



Historic England

Agricultural Buildings

Listing Selection Guide



Summary

Historic England's twenty listing selection guides help to define which historic buildings are likely to meet the relevant tests for national designation and be included on the National Heritage List for England. Listing has been in place since 1947 and operates under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. If a building is felt to meet the necessary standards, it is added to the List. This decision is taken by the Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). These selection guides were originally produced by English Heritage in 2011: slightly revised versions are now being published by its successor body, Historic England.

The DCMS' *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings* set out the over-arching criteria of special architectural or historic interest required for listing and the guides provide more detail of relevant considerations for determining such interest for particular building types. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-of-selection-for-listing-buildings>.

Each guide falls into two halves. The first defines the types of structures included in it, before going on to give a brisk overview of their characteristics and how these developed through time, with notice of the main architects and representative examples of buildings. The second half of the guide sets out the particular tests in terms of its architectural or historic interest a building has to meet if it is to be listed. A select bibliography gives suggestions for further reading.

Historic farmsteads and their buildings make a major contribution to the richly varied character of our countryside, and illustrate the long history of farming and settlement in the English landscape. This selection guide offers an overview of the development of farmstead plans; of the main building types likely to be encountered; of the main phases of agricultural history in England since the Middle Ages; and of regional variation; and gives selection guidance to be used when assessing agricultural buildings for Listing.

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Front cover

Mid-nineteenth-century, large-scale, accommodation for cattle at Barrington Court, Somerset.

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Introduction

Historic farmsteads and their buildings make a major contribution to the richly varied character of our countryside, and illustrate the long history of farming and settlement in the English landscape. England has a huge range of geology, displaying greater variety within small areas than anywhere else in Europe: this is reflected in the often striking use of local materials and techniques in farm buildings, and in their relationship with the land itself. Farming practices have also varied enormously between regions resulting in a great diversity of building type, size and farmstead layout. For example, in East Anglia the older timber-framed farm buildings are concentrated on the heavy clays of the wood-pasture landscape of south-east Norfolk and Suffolk, while the large planned farms of brick or brick and flint are found on the later enclosed areas of heath nearby. Individual farm buildings could be small-scale and dispersed, as in the wood pasture landscapes of the Kentish and Sussex Weald or the moorlands of west Cornwall, or set out in strong linear groupings, as in many upland areas of northern England and the Welsh borders, or highly integrated in planned layouts, most commonly in lowland areas with larger arable-based farms that need to process large quantities of crops and feed yard-based livestock. Some areas of the country specialised in the production of crops such as hops or fruit that required specialist buildings like the oast houses of the south-east and west midlands and the cider houses of Herefordshire and the south-west. All in all there is enormous diversity.

This selection guide offers an overview of the development of farmstead plans; of the main building types likely to be encountered; of the main phases of agricultural history in England since the Middle Ages; and gives selection guidance to be used when assessing agricultural buildings for listing.

Earlier agricultural structures and their associated landscapes are treated in an archaeological selection guide covering [Agriculture](#). Other agriculture-related buildings such as deer hunting structures are covered in the [Garden and Park Structures](#) selection guide and mills in the

[Industrial Buildings](#) selection guide. Farmhouses range from humble vernacular buildings to large, polite, showpieces: these are treated in the various Domestic selection guides, notably [Domestic 1: Vernacular Houses](#) and [Domestic 3: Suburban and Country Houses](#).

1 Understanding Farmsteads and Farm Buildings

1.1 The landscape context

Farmsteads stand within wider landscapes (Fig 1). The size and density in the landscape of farms and fields, and their character, result from the type of farming practised, with farms ranging from the largest corn producing holding to the smallest dairying or stock rearing outfit. Historical patterns of settlement and land use can reach back into the medieval period and even earlier,



Figure 1
Ewepen Farmbuildings, Sherborne, Gloucestershire. In the Cotswolds, where stone was plentiful, the vernacular tradition lingered much later than in those parts of the country where brick was gratefully adopted. This barn, and the adjoining shelter, are of about 1860. Although of relatively late date the farmstead makes a very strong contribution to its locality. Listed Grade II.

although elsewhere there has sometimes been radical change. At the one extreme are areas of dispersed settlement with few or no villages, and here the landscape has always been dominated by scattered hamlets and farmsteads. On the other hand, in areas of nucleated settlement, medieval communities typically worked the land, laid out in open fields, from villages; the modern farming landscape, of enclosed fields and isolated farmsteads, was established only in the last few hundred years. Other areas have a mix of settlement patterns.

1.2 Farmstead and building types

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 out-farms sited away from the main stading. Farmsteads (or steadings as they are known in the northernmost parts of England) perform several basic functions. The farmhouse provides shelter for the farmer and his family, while the agricultural buildings provide for the housing and processing of crops, the storage of vehicles, implements and fodder and the accommodation of livestock. Building functions fall into two broad types: multi-functional buildings, on the one hand, and specialist buildings on the other. This latter category includes structures specialising in crop processing and storage (such as barns, hay barns, cider

houses, oast houses, maltings and granaries) or designed to accommodate animals (including ox and cow houses, shelter sheds, stables and pig sties) and birds (dovecots and poultry houses).

The relationship between farm-based activities determines how buildings are arranged around the farmstead, and how they relate to the house. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed increased efforts to unite these activities into one range, especially in pastoral areas with little corn and longer winters and where there was an obvious advantage in having cattle and their fodder in one enclosed building.

The desire to unify and integrate these functions became much greater after 1750 as improvers looked to raise farming standards and increase productivity. By the late nineteenth century farmsteads had developed into a range of types, which can broadly be distinguished between planned farmsteads designed as a set piece, often by an architect or agent and in accordance with nationally-publicised ideas, and evolved farmsteads whose buildings reflect more traditional building techniques and regional farming systems, and which grew up over time. The broad farmstead plan types divide into:

- **Courtyard plans**, focused around one or more focal working yards for cattle, the collection of their manure (extremely important for fertiliser), and other purposes. They subdivide into loose courtyard plans with detached buildings – often with irregular site boundaries and resulting from piecemeal development – and regular courtyard plans of interlinked buildings where the buildings and yards often result from one or more phases of replanning.
- **Linear and L-shaped plans** where the house and working buildings are attached and in-line, which are concentrated in the upland areas of northern and western England and found in areas of smallholdings where part-time farmers were employed in local industries.

- **Dispersed plans**, where the buildings and yards are scattered with no clear focal area. These may have the buildings and yards set within a paddock area or set along a routeway, and are concentrated cattle-rearing areas. They are often bisected by routeways and public footpaths giving a high level of public access to the farmstead.

Farmstead plans are of interest because they evidence local farming regions, and in time the emergence of more advanced agricultural regimes (or sometimes short-term enthusiasms) and because, along with natural landforms and field patterns, they are essential components of rural landscapes.

Smallholdings

These are distinct from farmsteads, and coherent surviving examples are now very rare. They either have no defined plan type or they fall into the categories of the smallest plan types. They can be identified from their position, often set within areas of enclosure of common land and associated with areas of industrial activity such as mining or quarrying, and consist of very small agricultural units, often run in conjunction with other economic activities such as mining or the transportation to market of its products.

2 Specific Agricultural Building Types

2.1 Crop-related buildings

Barns

The barn for storing and threshing corn is the most important building on the farm and usually the largest, though in some areas – usually where little corn was grown – they can be very small. They are generally the oldest and most impressive farm buildings to be found on farms and they dominate the statutory lists in terms of which kinds of farm buildings are designated. The traditional threshing barn plan, with its bays providing storage for the crop flanking a floor where it could be threshed and winnowed, prior

to storage, remained comparatively unaltered between the twelfth and early nineteenth centuries. Threshing bays in the centre of the barn had opposing doors, which when opened enabled a through-draft to help separate the grain from the chaff. Those associated with medieval ecclesiastical estates are particularly celebrated, such as the mid fourteenth-century Abbey Barn, Glastonbury (Somerset), or the mid thirteenth-century Great Coxwell Barn (Oxfordshire; Fig 2). These buildings constitute outstanding survivals; many (designated before the introduction of listing) will have been scheduled, or subsequently listed at a higher grade.



Figure 2
Barn, Great Coxwell, Oxfordshire. The safe storage of grain crops, especially fresh off the fields, was always essential to the great estates. This massive limestone

barn was built by the Cistercian monks of Beaulieu Abbey about 1246. Inside, aisle posts alternate with a form of base crucks. Listed Grade I.

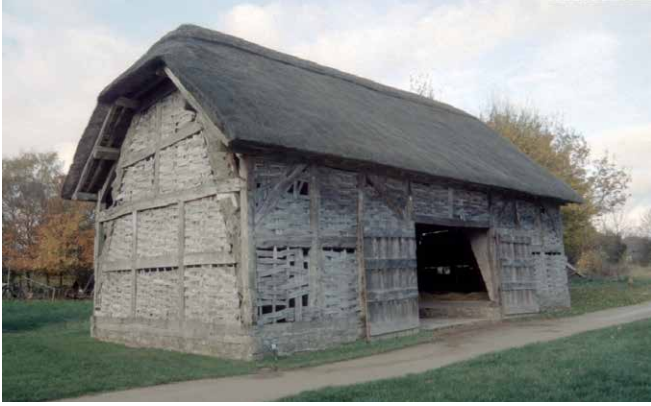


Figure 3
Cruck-framed barn, Cholstrey Court Farm, Leominster, Herefordshire (now at the Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire). While sharing features like large cart doors and threshing floors, pre-nineteenth-century barns have a strongly vernacular character. This sixteenth-century example reflects the predominance of timber-framed building – here the frame is of black poplar – in the Welsh Marcher counties. Removal to a museum does not preclude listing. Listed Grade II.

There is marked regional variation (Fig 3). Barns tended to be small in dairying or stock rearing areas. In the arable areas of the south and east of England, they could be large and were sometimes built in groups to provide shelter to cattle yards. Outside the most specialised arable areas, barns could be multi-functional (Fig 4), housing cattle, horses, grain, farm carts and implements. Sophisticated one and two-storey multi-functional barns such as the bank barns of Cumbria, the Pennines and the south-west, emerge in the late seventeenth century.

Many barns exhibit evidence of mechanisation. Threshing machines were introduced from the later eighteenth century. They were usually powered by horses accommodated in a projecting wheel house (once a common feature in the north-east and south-west); occasionally water and more rarely wind power is encountered. These did away with the need for large cross-ventilated threshing bays, so smaller door openings can be a revealing clue: Samuel Wyatt's home farm at Shugborough (Staffordshire) of the late 1790s is an early example of this. Horse engines and original threshing or winnowing

machines are exceptionally rare. Steam power was exploited by the 1830s, especially in areas such as Northumberland with easy access to coal supplies, and drive belts off steam engines powered farm machinery of many types. The introduction of the portable steam engine and threshing machine in the 1850s heralded the end of the traditional barn but many were converted into cow houses and fodder processing and storage buildings after the 1880s.

As with all agricultural buildings there may also be evidence for change of use. Barn interiors are generally open and plain, but careful inspection may reveal much evidence for re-used timbers (which can relate to much earlier building traditions), former floors, partitions, doors and windows. Alterations such as the expansion of barn space by taking down divisions, extending the building, or adding porches or building an entirely new barn are all changes which are part of the farm's history. Repairs are inevitable too, but the intactness or interest of the carpentry is likely to be an important consideration when alteration has taken place: some barns possess extremely fine structures, forming some of the outstanding examples of historic carpentry anywhere. Threshing floors, often of wood and sometimes of stone flags, brick or earth, are now very uncommon.



Figure 4
Combination Barns, incorporating areas for crop processing alongside housing for cattle, are strongly characteristic of Lancashire (as here) and the north-west.



Figure 5

A field barn near Muker, Yorkshire. Some of the most photographed agricultural landscapes lie around Muker and Thwaite in the Yorkshire Dales. They date from the mid-nineteenth century when the lush valley bottom pastures were enclosed with stone walls and each village farmer built his own barn with accommodation for a few cows beneath a first-floor hay loft. Hundreds survive, and only the best can be listed.



Figure 6

Hay barn, Aston on Clun, Shropshire. Hay barns, the predecessors of Dutch barns, are fairly common in the adjoining western counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Cheshire where pastoral farming and dairying predominated in the nineteenth century. Although eye-catching, most are of relatively late date – this unlisted example is probably of the mid-nineteenth century. Listing is more likely if they form part of a farm group.

Outfarms and field barns

These were built in areas where farmsteads and fields were sited at a long distance from each other (Fig 5). They can be simply threshing barns, or – increasingly from the eighteenth century in upland areas – multi-functional, buildings for livestock and their winter fodder. In steeply-sloping landscapes such barns, termed bank barns, had to be set running down the slope, sometimes with one storey at the upper end and two at the lower. More elaborate ‘outfarms’, typically with shelter sheds for cattle flanking the barn and yard, were built in some areas from the late eighteenth century, typically where newly-enclosed land lay too far from the principal farm to be worked from it.

Detached hay barns

Usually open-sided with roofs supported on high brick, stone, timber or iron piers, sometimes with brick gable walls perforated by ventilation slits. They are most common in areas where large numbers of cattle were housed over winter, and are typically of later nineteenth-century date (Fig 6).

Granaries

Detached granaries are generally of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century date (Fig 7), and many distinctive examples of those built on mushroom-shaped staddle stones (to prevent rats from climbing up) have been protected. Granaries were often built over stables and cartsheds, and combined cartshed/granary ranges are found from the eighteenth and even the late seventeenth centuries in parts of the south and east. Complete granary interiors, with wooden partitioning to grain bins, are relatively unusual. A granary’s age and size can be an indication of a farm’s scale and wealth in arable terms.

Grain and silage silos

In more recent times grain storage has assumed an industrial scale connected, in part, to the rise of the international trade in foodstuffs. The massive concrete grain silo has an important place in the annals of the Modern Movement – several were illustrated by Le Corbusier in *Vers Une Architecture* (1923; published in English as *Towards a New Architecture* in 1927) – and some have been listed. Attached to industrial-scale



Figure 7
Granary, Pike's Farm, Haversham, Buckinghamshire (now at Chiltern Open-Air Museum, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire). Granaries, used to store heavy sacks of grain, are necessarily robust buildings; that, coupled with their elevation off the ground which reduces rot, means they tend to survive relatively well. Even late examples, such as this of about 1840, tend to be firmly in local vernacular traditions.

mill complexes by a harbour, river or railway line, they can be powerful landmarks and the most ambitious and complete deserve careful scrutiny (see the [Maritime and Naval](#) and [Industrial](#) selection guides). Concrete silos for silage (that is, fermented fodder crops including grass intended for winter feed), previously stored in airtight clamps, began to appear on English farms from the 1880s (Fig 8). Early date (they are very rare from before 1914, and rare from before 1939), and group value with listed farm buildings, will be the key selection criteria.

Corn-drying kilns and mills

Large, solidly constructed corn dryers survive from the seventeenth century especially in the north-west and south-west, and were needed to ensure that grain was stored in optimum condition. Corn mills that form part of the farmstead are increasingly rare, particularly those that retain evidence for drying and stowage.

Oast houses

These grew out of the introduction in the sixteenth century of hops to the brewing process. Hops need to be dried if they are to keep, so oasts – or kilns – were developed, with drying

floors placed over ovens. The distinctive cone-shaped vents emerged in the eighteenth century, the better to direct air through the ovens and up into the drying floors. Kent was the leading hop-growing area, and its distinctive round oast houses became standard in the early nineteenth century. Worcestershire oast houses were more likely to be square in plan. Frequently converted into other uses (above all, domestic), they form truly iconic buildings within their landscapes and warrant careful consideration even when altered.

Root and fodder stores

As the widespread use of fodder crops such as turnips and the in-wintering of cattle spread as part of the Agricultural Revolution in the later eighteenth century, it brought about a need for storage. In some of the better-planned farmsteads

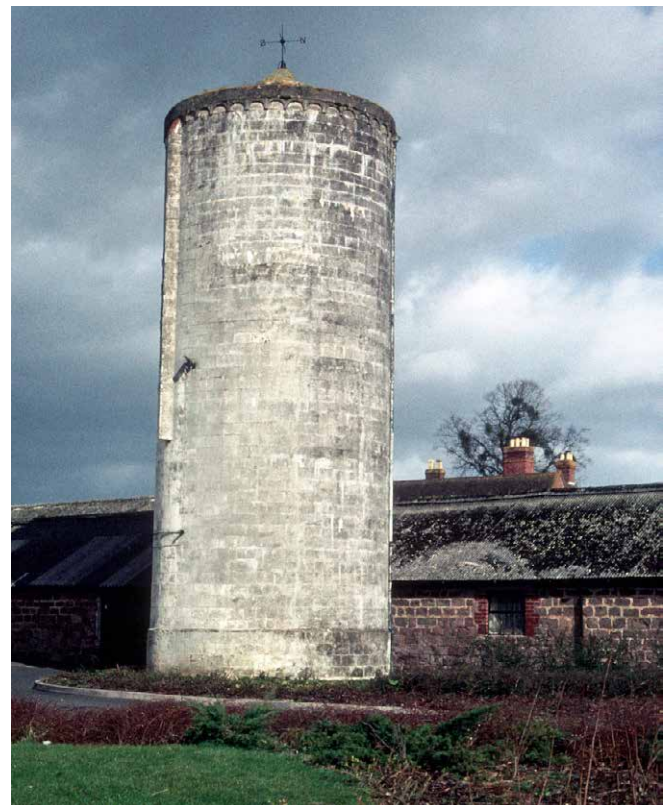


Figure 8
Concrete silo, Holme Lacy, Herefordshire. In England, the move from hay to silage – cut grass stored in an airtight container – began in the 1880s, although it was only during the Second World War that the movement really took off. This American-style concrete silo of 1912 was therefore in advance of the general trend.

the root and fodder stores would be incorporated into the cattle housing, usually located close to where the cattle were stalled, and access provided between the two. On smaller farmsteads the root store may be a separate building or form part of a combination building. Examples are predominantly nineteenth century in date, and may be of interest if part of complete planned layouts or of notable evolved farmstead groups.

Cider houses

These were for the milling of apples and pears for cider and perry, and occur mainly within multi-functional ranges or within farm buildings re-used for cider making, particularly from the nineteenth century. They are rarely found as designed buildings. Their identity is confirmed where the cider press or 'horse' gin exist, or are shown to have existed through marks on the walls or floor. Another indication is the inclusion of a mezzanine or part upper floor used to store apples.

2.2 Livestock accommodation

Cattle housing

This is well-documented in medieval sources, and sometimes suggested in the archaeological record. Longhouses (by which is meant a continuous range uniting accommodation for humans and animals) survive in parts of the north and west of England and are usually the only evidence for cattle housing before the nineteenth century. Any evidence for cattle housing other than this from before the late eighteenth century is exceptionally rare. Cow houses, either free standing or as part of a combination barn, were typically built for dairy cattle. As with barns, there is marked regional diversity in building types, and the names used to describe them: in Lancashire a cow house is called a shippon, in parts of Yorkshire a mistal. In Devon and Somerset they appear as the linhay, an open-fronted two-storey building with hay storage above. Cow houses may be placed underneath threshing barns as in the bank barns of Cumbria, or form part of field barns (such as those which dot the Craven Dales in Yorkshire). The folding of stock (animals, principally cattle) in yards became more general

in the nineteenth century and manifested itself in distinctive building types such as small open-fronted shelter sheds with their own yards in the north-east. Very few cow house interiors of the nineteenth century or earlier have survived unaltered because of changes required to meet hygiene regulations for the production of milk.

Covered yards

The most significant examples of covered yards – developed to house cattle and conserve their manure – are on the most expensively designed planned and model farms of the 1850s to 1870s. It then became increasingly common from the 1880s to roof over former open yards with timber- or metal-framed superstructures.

Dairies

Purpose-built dairies detached from the farmhouse are very rare. From the late eighteenth century, and particularly on gentry and aristocratic estates, examples could be highly ornamental, with decorative tile-work and stone counters for hygienic butter production (see also the Garden and Park selection guide).

Pig sties

Pigs were kept on most farms but little evidence for pig sties survives even in dairying areas, save in Cheshire and Staffordshire. Pigs were often left to run in yards amongst the cattle. Examples which form part of notable ensembles will be the most likely listing candidates (Fig 9).

Sheep housing

Dedicated sheep housing is uncommon. Hogg houses for over-wintering yearling sheep (in parts of the Pennines and Lake District) and shearing sheds are the main forms, and are concentrated in the least accessible parts of the northern uplands. Otherwise, sheep houses were typically one-storied, long and narrow, sometimes with one side open to a foldyard (where animals were fed and fattened) as in parts of the southern English downlands.

Dovecots (or pigeon houses)

These were built from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century to supply tender and highly



Figure 9
Remains of pig sties, Kelmscott Manor Farm, Oxfordshire. One of the improvements in animal husbandry in the later eighteenth century was the movement of pigs into the farmyard, where they could be fed on the by-products of dairying. Previously, they had generally been allowed to forage for themselves. Pig sties survive less frequently than more robust agricultural buildings, and thus have added interest where they do occur.



Figure 10
Multi-functional agricultural building, Morville, Shropshire. This unlisted structure illustrates how historic agricultural buildings see adaptation and change over the centuries. Even so, they tend to remain legible. Here it is immediately obvious the right-hand end, with a broad central door and generous flanking windows, was built as a stable. But internal inspection would be needed to see if its fittings survive; it is these which most lend stables their special interest.

prized meat from spring to autumn (with pigeon manure a valuable by-product), and were marks of considerable status. Whether square, multi-angular, or circular, dovecotes were typically of two storeys with internal nesting holes for the birds and a central revolving ladder (or potence) to give access to them. Most frequently these are found in home farm complexes although sometimes they also fulfilled a decorative function by being carefully placed in polite landscapes. Early and intact examples will be strong listing candidates; some have been scheduled in the past too, such as the fourteenth-century example at Kinwarton (Warwickshire). Considerable numbers survive from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (in the mid-seventeenth century there were thought to be as many as 26,000 in England), sometimes as part of farm groups or as isolated eye-catchers. In 1995 there were reckoned to be just over 2,000 surviving examples.

Rabbit warrens

Rabbit fur and meat was highly-regarded and expensive in the Middle Ages; by the post-medieval period they were managed in large-scale commercial warrens, and were becoming a pest to farmers. These warrens, typically on

upland or marginal land, generally comprised a series of artificial mounds within which the rabbits lived, the whole sometimes contained by an encircling wall and often with a warren keeper's cottage. Where a warren wall stands in association with a listable warrener's cottage it too will be a candidate for listing.

2.3 Stables and cartsheds

Stables

After the barn, the stable is often the oldest building on the farmstead. The value of horses as draught animals meant that stables were generally well built and often placed near the house and given a certain level of architectural and decorative treatment. Stables needed to be well ventilated with plenty of light for grooming and harnessing. Free-standing stables began to be built from the sixteenth century. They are normally two-storey buildings with a hayloft above and the horses stalled across the building, with a central door between two windows along one side (Fig 10). The floors were cobbled, and later of brick, with drainage channels laid across the floors.

Stables attached to wealthy households were typically the most prestigious and architecturally well-finished of the ancillary buildings. They could attain high levels of design and finish, and have plastered ceilings to prevent dust falling through into the horses' eyes. In the later Tudor and Stuart periods horses' deployment in tilting and the *haute école* - the continental-influenced manner of dressage - were further reasons for investing in carefully constructed quarters for horses.

roadways, giving direct access to the fields. Regional variations mainly occur between side or end entrances and whether or not they have overhead granaries (Fig 11). Waggon houses, designed to shelter a loaded waggon overnight, can be considerably larger than simple cartsheds. They were normally open at both ends although some have now been closed off at one end. Pre-nineteenth-century examples are very rare, and include some with earthfast timbers.

Cartsheds and waggon houses

Cartsheds often face away from the farmyard and may be found close to the stables and



Figure 11
Cartshed with granary over, Frocester Court, Gloucestershire. In the Middle Ages Frocester was a great monastic estate, and a thirteen-bay barn survives from that time. About 1850, when ranges of new

buildings were constructed by an improving farmer, their styling was deliberately medieval, and the quality high. Listed Grade II.

3 Historical Summary

3.1 Medieval

Most medieval agricultural buildings are listed, many at a high grade. Most celebrated are the great barns of the ecclesiastical and monastic estates. These often have considerable architectural presence and may possess fine roof carpentry. Also associated with high-status sites – castles, monasteries and manors – are the earliest dovecotes. Lower down the social scale, substantial farm buildings erected by prosperous freeholders and peasant farmers begin to survive from the fourteenth century onwards (as do their houses). These are of great importance and provide the earliest above-ground physical evidence for wealth generated solely

from agriculture at a level below the great landed estates. Complete examples will generally be worthy of listing at a high grade.

3.2 1540-1750

Larger farms and estates benefited from the great land sales that followed the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530-40s. The resultant increase of average farm sizes – particularly in more capital-intensive arable areas such as the downland of Hampshire – was accompanied by a general increase in agricultural incomes and productivity. Substantially complete pre-1750 farm buildings are rare and often provide the first

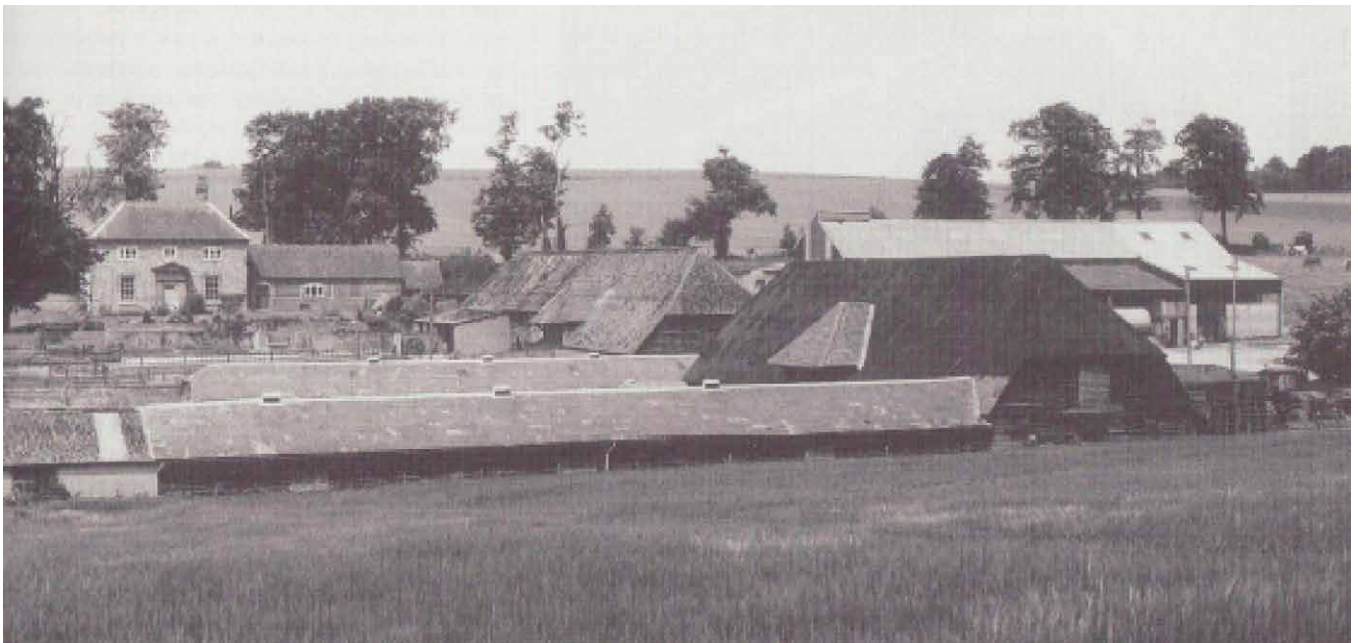


Figure 12
Manor Farm, Chaddleworth, Berkshire. The two half-hipped barns are typical of the central-southern counties. The nearer example was probably built as a

straw barn, storing bedding for the adjoining livestock yard. Both are listed Grade II.

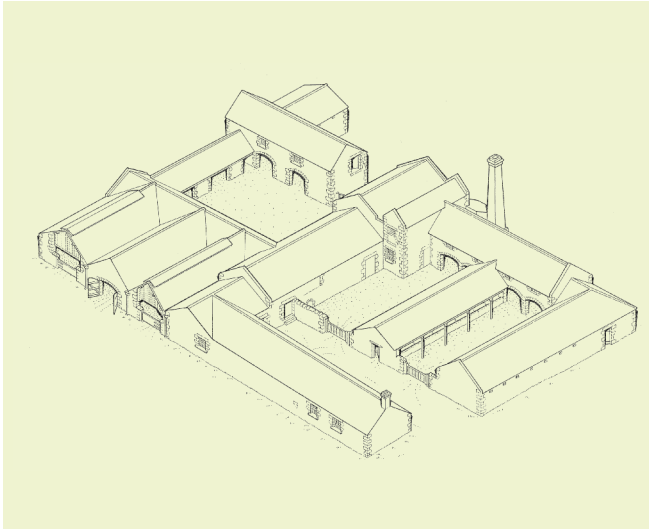


Figure 13
Easington Demesne, Northumberland. An example of how a planned layout could evolve gradually, in this case in several stages between 1810 and 1920. Additions included two further cattle yards, one open and one closed, the latter with its own root store (left, with door open).

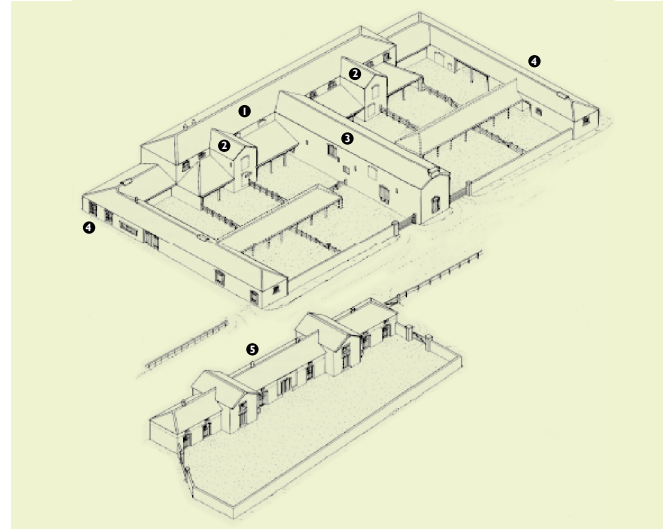


Figure 14
The model home farm at Hareby, Lincolnshire, about 1850. Cattle yards stand either side of a threshing barn and central straw/fodder rooms to facilitate economical distribution. The yards face south to catch the sun, but are uncovered. Key: 1 barn; 2 chaff house; 3 fodder storage and preparation; 4 loose boxes; 5 stable range.

evidence for the development and strengthening of regional traditions and building types, for example the timber-framed west midlands barns that replaced small medieval cruck barns, the split-level bank barns in Cumbria, and the growth of the southern English downland farmsteads with their groups of substantial barns specialising in the large-scale storage and processing of corn (Fig 12). It is very rare for farmsteads to have more than a barn and house dating from this period.

3.3 1750-1880

The Agricultural Revolution of the second half of the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century was defined by investment in new types of stock and crops, buildings, and land management. It was underpinned by an increasing level of government interest and involvement, especially from the 1790s, and saw energetic exchanges of ideas, both at the local level of farmers' clubs and nationally via the Royal Agricultural Society of England, founded in 1837. This was accompanied by the reorganisation and enlargement of holdings, the

final phase of the enclosure of open fields (mostly in the midland counties) and the wholesale enclosure of moors, heath and other 'waste' land (often by parliamentary Act) that had typically not been cultivated since the fourteenth century or even before the Romans. Underpinning all this were rising grain prices and increased demand from a growing urban population. The widespread adoption of improved grasses and winter feed-crops such as turnips, accompanied by the production of good manure by livestock wintered in yards or buildings, played a major role in boosting agricultural productivity.

This period witnessed major developments in farmstead plans and building types, and is reckoned the internationally most important period of farm building development in England (Figs 13-15). After the 1790s, and especially from the 1850s – the era of 'High Farming' when farmers invested heavily in fertilizers, feed, land improvement like drainage, and new buildings – farm building design and layout were affected by a number of factors. Most important among these were the application of scientific principles



Figure 15

A typical improved farmstead on the fringes of the Cheviot Hills. Many nineteenth-century Northumbrian farmsteads incorporated mechanisation for threshing and fodder preparation.

to planning that led to the more rational use of buildings and communication between them (for instance, the use of multi-functional barn ranges and tram lines for hand-pushed carts to transport foodstuffs or manure); the extension of mechanisation (horse, water, wind and - from the 1820s - steam power) for working threshing and other machinery; the import of fertilisers and feed such as oilcake; the accommodation and feeding of ever-increasing numbers of livestock in yards that facilitated the recycling of straw and manure to boost the fertility of the land; and the introduction (particularly from the 1850s, made affordable by railways) of new materials such as imported softwood, machine-made brick, cast-iron fittings and mass concrete. In some areas, but not everywhere, this led to a dramatic break with earlier vernacular building traditions, a tendency that was further boosted by the emergence of a professional building trade, the rise of pattern books, and the frequent gentrification of the yeoman class. Farm buildings of this period often display an attention to architectural detail that reflects this latter social development.

3.4 1880-1940

These years saw a prolonged and regionally varied agricultural depression (cheap imports depressed home prices) from which farming did not recover until the Second World War. Very few buildings from this period are likely to fulfil the listing criteria. Buildings tended to be of the cheapest materials, such as corrugated iron, and many, such as Dutch barns, were prefabricated. Only the wealthiest farmers and landowners continued to build model or experimental farms, which could be of some architectural sophistication. These may justify serious consideration for listing. Hygiene regulations in the inter-war period resulted in new forms of cow house and dairy, resulting in the replacement of earlier forms of housing for dairy cattle by new cow houses with concrete floors and stalls, and metal roofs and fittings. New types of housing for pigs and poultry also appeared, following American and Scandinavian models.

3.5 1940 to the present

Structural changes in the farming industry increasingly required farmers to construct new buildings that economised on labour and conformed 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. The intensification and increased specialisation of farming in the post-war period was accompanied firstly by the introduction of wide-span multi-purpose sheds in concrete, steel and asbestos able to accommodate large machinery, and secondly by the increased levels of environmental control of livestock and on-farm production, particularly of milk. The exceptions are in the national parks (established in the later 1940s) and in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (a designation first assigned in 1956), where traditional materials have been more widely used.

4 Specific Considerations

4.1 Architectural quality, survival and group value

Individual buildings must be assessed on their own merits. However, a building which stands in a group with one or more listed structures (including the farmhouse) is more likely to be of interest than a sole survivor. The presence of a group of historic farm buildings, if of early date, or exceptional architectural quality, or which clearly represent local farming traditions over time, can sometimes strengthen the case for listing at a higher grade. However, it should be noted that not all the buildings in such a group need be listed, or listed at the same grade: each structure will require individual assessment.

4.2 Regional diversity and character

As noted above, historically regional variation in farmsteads and individual building types was very marked, even across small areas. The diversity of building types, and of farmstead form and scale, are the direct result of how developments in farming practice varied from place to place through time. Furthermore, agricultural buildings often provide some of the most important evidence for local building crafts, which may have been largely lost from the housing stock. Careful consideration is necessary to ensure that the special values of characteristic regional farm buildings are given appropriate weight in listing assessment. Regional and local countryside character also derives from field systems, and some buildings may possess extra interest because they relate to an especially intact field

system that is strongly representative of the character and development of a regional farming pattern.

4.3 Fixtures and alterations

Features such as horse engines, and structural alterations to accommodate significant innovative changes in farming practices, will almost always add to a building's interest. This will principally apply in listing terms to buildings before 1850. With stables, where of sufficient quality complete interiors – with stalls, mangers and feed racks – of the nineteenth century and earlier, whilst not as rare as cattle stalling, may make a building suitable for listing. Mounting blocks may deserve inclusion too. There is hardly a farmstead without late nineteenth-century adaptations for increased livestock accommodation. These late additions will rarely merit protection unless associated with an exceptionally complete traditional farmstead or as a major example of planned farmstead architecture, such as those designed by James Douglas on the Duke of Westminster's estates in Cheshire in the mid-Victorian period which are all provided with extensive hay barns and accommodation for dairy cattle which supplied urban markets with dairy produce.

4.4 Planned and model farmsteads

Complete planned, or model, farmsteads of the period up to and including the 1840s are of national significance and should normally be listed where they survive in good condition, the

best at a high grade. More discrimination should be used for the 1850-80 period, with attention being focused on:

- Farmsteads that are exceptionally complete (including those with internal fittings and so forth)
- Distinguished examples of estate architecture
- Farmsteads that in terms of their planning (the housing of steam – or water-powered machinery in projecting mill barns, and the conveyance of fodder to livestock along clear flow-line principles, and so forth) are at the cutting edge of developments in farmstead design.

4.5 Reconstructed buildings

Instances where buildings, primarily barns, have been dismantled and re-erected are quite common, and judgment will be needed as to the level of special interest of the resulting structure, and whether it retains a due degree of authenticity in its reconstruction. Likewise, collapsed buildings may warrant retention on the List where it is possible to salvage significant parts of their structure for re-assembly: mere collapse alone will not be sufficient reason for de-listing.

4.6 ‘Barn’ conversions

Especially since the 1980s farm buildings have increasingly been converted to business or residential use (Fig 16); Kentish oasthouses have undergone such treatment for an even longer period. Such tend to be called ‘barn conversions’ although in fact a wide range of building types has seen adaptation in this way, and not untypically affects whole farmsteads including stables, cow houses, granaries and cart sheds (as well as barns). Judgment will be needed when determining the designation-worthiness of such buildings. The surviving architectural interest of

the structure, authenticity of fabric and group value with other buildings are key factors in assessment. Only in exceptional circumstances will such conversions warrant de-listing.

4.7 Outfarms, field barns and hay barns

While outfarms and field barns of one sort or another can be found in most parts of England, a few areas have fairly dense clusters of examples, typically where there was large-scale enclosure and improvement of land some distance from the main villages and farms in the later eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. Where these concentrations occur, as in parts of the Yorkshire Dales, the buildings are typically of similar character and date, and isolating examples with special interest can be challenging. Any which predate the mid eighteenth century are likely to be of special interest. Early examples (particularly eighteenth-century or earlier ones) which survive in reasonable condition may be likely candidates for designation. With later ones architectural quality and an integrity with a surrounding landscape of fields, trackways and other associated features may be relevant.

Many hay barns date from the late nineteenth century; here listing will be very exceptional. Candidates for listing are likely to be ones which possess distinctive architectural character, or are associated with particularly significant farmstead groups.

4.8 Former agricultural buildings in built-up settings

Survivals of farm buildings in built-up areas may have an extra claim to special interest on account of their rarity and eloquence as witnesses to a pre-urban past.



Figure 16
Stocksfield Farm, Hexham, Tynedale. A nineteenth-century planned farmstead successfully converted to multiple business uses. Listed Grade II.

4.9 Historical interest and dated buildings

Well-documented historical associations of national importance may increase the case for listing, although the building will still ideally possess intrinsic interest as well. Examples would be farmsteads where new machinery or farming systems were pioneered or promoted, or where a clear connection can be proven with an improving landlord of interest. Where agricultural buildings are clearly dated (whether by datestone, documentation, or tree-ring dating) this is likely to add to their interest. It will not in itself be a reason to list.

4.10 Extent of listing

Amendment to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides two

potential ways to be more precise about what is listed.

The empowerments, found in section 1 (5A) (a) and (b) of the 1990 Act, allow the List entry to say definitively whether attached or curtilage structures are protected; and/or to exclude from the listing specified objects fixed to the building, features or parts of the structure. These changes do not apply retrospectively, but New listings and substantial amendments from 2013 will provide this clarification when appropriate.

Clarification on the extent of listing for older lists may be obtained through the Local Planning Authority or through the Historic England's Enhanced Advisory Service, see www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/EAS.

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5.3 Regional characterisation

The Historic England website has a section on farm buildings. This includes a National Farmsteads Character Statement, more detailed guidance on the historic character and significance of Farm Building Types, and eight Preliminary Character Statements for the English regions, describing their agricultural buildings and setting out their historic and landscape contexts <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/rural-heritage/farm-buildings/>

6 Where to Get Advice

If you would like to contact the Listing Team in one of our regional offices, please email: customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk noting the subject of your query, or call or write to the local team at:

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37 Tanner Row
York
YO1 6WP
Tel: 01904 601948
Fax: 01904 601999

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4th Floor
Cannon Bridge House
25 Dowgate Hill
London
EC4R 2YA
Tel: 020 7973 3700
Fax: 020 7973 3001

East Region

Brooklands
24 Brooklands Avenue
Cambridge
CB2 8BU
Tel: 01223 582749
Fax: 01223 582701

West Region

29 Queen Square
Bristol
BS1 4ND
Tel: 0117 975 1308
Fax: 0117 975 0701

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