regulations has resulted in both the redundancy of traditional working buildings and the demand for industrial-style sheds and large concreted working areas, often with new points of access. These changes have combined with the increased size of farms to hasten the redundancy of traditional farm buildings and remove entire farmsteads from agricultural production. Traditional buildings on working farms are most commonly used for storage. Many traditional buildings have not been maintained for several decades, and their repair and adaptation for modern farming use can be very costly. The owners and tenants of farms are also seeking to capitalise on the potential of the existing building stock for rural diversification and regeneration, and to inject new capital into their businesses.
- *The strong demand for the adaptive re-use of traditional buildings.* The continued reduction of holdings, which is expected to accelerate in many areas, has also resulted in whole farms and steadings being brought onto the property market. The availability of financial resources for investment in alternative uses of redundant buildings by the farming community is likely to be limited by the continual demand for investment in new build and modern equipment, as well as factors such as market demand, and the broader social and economic context. Despite policies designed to encourage economic use, *The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project* has deepened the results of national research (see 1.2) that the overwhelming demand is residential use for historic farmstead sites and redundant buildings. As a consequence of the demand for 'country living', and restraints on development in the wider countryside, property prices in rural areas are high, and are expected to remain relatively high for properties that have a distinctive and valued architectural character.

These drivers for change are resulting in the demand for new buildings on working farms conforming to international models of construction and economy on the one hand, and the conversion of traditional working buildings that contribute to local landscape character and local distinctiveness on the other. This is likely to accelerate further, whether in response to the growth of larger farming units or the (often complementary) demand for smaller units sometimes associated with dual income (including hobby farm) households.

The options for change are conditioned by a number of factors, ranging from access to services to the adaptability of the whole group and its buildings in its

landscape context. Another key factor is the resources of the owner and the availability of grant aid. The context for considering change and for framing planning policy and delivery also differs sharply from one area to another, depending on a range of factors such as farm income, the broader social and economic character of the surrounding area and the rates of conversion and dereliction. The economics of farming have limited the viability of expensive repair for continued agricultural use. Moreover, agri-environment scheme funds are limited for targeting those buildings that can be fully repaired and conserved for their intrinsic or landscape value. For the overwhelming majority of buildings that have the capacity for alternative uses, adaptation provides the most effective means of long-term management.

TABLE 2: KEY OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

The key options for traditional farm buildings are:

Maintain – for buildings in continued agricultural use or with long-term potential for alternative uses. Grants for maintenance are promoted by the Entry Level Environmental Stewardship scheme. Although this is the best option for retaining the overall historic and landscape integrity of traditional farming landscapes, a combination of factors, as outlined in section 1 above, has undermined the incentive to invest in repair and maintenance, particularly for expensive remedial works.

Adapt – for farm diversification, economic or residential use, where the proposed change is considered to be the best way of conserving and securing a future for the building. The options for conversion to enable continued agricultural use are increasingly limited. Redundant post-1950 sheds are thus best suited for industrial units requiring flexible working space, and traditional buildings for more ‘bespoke’ commercial uses as well as being subject to high demand for residential conversion.

Restore – to retain as features in the landscape or as significant historic buildings, with minimal or no alteration. Grants are available through English Heritage for grade I and II* listed buildings considered to be at risk, and through Natural England under the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship scheme. These are focused on small numbers of those most significant buildings that are particularly sensitive to change.

Collapse – either gradual, or through intervention involving demolition and salvage of materials. Dereliction and loss has for centuries followed functional redundancy. Buildings most prone to loss are those of low historic or architectural value, low significance or in poor condition. Location, capacity for adaptive reuse and scale are additional factors. Isolated buildings, without access, in deteriorating condition or lacking the capacity to accept alternative uses, are most prone to loss as a consequence of their redundancy.

1.2 Responding to Change

In response to these changes English Heritage and the Countryside Agency commissioned research to examine in more depth the drivers for change and the effectiveness of policy at the national and local level for listed farm buildings. This research also provided for the first time statistically robust national and regional estimates of the structural condition and adaptive reuse of listed farm buildings. It demonstrated that:

- a significant proportion of redundant listed farm buildings are in an advanced state of structural decay, and over half of all listed farm buildings have been subject to planning applications for development;
- the overwhelming majority of conversions are for residential use (70-80%), despite planning policies that favour employment and business uses;
- pressures for change will continue and accelerate in some areas, as farmers seek to rationalise their businesses and construct new infrastructure;
- the majority of local planning guidance, whilst focusing on the issue of reuse, reflects limited knowledge of the character of historic farmsteads and how this has changed over time;
- the evidence base for historic farmsteads in Historic Environment Records is weak, and almost exclusively confined to individual listed buildings. This does not provide a full or general understanding of the character and survival of farmsteads and their buildings, and how they contribute to landscape character and local distinctiveness.

In 2006 English Heritage and the Countryside Agency published a policy statement for traditional farm buildings, *Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Traditional Farm Buildings*. This policy statement stressed the need to understand how and why historic farmsteads and their buildings are changing, and the importance of finding new uses that conserved their character and contribution to the local scene. The statement recommended 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. Character-based frameworks, which develop an understanding of the resource within its broadest possible context, should provide the context for future decision making'. It was accompanied by *Preliminary Regional Character Statements*, and guidance that promoted high standards in the conversion of traditional farm buildings to new uses. Work conducted since then has:

- explored how agri-environment scheme grants for historic buildings benefit rural economies and communities;
- deepened understanding of the rates of conversion and dereliction;
- piloted the mapping of *all* historic farmsteads (as has been now completed across the whole of the West Midlands region), in order to understand how they contribute to landscape character and determine their present social and economic role; and
- piloted tools for land management and planning (for example on the Bolton Abbey estate in North Yorkshire and with Basingstoke and Deane District Council in Hampshire), including the identification of key

This and subsequent work in developing guidance on conversion and the evidence base on historic farmsteads is summarised on the HELM website - www.helm.org.uk/farmbuildings. This work, and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders at a regional and national level, has endorsed the importance of piloting and developing new tools based on character and context that will:

- 1 take account of the issues driving forward change, ranging from the demand for residential use to the restructuring of the agricultural industry;
- 2 inform appropriate development through considering buildings as part of their wider landscapes, and within their regional and local context;
- 3 inform evidence-based guidance, spatial planning and clear and transparent decision-making;
- 4 enable users at the earliest possible stage to identify key issues and opportunities and the capacity for change at an area as well as a site-based level;
- 5 ensure that approaches to reuse and good design recognise and respond to patterns in the wider landscape;
- 6 inform initial scheme development and pre-application discussions;
- 7 contribute to positive and forward-looking tools for spatial planning and land management;
- 8 inform a consistent approach in development management and listed building consent.

This expanding body of work has firstly emphasised the need to better understand the social, economic and environmental value of historic farmsteads and their buildings. This, combined with awareness of the drivers for change and their impact, can then help to realise opportunities for spatial planning, land management and economic development.

1.3 Planning Issues

Future change in historic farmsteads is inevitable if they are to be retained as a distinctive part of the rural landscape. This can be achieved in ways which are based on an understanding of variations in the character and significance of farmsteads, and their sensitivity to and potential for change. Such an approach is consistent with national planning policy and guidance (see text box below), which encourages local authorities to take a flexible and positive approach to the sustainable re-use of redundant rural buildings, especially for economic use. It encourages positive approaches towards rural development, where it is considered to be sustainable, and based on a good understanding of the quality, character and local distinctiveness of the rural environment. This involves providing information on the size, character and condition of the historic farm building stock, how it contributes to local distinctiveness and how the resource is changing over time. Pressures for change are locally varied, and influenced by patterns of redundancy and dereliction; farm income; the

broader social and economic character of rural areas; the supply of traditional farmsteads and buildings onto the property market; and the relative demand for economic and residential conversion.

The increased importance placed in national planning policy on ‘local distinctiveness’, ‘sense of place’ and ‘sustainable communities’ means that the issues confronting traditional farm buildings cannot be considered in isolation from the patterns of settlement and land use that have been inherited from the past or the changing demography and structure of rural communities and economies.

TABLE 3: KEY MESSAGES IN NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

National planning policy stresses the importance of:

- An evidence-based approach to future change, requiring ‘a vision for the future of places that responds to the local challenges and opportunities, and is based on evidence, a sense of local distinctiveness and community derived objectives, within the overall framework of national policy and regional strategies’ (PPS 12, *Local Spatial Planning*, 2008, 2.1).
- Not repeating national guidance, but having greater detail and a local interpretation of higher-level policy if evidence based and justified by local circumstances (PPS 12, *Local Spatial Planning*, 2008, 4.32).
- Ensuring that ‘All development in rural areas should be well-designed and inclusive, in keeping and scale with its location, and sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness’ (PPS 7, *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*, 2004, para. 1) and ensuring that developments ‘respond to their local context and create or reinforce local distinctiveness’ (PPS1, *Delivering Sustainable Development*, 2005, para. 36).
- A positive and proactive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment which is evidence based and takes ‘into account the variations in type and distribution of heritage assets, as well as the contribution made by the historic environment by virtue of: its influence on the character of the environment and an area’s sense of place; its potential to be a catalyst for regeneration....’ (PPS 5, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, 2010, HE3).
- Identifying and assessing the significance of heritage assets (as identified by local planning authorities as well as designated assets that meet national criteria). Using this to inform place-shaping, conservation and new development so that it makes ‘a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment’ and enhances or better reveal the significance of a heritage asset (PPS 5, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, 2010, HE 7 and 10.2).
- Achieving sustainable economic growth by promoting thriving, inclusive and locally distinctive rural communities whilst continuing to protect the open countryside (PPS 4, *Planning for Sustainable Economic Development*, 2009). It emphasises the importance of all types of business and enterprise, and the conversion and reuse of appropriately

Besides the importance of agriculture as the dominant land use in rural areas, there is now little difference in the employment profiles of different sectors between rural and urban areas. Recent work by rural economists has demonstrated how hitherto hidden patterns of home-working, partly enabled by access to broadband, are contributing to the economic and social health of rural economies and communities. In its response to the *Matthew Taylor Review of the Rural Economy and Affordable Housing*, the Government accepted a number of key recommendations including:

- ‘the adaptive reuse of otherwise redundant historic buildings could and should play a significant role in delivering’ additional small-scale business, workspace and residential developments’ (Recommendation 29);
- a positive approach to such development which is not linked to public transport ‘would help remove a significant barrier to rural economic development, including the reuse of disused farms or farm buildings, subject to proper assessment of the impact on economic, social and environmental sustainability’ (Recommendation 24).

2 APPROACHES TO FUTURE CHANGE: KEY PRINCIPLES

Future change in historic farmsteads is inevitable. Informed decisions are needed on what the future uses should be and how they can be achieved in a way that conserves and enhances the character of the landscape, the farmstead group and its individual buildings. Approaches to future change, whether at an area and site-based level, should be underpinned by an understanding of:

1. differences in the character of farmsteads in their broader landscape context
2. their sensitivity to and potential to different scenarios for change
3. their significance

2.1 The Character of Farmstead Architecture

A farmstead is the homestead of a farm where the farmhouse and some or all of the working farm buildings are located, some farms having field barns or outfarms sited away from the main steading. The character of farmsteads has been shaped by their development as centres for the production of food from the surrounding farmland, the result being an immense range in their type, scale, form and use of materials. They have always evolved, the result being the loss of buildings, the addition of new buildings, total replacement and, sometimes, total loss.

Most *traditional farmstead buildings* date from the 19th century, survivals of earlier periods being increasingly rare. Traditional buildings can be 'vernacular' or 'designed':

- Vernacular buildings are characteristic of their locality. They often use locally available materials, although they may include the use of imported brick, slate and other materials as these became available in the area. They will often display evidence for successive change, with farmsteads and buildings developing and being added to over time.
- Designed buildings are usually built in a single phase and sometimes in a recognisable architectural style. They are usually marked by a consistent use of local or imported materials, and can be designed by architects, agents or engineers

Industrial buildings can be:

- factory-made prefabricated structures using steel/iron frames and corrugated iron cladding (e.g. Dutch barns as used from the later 19th century) and examples of 1914-40 concrete and industrial brick structures (e.g. silage towers) and groups;
- Post-1950 wide-span and multi-purpose sheds, built in order to economise on farm labour and meet animal welfare standards.

FOR ILLUSTRATED GUIDANCE ON THIS SEE THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CHARACTER STATEMENT AND THE STATEMENTS FOR THE NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS

2.2 Sensitivity to and Potential for Change

The varied historic character of farmsteads and their landscapes will present different sensitivities to the different options for change, depending on the nature of the change proposed and the scale at which it is being applied (see table). Key factors are:

- The density, distribution and visual prominence of farmsteads in the landscape, and whether they are mostly isolated or located in settlements.
- The capacity of the existing road network and access routes to farmstead sites.
- The layout and scale of the farmstead and its associated buildings. Small farmsteads may have less potential for change than a large complex or a listed building. Some farmstead plan types may have greater potential to accept change than others. For example, an enclosed, inward-looking courtyard will have less potential for change than a large steading with multiple yards.
- Scale, lighting and layout of individual buildings. Some buildings were multi-functional or needed good internal light (such as stables) and others (for example, dovecotes, pigsties, and threshing barns) were highly specialised in their function. Some buildings will thus be characterised by their generally robust construction, large scale, good levels of natural light and durable building materials. Others will be much more sensitive to adaptive reuse, because they are

- The robustness of building materials and structural condition.

TABLE 4: KEY OPTIONS AND THE IMPACTS TO CONSIDER	
<p>Different degrees of change can cumulatively transform the physical character of places and how they are used, valued and perceived. Each of the options for change, and in particular adaptation and new build, will have different impacts upon the site and its surrounding landscape in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any growth in traffic and its impact on tranquillity and the neighbourhood; • the views into, over and out of the site; • setting, boundaries and curtilage, through improvement of access, provision of car parking, development of prominent viewpoints and elevations; • the use of historic open areas such as yards and gardens; • impact of change on the existing buildings, through loss of fabric, new openings, sub-division or amalgamation of spaces; • habitats for wildlife. 	
Option	Impacts to Consider
<p>Maintain Through investment using traditional or non-traditional materials.</p>	<p>The key issues to consider are at a site level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the cost of continued maintenance and repair, sometimes linked to the need for minor adaptation; • the type of repair and its impact on the durability and integrity of historic fabric; • the sources and supply of traditional building materials onto the market.

<p>Adapt Through continued agricultural use or new non-agricultural uses that will affect the working and historic character of traditional farmstead buildings.</p> <p>New Build To enable continued on-farm operations or for a dwelling/non-agricultural business.</p>	<p>The impact of adaptive reuse or new build upon an area will differ, depending on the visual prominence of farmsteads in the landscape, the degree of access to them providing by the road network and their layout and scale..</p> <p>At a site level adaptive reuse for non-agricultural use (including diversification projects that require planning permission) and new build will have an impact on the whole site, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the views into the site; • the impact of any gardens, access and parking on the landscape setting; • the use of existing and creation of new access and open areas; • demand for more natural light (new openings) and the sub-division or amalgamation of spaces; • the loss or creation of fabric.
<p>Collapse/Loss Through continued dereliction or demolition and salvage.</p>	<p>The scale of loss will have a cumulative impact on landscape character. Key issues to consider are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the contribution that farmsteads and traditional working buildings make to landscape character and significance; • the impact of any loss on the strength of landscape character; • the historic and architectural significance of the site/building.

2.3 Assessing Significance

The potential impact of each option can then be considered in relationship to the significance of the site, its surroundings and the buildings and spaces within it. Like sensitivity, significance needs to be considered at different levels:

1. The farmstead site as a whole in its landscape setting.
2. Individual buildings and spaces within the site.

It is important to recognise that at both these levels significance can vary (see text box below). Detailed assessment is only likely to be relevant at the level of individual buildings and spaces with the site.

Local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand

the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset. (PPS 5, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, 2010, HE 6.1).

Historic farmsteads have a wide range of benefits that they bring to wider society. Following the framework of heritage values identified in *Conservation Principles* (2008), these can include:

- Evidential Value, in revealing information through their architecture and landscape context about the patterns of traditional architecture and the development of rural landscapes and settlement.
- Historical Value, through illustrating developments in agricultural and social history, including any associations with notable estates and agricultural improvers, and how these are all reflected in today's landscape.
- Aesthetic Value, through their diversity of forms, scales, shapes and materials, and relationship to the landscapes of which they form part.
- Communal Value, as places to live and work, as wildlife habitats, for their importance as stored energy (representing an historical investment in material and energy), their contribution to locally distinctive places and landscapes, and to the economies and communities of rural areas.

See www.english-heritage.org.uk/conservationprinciples.

Guidance on how to assess significance is provided in Stage 4 of the Area Assessment Framework and Stage 3 of the Site Assessment Framework below.

3. PLANNING TOOLS

3.1 Introduction

The planning tools presented in this report, when used in combination with the evidence base provided by the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project, are intended to:

- *promote positive and tailor-made solutions that are based on an understanding of local character and issues.* An understanding of the historic character of farmsteads and their landscapes can provide a positive and proactive context for spatial planning. It can also inform design solutions to proposals for adaptive reuse, new build and the overall form and pattern of a site in relationship to its surrounding landscape.
- *identify issues and opportunities, including the options for change, at an early stage.* An application for new development, change of use or listed building consent will have a greater chance of success if the key issues are identified and considered at the pre-application stage, and it is well prepared and justified. This can inform consultation at the

earliest possible stage with local authorities, including the preparation of Design and Access Statements, and with other interests potentially affected by the proposals.

This approach builds on the results of work undertaken by English Heritage in collaboration with the former Countryside Agency, the High Weald and Kent Downs AONBs and the Bolton Abbey estate in North Yorkshire.

The Planning Tools are intended to operate at the scale of areas and sites, and are intended to help the user identify the sensitivity to and potential for change of farmsteads in the context of their landscapes, based on an understanding of their inherited character and significance. They comprise:

- **An Area Assessment Framework** for informing the drafting of evidence-based planning guidance and for the purposes of estate and land management.
- **A Site Assessment Framework** designed to assist in developing an understanding of the character, significance and potential for change of a farmstead in order to inform an understanding of the key issues if change is being considered.

Both provide full checklists which can be tailored to local needs and circumstances. In Kent the final stage of the Site Assessment Framework has been worked up as illustrated design guidance, which suggests how future change can capitalise on this inherited character. The framework developed on the Bolton Abbey estate was tailored with the needs of land management in mind, including those practical issues which can directly constrain the options available at the outset.

The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project provides the guidance and evidence base that can inform both scales of the assessment process (see Table 1: Summary of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project).

TABLE 5: THE PLANNING TOOLS SUMMARISED

Use the guidance and the evidence base provided by The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscape Project

AREA ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Identify Issues

What is the nature and extent of designation, and how much has been converted to other uses? How many historic farmsteads are in agricultural or non-agricultural use? What are the local drivers for change? What is their structural condition?

Character Appraisal

Identify the key farmstead and building or site types in the area, their dates and distribution, and their landscape and settlement context.

Sensitivity Appraisal

Assess their sensitivity to the different options for change, particularly adaptive reuse

Significance Appraisal

Assess how traditional farmsteads and buildings contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the area, their rarity and any historical associations.

SITE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The aim of this of to help the user identify at an early stage the key issues relating to individual sites, including consideration of the options for future change.



PRESENTING A SCHEME

If planning permission or listed building consent is required, the Site Assessment Framework can then inform the preparation of an effective scheme for pre-application discussion informed by an understanding of the context of the site and its surroundings. Available design guidance can also be used at this stage, and the need for any detailed recording of historic buildings or archaeology identified. .

3.2 THE AREA ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The aim of the Area Assessment Framework is to consider how farmstead sites and traditional buildings, contribute to landscape character and local distinctiveness. The Area Assessment Framework, in combination with the products of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project (Table 1: Summary of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project), can also be used to develop supplementary planning guidance that is based on an understanding of local character and context.

Guidance can be simply adapted to take account of local needs and circumstances, and English Heritage will work with its partners across the West Midlands to develop this. This will be made available as it is developed and completed.

TABLE 6: THE AREA ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK	
What it does	<p>Informs the development of planning and land management policies and guidance for rural buildings that are based on a clear understanding of local character and context, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the extent of post-1950 change and the identification of traditional farmstead groups and buildings which are key contributors to local distinctiveness; - their visual contribution to landscape character and local distinctiveness, including its amenity value.
Applications	<p>For planners and land managers, to help evidence-based, positive and forward-looking approaches to inform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spatial planning and the development of policy and guidance; • land management strategies, specifically within the ERDP (entry-level and higher level agri-environment schemes), Land Management Information Systems, Land Management Plans and Whole Farm Plans; • heritage management, including archaeological interpretation, recording and research strategies and projects, conservation area appraisals and management plans, conservation management plans.

Stage 1 Issues

Designation

What is the nature and extent of designation?

1. heritage assets may be buildings or archaeological sites included on a local list, within a conservation area, registered park or garden, or within the setting of a designated national asset (scheduled monument or listed building). There are over 69,000 agricultural list entries in England, under 6% of which are listed at grade I or II*: 55% contain a farmhouse or farm dwelling, 24% a barn function, 6% stables and 11%

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/protecting/heritage-protection/what-can-we-protect/listed-buildings/>

2. Other area designations: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Park, designations for nature conservation and biodiversity, World Heritage Sites.

Drivers for Change

What are the most significant drivers for change in the area under consideration, and how are they likely to impact on the character of farmsteads and landscapes? See Table 3 for guidance.

Present Condition and Use of Historic Farmsteads and Buildings

Consider:

- the Photo Image Survey, which records the rates of conversion and dereliction for each National Character Area and local authority area;
- the results of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project, which has analysed the patterns of agricultural, residential and commercial/ business use of historic farmsteads (see *Table 1: Summary of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project*).

For a summary of the Photo Image Survey see the *Extending the Evidence Base* report on the HELM website - www.helm.org.uk/farmbuildings.

Stage 2 Character Appraisal

Identify:

- 1 *Historical Development of the Area*
 - how the area has developed over time, with a particular focus on its agricultural and rural history
- 2 *Landscape and Settlement Context*
 - how farmsteads relate to the pattern and development of settlement in the area, and the patterns and scales of fields and other key characteristics of the landscape such as woodland
- 3 *Farmsteads and Building Types*
 - dating
 - farmstead types
 - key building types
- 4 *Materials and Detail*
 - the key building materials in the area, and any other factors such as craft and estate traditions

This can be done by:

- reference to the Regional and Area Farmstead Character Statements
- using available knowledge

- using the farmsteads mapping data and consulting other records in the county Historic Environment Record
- testing and deepening this understanding through rapid appraisal from public highways, *where necessary*.

This is a broad-brush and generalised approach, that that does not require additional resources for site survey. This equates with the method for Outline and Rapid Assessment set out in section 3.2-3 of the English Heritage guidance on Historic Area Assessment (*Understanding Place*, 2010, published on the HELM website on www.helm.org.uk).

The area can be subdivided into distinct character areas. These can simply relate to the National Character Areas, or make use of other area mapping notably Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Landscape Characterisation. See also the County summary reports.

Stage 3 Sensitivity Appraisal

Different types of farmsteads and their landscapes will have different sensitivities to the scenarios for change as set out in section 2.2 of this report. Using the information gathered for Stages 1-3 of the Area Assessment, the user can then consider the potential and sensitivity to change of farmsteads in the area and its sub-areas.

Stage 4 Significance Appraisal

The Regional and Area Farmstead Character Statements (see *Table 1: Summary of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project*) provide guidance on Historical Development, Landscape and Settlement, Farmstead and Building Types and Materials and Detail. Reference to these can then be combined with extensive survey and existing knowledge (from Stage 2) to outline the significance of farmsteads in a regional, sub-regional and national context, and the extent to which they resemble or differ from those of neighbouring areas.

Local Character and Distinctiveness

Significant traditional farmsteads will make a positive contribution to *local distinctiveness* and an area's *sense of place*, through their varied scales and layouts, use of materials and the way that they relate to the surrounding form and patterning of landscape and settlement. They will have one or more of the following:

1. historic groups that contribute to the landscapes and settlements within which they developed;
2. legible historic groups, where the historic buildings can be seen and appreciated in relationship to each other and the yards and other open spaces within and around the farmstead;
3. historic buildings with minimal change to their traditional form, or in some cases their importance as estate or industrial architecture;
4. locally distinctive building materials;
5. heritage assets (see Stage 1 above).

Another key factor in determining the significance of traditional farmsteads in the landscape is the degree of post-1950 change:

- *High Significance.* Substantially intact traditional farmstead groups (including field barns and outfarms) which have a clear visual relationship to the landscapes that they developed within.
- *Medium significance.* Farmsteads fitting into this category will be more difficult to read in relationship to their landscapes, because of the degree of change observable to farmsteads in the area and the post-1950 development of their surrounding landscapes.
- *Low significance.* It is difficult or impossible to read or appreciate the historic character of farmsteads in relationship to their landscapes, as a result of the degree of major change to farmsteads and the surrounding landscape.

The Farmsteads Mapping for the West Midlands, which is stored on each county's Historic Environment Record, also records the degree of change to those traditional farmsteads marked on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey Maps of the late 19th century.

Rarity and Historic Associations

It is rare to find farmsteads and their buildings, especially coherent groups with little or no post-1950 change, that can be understood and appreciated in relationship to:

- common-edge settlement with small farms;
- country house estates and parks;
- archaeological features resulting from land use and settlement - the remains of shrunken or deserted sites (eg monastic granges), settlements (eg deserted medieval villages, platforms of farmsteads) and legible field systems (ridge and furrow).

Some areas may also be associated with significant estate centres, such as medieval monastic estates and estates in the forefront of 18th-19th century agricultural improvement.

There are also a very small number of rare or significant late 19th/early 20th century industrial buildings with minimal changes to their original form.

THE SITE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The Site Assessment Framework applies equally if:

- the farmstead is in single ownership;
- ownership of the farmstead has already been divided;
- the options for change for one or more buildings are being considered.

It is a checklist designed to assist in understanding key issues if change is being considered, before a detailed planning application is put together. English Heritage has published guidance on the adaptive reuse of farm buildings (*The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A guide to good practice*) which seeks to promote high standards in design at the outset, including appropriate detailing, materials, craftsmanship and the setting of buildings (www.helm.org.uk/farmbuildings).

The Site Assessment Framework has four stages that aim to help the user to identify:

1. Site and management issues
2. Character and Condition
3. Significance
4. Issues to consider and discuss with planners

This will help the user understand:

- how the character of the site and its setting results from past change, and how this can inform opportunities for the reinforcement and enhancement of character;
- how the impact of the various options for change will differ, depending on key factors such as whether the farmstead is isolated or located within a settlement, its prominence in views across the landscape and the scale, layout and form of the buildings, including their condition.

TABLE 7: THE SITE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

What it does	<p>Informs an early understanding of where there may be opportunities for further change, what is significant and needs conservation, and what can be enhanced or reinstated, based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preliminary issues e.g. access to highways and services, condition, planning constraints; • the degree of change to historic fabric and the surrounding area, which should indicate and suggest where there may be opportunities for retention of important older structures and detail, the reinstatement of lost features and areas or the redevelopment, redesign or remodelling of other parts; • the landscape context and overall form of the whole group, including how buildings face towards or away from areas for access, movement and containment within and around the site;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the scale, lighting and internal sub-division of individual buildings; • the survival of unusual, rare or historic features.
Applications	For applicants and planners, to help the user gather evidence and identify options for change and key issues to be considered, including pre-application discussion if listed building consent or planning permission is required. Also to inform approaches to design and appropriate levels of recording if required.

The approach for Site Assessment is based upon the comparison of modern and historic maps, and observation of the site and its landscape context, in order to determine the significance of a site and its buildings, and its potential for change. This will help the user identify the impact of the options for change, and the issues to inform pre-application discussion if planning permission or listed building consent is required. In particular it will help identify:

- major issues that may influence the potential uses of the farmstead;
- how the farmstead contributes to the character and local distinctiveness of the area;
- the significance, sensitivity to, and potential for change of, the farmstead in its landscape setting;
- the architectural patterning – the building styles, materials and details – that are relevant and important to maintaining or enhancing the character of the farmstead as a group in its landscape setting.

By using the Assessment Framework the user will then be able to demonstrate:

- how the character and significance of the farmstead in its landscape setting has been understood;
- how the form and scale of any proposed development has been informed by an understanding of the context of the site and its surroundings;
- the justification for proposals for retention, reinstatement, redevelopment and enhancement which reveal or enhance the historic character and significance of the farmstead;
- how approaches to new design, including the scale, height, alignment and materials of proposed buildings, are informed by an understanding of the character of the farmstead and its significance.

Discussions with the relevant local authority may indicate that planning permission or listed building consent is required. The understanding gained from the Assessment Framework can therefore inform approaches to an effective scheme, that will suggest where there may be opportunities for further managed change, what is significant and needs conservation, and what can be enhanced or reinstated. It can also provide the architectural

advice that responds to the landscape context, such as the materials, building styles and details that are relevant to maintaining or enhancing the character of the farmstead as a group.

TABLE 8: THE SITE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Stage 1 Site and Management Issues

Ownership, use, access to highways and services, designation (landscape, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, nature conservation etc.).

Stage 2 Character & Condition

Using historic Ordnance Survey maps and site survey identify the inherited (historic) character of the farmstead group and its buildings within its landscape setting and assess how the farmstead has changed over time.

Stage 3 Significance

Assess the significance of the farmstead in relation to:

- The farmstead in its landscape setting;
- Farmstead form and completeness;
- The individual buildings.

Stage 4 Potential for Change

Using the understanding of character and significance, identify constraints and opportunities, before entering into pre-application discussions with the planning authority (where Planning or Listed Building Consent is required). Also consider additional issues such as personal objectives and resources, planning policy and the need for further research or recording.

Preparing a Scheme

Use this understanding to inform approaches to conversion, new build and modification, materials and architectural features. Proposals should indicate where buildings can be retained, features reinstated or areas remodelled and enhanced, or where opportunities for redevelopment or reorganisation of the farmstead will contribute to its character based on the information collected up to this stage in the Assessment Framework. The understanding gained from the Assessment Framework can help to develop a scheme for the site, and options for conversion and new build, materials and architectural features.

STAGE 1 ESTABLISH SITE AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

1. Identify the Site – Boundary and Ownership

Identifying the boundary of the whole site is a key requirement for the later stages of the assessment. The buildings may face or have direct access to small enclosed areas which served as gardens and yards for farm animals or stacking harvested crops. Small paddocks, orchards or blocks of woodland would generally be considered to form part of the surrounding farmland, and not the farmstead. The use of historic maps in Stage 2 will show how the boundary has changed.

A site may be in a single ownership or tenancy, or split into different parts. This and the type of ownership – freehold, tenanted, corporate, utility etc – can be a major factor in determining the approach taken towards determining the options for sustainable management. Large estates, for example, can trade an important asset against an adaptable one, whereas such an option may not be available to an individual owner.

2. Site Access and Services

This is a critical initial consideration, as so much is determined by the capacity of the existing road network and access routes to the site. Access to roads must be safe with clear sightlines. Some forms of commercial and community use will require suitable access via a two-lane highway.

Consider:

- Distance from public highway
- What access is there to the site?
- Width of access road(s)
- Vehicular access in/out of site
- Are there accessible public transport services?
- Are there Public Rights of Way which pass through or adjacent to the farmstead?
- What services (water, sewage, electricity, telecommunications) are provided to the site? What potential is there?

3. Designations

It is important to identify whether there are any statutory or local designations relating to the landscape, heritage or biodiversity. Designated landscapes, areas or features may require specific applications in addition to a planning application and involve consultation with other bodies.

Area Designations:

Establish whether the site is within or adjacent to a National Park or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,.

Heritage Assets

See *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps5/>

Heritage assets comprise assets included on a local list or register held by the local authority or designated assets (e.g. scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and registered parks and gardens). Nationally designated assets are subject to the policies in HE9 and HE10 of PPS5. The effect of an application on the significance of a local heritage asset (not covered by HE9) is a material consideration in determining the application, and the policy principles are set out in Policy HE8.

Buildings which contribute to the significance of World Heritage Sites (in the West Midlands Ironbridge Gorge) or Conservation Areas will be subject to policies HE9.1-4 and HE10.

Assets with archaeological interest that are not currently designated as scheduled monuments 'but which are demonstrably of equivalent significance' should also be considered subject to the policies in HE9.1-4 and HE10. In the case of farmsteads these will most commonly comprise the remains of shrunken medieval settlement and cultivation, notably ridge and furrow.

Wildlife and Habitats

- Farmstead buildings and their landscape settings provide, or can provide, important habitats for local fauna and flora. Local authorities now have a duty (through the NERC Act 2006) to take nature conservation into account.
- *Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)* are areas of land notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as being of special nature conservation interest.
- *Protected species* Certain species, bats for example, are protected as European Protected Species. Expert advice will be required to ascertain whether a protected species is present within or adjacent to a farmstead site.
- Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC) are sites of non-statutory designation, usually assessed by the local authority or wildlife trust, which is recognised by local planning policies.

STAGE 2 IDENTIFY THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Character

Identifying the inherited character of the site will help the user:

- understand how the farmstead and its surrounding landscape results from change over time and how new types of farmsteads and buildings have been developed, often in close relationship to the changes in the farmland around them;
- identify its sensitivity to the changes being considered, due to key factors such as whether the farmstead is isolated or located within a settlement, its prominence in views across the landscape and the scale, layout and form of the buildings, including their condition;

- inform (at Stages 4-6, after discussion with the local authority) approaches to the future use of both traditional buildings and industrial-scale sheds, and the extent to which future approaches to design should capitalise on the traditional character or diverge from it.

This stage requires looking at:

- the landscape;
- the farmstead;
- the buildings.

ILLUSTRATED GUIDANCE ON THESE CAN BE FOUND IN THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CHARACTER STATEMENT AND THE STATEMENTS FOR THE NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS

This can be achieved through a desk-based survey and site survey:

Desk-based survey

Use historic Ordnance Survey maps of around 1900, and then modern maps and aerial images to identify how the present character of the site and its surrounding area results from past change.

Consider:

- The location of the site, by considering whether it forms part of a settlement (village or hamlet) or whether it is isolated, and, if so, to what extent?;
- The scale of the fields and the form of the boundaries around the site (e.g. small, irregular fields, medium fields with wavy boundaries, regular fields with straight boundaries);
- The historic plan form of the farmstead – how the buildings are arranged around and provide access to yards and other areas within and around the farmstead, gardens, the relationship of the farmhouse to the farmstead, the presence of other dwellings.

The loss of a larger historic building will usually have a greater impact on character than the loss of a small building. It may, therefore, be useful to assign the level of change between the historic maps and the present to one of the following four categories:

- Substantially intact – less than 25% change;
- Partial change – 25% -50% change or loss of the traditional buildings;
- Significant change – more than 50% change or loss of the traditional buildings;
- Major change: More than 75% change or loss of the traditional buildings.

THE WEST MIDLANDS FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPES PROJECT HAS MAPPED THESE PATTERNS OF CHANGE AND SURVIVAL ACROSS THE WHOLE REGION, PROVIDING A CONTEXT FOR DECISION-MAKING AT A LOCAL SCALE

TABLE 9: HISTORIC MAPS

Comparison between historic and modern maps and site survey will help identify the changes to the site and its surrounding area.

Ordnance Survey maps date from the 1850s.

www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/products/historicalmapdata

Most local libraries hold copies of the 2nd and 3rd edition maps of the 1890s-1920, which clearly show the buildings and which were compiled at the end of the last major period of development of the traditional farmstead.

County record offices and websites can hold historic mapping and earlier maps such as tithe maps which date from the 1830s-40s or estate surveys which may assist in dating some of the buildings. See also www.old-maps.co.uk.

Aerial views can also assist in site assessment. See www.bing.com/maps and www.maps.google.com.

Site survey

- Working from the form of the landscape around the site, identify key views into the farmstead, particularly from publicly accessible areas;
- Identify and record key features in the landscape around the farmstead that help frame views towards the steading such as houses, woodland, orchards, ponds, earthworks, quarries etc.;
- Consider the scale and impact of the farmstead in the landscape, and what are the most visible features – buildings will differ in their form and scale, and also in the dominance of their walls or roofs;
- Record the construction and form of the boundaries to the farmstead and adjacent fields, e.g. walls, hedges, fences;
- Identify, where possible, and briefly describe individual buildings:
 - the building types in terms of their historic and present uses, and whether they are industrial or traditional in their style;
 - the form and scale of the buildings;
 - the principal elevations of the buildings, including their main points of access and how they relate to enclosed spaces and routeways within and around the farmstead;
 - the number and size of openings (including blocked openings);
 - construction and materials – mass-produced iron and steel-framed buildings, temporary or permanent, timber-frame, mass-walled, or iron framed.

Much of the information collected in this stage can be recorded on sketch plans and in photographs.

Condition

Determining condition is a critical initial stage, as it will inform consideration of the cost relating to each option and may influence planning decisions regarding the potential for re-use.

Assess whether the condition of each of the buildings is:

- Very bad – ongoing structural cracks/failure and damage to roof, the latter leading to deterioration of interior structure and fabric; need for major structural repairs.
- Poor – most elements of the fabric and external joinery and internal fittings and carpentry have deteriorated, due to spalling/deterioration of walls, leaking roof, defective rainwater goods; need for minor structural repairs.
- Fair – structurally sound, but needs general repair and maintenance. May include stable structural cracks.
- Good – structurally sound and well-maintained, minimal intervention required.

If the building is listed and in very bad or poor condition has it been identified as a 'Building at Risk' and included in the national Heritage at Risk Register (for Grade I and II* buildings) or identified by the local planning authority in a local at risk register (Grade II listed buildings and / or local list buildings)? For Heritage at Risk and the regional register see:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/protecting/heritage-at-risk>

STAGE 3 IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANCE

The information gathered on the character and sensitivity to change of the group at Stage 2 can now be used to inform determination of the significance of the farmstead, and in particular:

- the farmstead in its landscape setting;
- the form and completeness of the farmstead group;
- the importance and character of the individual buildings;
- the position and function of spaces within and around the farmstead.

Significant traditional farmsteads will have one or more of the following:

- legible historic groups that have experienced little or no change since the late 19th century (2nd Ed OS map);
- historic groups that have a clear visual relationship to the landscape that they developed within;
- locally characteristic building types with minimal change to their traditional form;
- locally characteristic building materials;
- include listed buildings, listed working buildings being of particular significance to the farmstead.

There is also a very small number of rare or significant late 19th/early 20th century industrial buildings with minimal changes to their original form.

ILLUSTRATED GUIDANCE ON THE CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF FARMSTEADS CAN BE FOUND IN THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CHARACTER STATEMENT AND THE STATEMENTS FOR THE NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS

STAGE 4 POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

The aim of this stage is, using the understanding gained from using Stages 1-3 of the Assessment Framework, to bring together and identify the key issues that must be considered before the potential for change is discussed with planners, in particular:

- how the inherited historic character of the site and its setting can inform opportunities for the reinforcement and enhancement of character;
- whether the farmstead is isolated or located within a settlement, its prominence in views across the landscape and the scale, layout and form of the buildings, including their condition.

Checklist for Landscape

Issues and opportunities

Consider:

- The importance of key views into the site – are there views to the site that have little or no potential for change or parts of the farmstead that are not visible from the landscape and may have potential for change?
- How would the removal of buildings impact on the landscape setting of the farmstead and the character and significance of the farmstead? What opportunities are there for the enhancement of the character of the landscape and farmstead?
- Are there prominent roofs or walls where the insertion of new openings would be detrimental to the landscape character of the farmstead?
- The potential impact of new access routes or alterations to existing access routes – this is a critical initial consideration, as so much is determined by the capacity of the existing road network and access routes.
- The potential impact of the creation of new curtilages and parking on the landscape setting – using buildings to provide space for cars and other elements which may intrude on the rural landscape.
- The impact of any gardens, access and parking on the landscape setting.
- Demand for more natural light (new openings) and the sub-division or amalgamation of spaces.
- Are there opportunities to enhance the landscape setting of the farmstead, the wider landscape or biodiversity through restoration or introduction of features such as hedges, ponds or tree planting?
- Farmsteads were vibrant places connecting people to the landscape around them. This functional relationship with the land, and the role of

- Degrees of enclosure:
 - *Working spaces* are open areas within and around the farmstead which functioned for stacking crops and moving livestock and vehicles and can be very sensitive to change. They offer obvious opportunities for the reinforcement and enhancement of character as they provide the overall space and setting for buildings and contained areas (yards and gardens) within farmsteads, enabling an appreciation of their relationship to each other. Working spaces on the perimeter of a farmstead, including those for stacking corn and other small enclosures, serve to link the outer edges of the farmstead to its surrounding landscape.
 - *Yards* are areas for containing livestock, particularly cattle, onto which buildings face. Single or multiple yards are of fundamental importance to the development of many farmsteads and can range from fully enclosed, private spaces surrounded by buildings to more open yards served by one or two buildings. Some farmsteads, especially those that are dispersed in their form, are not focused on any single yard area but may have several yards relating to individual buildings or groups of buildings.
 - *Gardens* can stand within or to one side of the farmstead, and historically developed as private areas with a distinct and separate character. They may be screened from the working areas of the farm by hedges or walls.

Guidance

- Ensure that views to and from the site work with the surrounding topography and the cover provided by existing trees.
- Consider enhancement with tree cover to mitigate against the effects of cold winds.
- Ensure that the choice of planting and landscaping (trees, hedges, shrubs etc), and that the scale and form of any proposed enclosure boundaries on the edge of the site, is informed by and responds to local character and enhances habitat for wildlife.
- Work with historical points of access to and patterns of movement around the steading.
- Retain and enhance the visibility and character of spaces around and within the steading.
- Work with the form, orientation and hierarchy of buildings within the group and their relationship to spaces around and within the steading.
- Minimise hardstandings.
- Maintain the sense of space between buildings, and between working buildings and the farmhouse.
- Maintain the relationship between open spaces and the facing and orientation of buildings

- Avoid increase in boundaries or boundaries of inappropriate character which undermine their integrity as individual farmsteads.

Checklist for the farmstead group

Issues and opportunities

Consider:

- The opportunities or constraints offered by the plan form and the level of change.
- Access – some farmsteads may only have a single, private point of access, which constrains the volume of movement to and from the site, while others may stand alongside or sit astride a road or public path or be at a junction of routeways giving public access to the centre of the farmstead. Understanding and maintaining the relationship between routeways and buildings is vital to conserving the character of historic farmsteads.
- The form and scale of the buildings – note the scale of the whole group and the differing scale of individual buildings. Buildings of different scales – from post-1950 sheds to smaller-scale traditional buildings – will clearly present different capacities for change, and reflect their historical function and importance. The different scales and forms of buildings offer different opportunities for change.
- The number and size of the openings and the need for new openings and the existing sub-division of the internal spaces. Consider evidence for lost floors and partitions, historic features such as stalls, machinery, grain bins and floor surfaces, exposed carpentry including roof trusses and floors, historical graffiti and marks of lost features.
- The presence of internal features, such as machinery.
- The durability and vulnerability of the building materials.

Guidance

- Retain the clear separation, in terms of character, between domestic and working buildings.
- Retain solid-to-void proportions (i.e. the relationship of existing doors and windows to wall and roof).
- Minimise alterations to prominent and significant external elevations, through careful attention to internal planning and how and where to introduce or borrow light.
- Conserve open interiors with impressive proportions and long sight lines.
- Retain historic features including door and window treatment, exposed roof trusses, floor structure, machinery, floor surfaces.

Additional Issues

There are additional issues that need to be considered at this stage:

Personal Objectives and Perceptions

- What are the personal objectives and perceptions of the applicant?
- Do the resources available match the objectives?

Planning Policies

The constraints and opportunities for development in rural areas are set out in national and local planning policy. Local planning policies for re-use often require employment uses to be considered before residential for adaptive re-use schemes, and set out criteria to assess development proposals.

- Review national and local planning policies and guidance.
- If there are existing uses on the site will they be displaced? Will they require new build on the site or elsewhere?
- Refer to detailed planning considerations include issues such as:
 - over-looking
 - loss of light
 - noise

Economic and Community Issues

National planning policy encourages local authorities to support diverse and sustainable farming enterprises and for the local authority criteria for re-use to take account of settlement patterns and accessibility to service centres, markets and housing. Consider:

- opportunities for community and economic use, including social housing;
- local employment pressures (trends, nearby markets/employment centres, types of employment);
- market and rental values for various uses;
- communications, including access to and bandwidth of broadband.

Sustainability

Sustainability is an essential consideration for all planning applications. Sustainability should not just consider car journeys but should examine all aspects of the sustainability of the proposed development. Consider:

- the pattern and density of settlement in the surrounding area;
- the potential for home-working;
- transport, including distance to services and public transport;
- thermal efficiency;
- the potential for micro-generation through ground-source heating, solar and wind power;
- the use of grey water recycling and reed bed sewage disposal;
- the cost and availability of traditional building materials including locally sourced materials and the salvage of materials;

Materials

The use of materials of appropriate quality is essential in ensuring a successful scheme. Consider:

- the cost and availability of traditional building materials;

- the potential for salvage of materials.

Wildlife and Habitats

Farmsteads and their settings provide opportunities to enhance habitats for wildlife through the integration and restoration of key features such as ponds, trees and boundaries which connect farmsteads to their surrounding landscapes. In addition:

- Buildings provide important habitats for birds and mammals (including bats), which can be provided through nest boxes, eaves and roof design, retaining rough surfaces and using the small openings typical of farm buildings.
- Buildings provide habitats for species from all plant groups, which should not be removed unless they are clearly causing damage and speeding up weathering.
- Regular maintenance on a rolling basis is good for wildlife as only a proportion of the building is affected at any one time.
- The water content of the subsoil over the whole site is critical in preventing subsidence and damp – trees may be only one part of a complicated set of issues including drainage in and around the site, and identifying all sources of damp.

See also:

- http://www.buffalodesign.co.uk/clients/bats/bio_bats.html for guidance on bats
- <http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/wildlifegarden/> for guidance on attracting wildlife to gardens
- <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-wabman.pdf> for very full guidance

Need for further survey, recording and analysis

The initial assessment of character and significance may have identified buildings that require further, more detailed examination to fully understand their origins and development to inform development proposals. Conditions for recording a building or farmstead may be attached to a planning or listed building consent for recording before the commencement of building works to create a record of the site in its agricultural form. Some farmstead sites may be considered to have archaeological potential and may require further assessment. Surveys for wildlife that may be impacted by the proposed development may also be required. Such recording is likely to be undertaken by consultants and will incur a cost to be borne by the owner.

Seek advice from:

- the local authority Planning or Conservation Officer regarding the need for more detailed building recording to inform the proposed scheme or to be carried out before changes are made;
- the local authority Archaeologist regarding the potential for the requirement of archaeological investigation;
- the local authority Ecologist regarding the need for an ecological survey to establish the nature conservation interest of the site and its setting.

