

Kent Downs AONB Farmstead Guidance



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This document is intended to inform change on farmsteads across the AONB and is designed to be used with the Kent Downs Farmsteads Guidance. It is divided into three parts:

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1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally important protected landscape, whose special characteristics include its dramatic landform and views, rich habitats, extensive ancient woodland, mixed farmland, rich historic and built heritage, and its tranquillity and remoteness. 75% of the AONB's area is managed by a mixture of arable, livestock and horticulture. Within its bounds it shows a considerable variation in landscape character that encompasses open and wooded downs, broad river valleys, dry valleys, arable farmland vales, wooded greensand ridge, and open chalk cliff coastline. These different landscapes relate to patterns of settlement and land use which extend back into the medieval period, and earlier. The size and density of farmsteads in the landscape and the scale and form of fields results from the type of farming, ranging from large intensive arable farms to small dairy farms.

Part 3 of this Kent Downs Farmstead Guidance outlines the typical features of farmsteads and their buildings in each of the 13 Kent Downs Landscape Character Areas and identifies their rarity and significance as it applies in each Area.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the Guidance is to inform change on farmsteads and that contributes to the conservation and enhancement of the special characteristics of the Kent Downs AONB.

It is intended to assist you – whether you are an owner, agent, developer or local authority officer – to identify and understand the inherited character and significance of farmsteads in the landscape of the Kent Downs. In doing so, you will be better placed to understand the opportunities and constraints and potential for change within a farmstead and develop approaches to future change that capitalises

on this inherited character.

It responds to national guidance that emphasises the need for sensitive responses to development proposals in rural areas to be supported where it is considered to be sustainable, and based on a good understanding of the quality, rarity, significance, character and local distinctiveness of the rural built and natural environment. A sound evidence base, assessment method and design guidance is therefore needed for both those who wish to develop and those charged with determining the merits of their proposals.

1.3 How to use the Kent Downs Farmsteads Guidance

This document provides summary guidance on farmsteads in the Kent Downs AONB and provides information about farmsteads in each landscape character area. It is linked to generic guidance from the Kent Farmsteads Guidance on farmstead character, assessment and design.

It can also be used with the existing suite of guidance documents provided by the Kent Downs AONB unit: *The Kent Downs Management Plan*, *The Kent Downs Landscape Design Handbook*, *The Kent Downs Rural Streets and Lanes: A Design Handbook*, and *The Farm Diversification Toolkit* which are all available on the Kent Downs website. [www.kentdowns.org.uk]. The Kent Farmsteads Guidance is designed to inform future change to farmsteads, including applications for planning permission and listed building consent. This should be clearly and succinctly presented and based upon an understanding of the present-day historic character of the site, which has developed through change over time, and its significance. Significance is of critical importance in determining whether planning permission or listed building consent should be granted. The Site Assessment Framework, when used with the Kent Farmsteads Character Statements, will help the user identify the key issues for consideration at the earliest possible stage, before detailed proposals are drawn up. Once the understanding of a site has been gained, the Design Guidance can be used to scope out whether and how the inherited character of the site provides opportunities for sustainable change that contribute to and enhance the quality and character of the local scene.

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**

The Design Guidance is a new approach that suggests how the inherited character of the whole site and its landscape context provides opportunities for change. Please note that applicants in using this framework must clearly demonstrate an understanding of the site (using this framework to guide their work) and demonstrate that design proposals relate directly to their site rather than using the guidance as a pattern book or for justification of inappropriate schemes for a specific site.

Significant farmsteads 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, which may be buildings or archaeological sites included on a local list, within a conservation area or within the setting of a designated national asset (a listed building or scheduled ancient monument).

Site character and significance can be determined by using the guidance as set out below:

1. Kent Farmsteads Character Statements, Part 4, Historical Development and Landscape and Settlement
2. Kent Farmsteads Character Statements, Part 4, Introducing Farmstead Character and Farmstead Types
3. Kent Farmsteads Character Statements, Part 4, Introducing Farmstead Character and Building Types
4. Kent Farmsteads Character Statements, Part 4, Introducing Farmstead Character and Materials and Detail
5. Planning Background and Issues, Part 1, 3.6-9

1.4 Planning Background and Issues is set out in Part 1 Section 1 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance.

Policy Context

The CROW Act requires management plans to be produced, published and regularly revised by local authorities. By providing farmstead design guidance, this guidance contributes to the implementation of the management plan objectives and policies for the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014.

Key Issues

- Across the AONB there are high rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. Listed and unlisted working buildings exhibit low rates of structural failure but very high rates of conversion by national standards.
- The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are rare across the AONB. At a landscape scale, farmsteads remain distinctive for their form, mass and use of traditional materials.

1.5 Relationship to the Planning Permission Application Process

This guidance provides advice on the particular qualities of farmsteads in the Kent Downs AONB and can be used in conjunction with other guidance as available. Applicant/s and/or their agent, should always contact the local planning authority (LPA) to confirm whether any consents are needed. Local Plans/Local Development Frameworks and Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents will be available to give local guidance and may even be site specific.

1.6 Relationship to Other Design Guidance

Kent Design Guide

Kent Design – a guide to sustainable development seeks to promote sustainability and good design throughout Whilst this new guidance provides more detailed guidance relating to farmsteads within the AONB, the Kent Design Guide (published by Kent County Council) should also be followed in preparing development schemes.

Village Design Statements

A number of villages within the Kent Downs AONB have produced village design statements which describe the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside and identify design principles based on local character. These should also be consulted where relevant. For information on Village Design Statements contact the Local Planning Authority/Parish Council or AONB Unit.

1.7 Consultation

In preparing the Kent and Kent Downs Farmsteads Guidance an initial consultation was undertaken in January 2010 with representatives of local authorities, parish councils, local farmers etc. to discuss its scope, content and look. It will be enhanced and amended as knowledge develops. Further views are now being sought on this draft document with the intention that ultimately the handbook be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

2 GUIDANCE FOR THE KENT DOWNS AND ITS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

The Historic Character of Farmsteads in the Kent Downs AONB

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. Most traditional farmstead buildings across the Kent Downs AONB date from the 19th century, survivals of earlier periods being increasingly rare. From the medieval period to the later 18th century, documentary, map and field evidence shows that many farmsteads comprised no more than a house and barn. High-status groups, such as home farms to estates or manor farms, would have the largest barns – sometimes two or more barns, and additional buildings. After this date – and only rarely before – other buildings were added to the group, either by adding aisles or lean-tos to the barns to house animals or building new cowsheds and other types of buildings.

See Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance for further information under each of these headings. 

Landscape and Settlement

The Kent Downs AONB contains a broad diversity of landscape types, from the chalk downs to vale landscapes and the anciently-enclosed Wealden landscapes around Sevenoaks. There are some villages, concentrated in the Stour Valley and the Hollingbourne Vale, but the AONB is otherwise characterised by high densities of dispersed settlement (isolated farmsteads and hamlets) which had been established by the 11th century and sometimes earlier. The farmsteads are mostly sited along the existing road network (medieval and earlier routeways). Large farmsteads, often manorial, can be found in close proximity to a medieval church or chapel representing an early church/manor relationship. The fields are generally large-scale to the lower slopes, valley bottoms and the downland plateaux, and smaller scale in the Wealden landscapes to the north of the AONB.

Farmstead Types

There is a high density, by national standards, of 18th century and earlier farmhouses. Courtyard-plan farmsteads are predominant, with the largest concentrated in the arable eastern downlands and vales and the smallest in the Wealden landscapes to the north of the AONB. These are either loose courtyard plans, where buildings have developed in piecemeal fashion around one or more sides of a yard, or regular courtyard plans where the buildings are interlinked and the whole group has a planned appearance.

Building Types

Within each farmstead there may survive a range of historic buildings types, in particular:

- Threshing barns, which are largest in scale on the downs.
- Split-level combination barns of the mid-late 19th century.
- Some oast houses, typically of 19th century date.
- Granaries are typically of 18th or 19th century date, timber-framed and set on staddle stones or sited over cartshed and stable ranges.

-
- Cattle housing, usually in the form of shelter sheds around sheds.
 - A small number of late 18th or early 19th century outfarms survive on the downs, typically with barn and flanking shelter sheds facing into yards.

Materials and Detail

Working farm buildings in stone and brick, roofed with tile or slate, increasingly replaced buildings in clay, timber and thatch from the later 18th century. Building materials such as softwood timber, brick, slate and iron could also be imported onto the farm via coastal and river ports, canals and rail.

- Timber-framing was used from the medieval period for houses and farm buildings. Its use for the latter continued into the 19th century. Framed farm buildings were clad in weatherboard or plain tile hanging, the latter contrasting with the ornamental hanging occasionally used for houses.
- Bricks made from the local clays were used from the 18th century for farm buildings, in some cases earlier for houses.
- A distinctive 19th century walling technique was the use of brick quoins and bands combined with flint, providing an overall decorative effect.
- Throughout the AONB lower greensand outcrops provided 'ragstone'. This was widely used across Kent from the medieval period, and is mostly associated with 19th century farm buildings.
- Galleting – the use of small flints and stone in thick mortar joints – was used in flint and stone walls. It is a technique found in other southern English landscapes, including the downlands.
- Hipped and half-hipped clay tile roofs are a strong feature, to typically large-scale houses, barns and oast houses, and smaller-scale cattle housing and other structures.

See pages 8-11 for images of farmsteads in the Kent Downs AONB

Advice for your locality

The key characteristics of these landscapes are outlined in the pages that follow. These are focused on explaining the scale and form of farmsteads in their landscape context, further details of which are available on the Kent Farmsteads Guidance.

The Kent Downs is divided into 13 Landscape Character Areas shown on the map on the following page.

Identify which area you are in and then go to the chapter identified for your locality. Alternatively click on the number where you live on the map below.

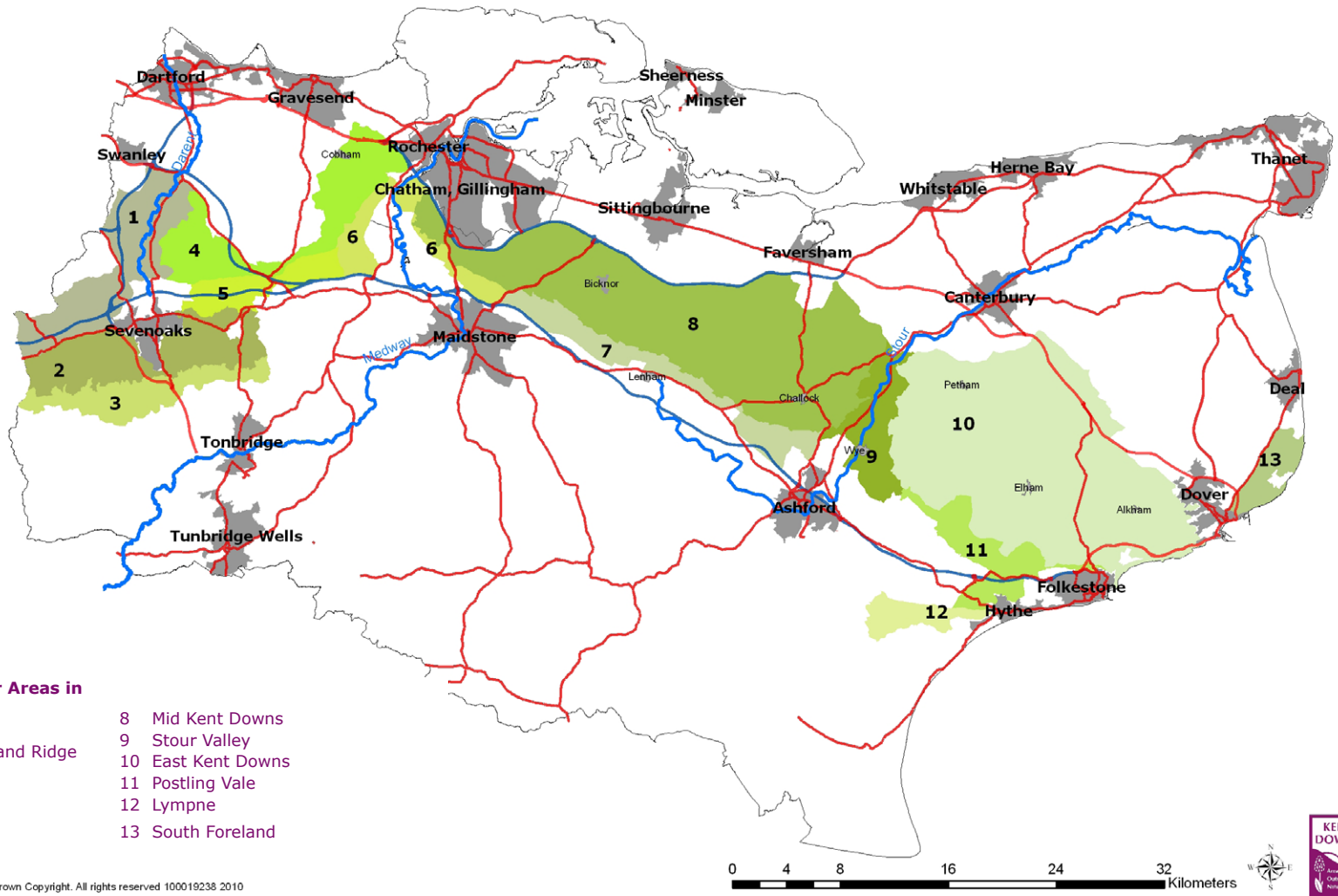
You can then access information about farmsteads in your landscape character area and be directed to generic guidance from the Kent Farmsteads Guidance on farmstead character, assessment and design.

Landscape Character Areas in the Kent Downs:

- 1 Darent Valley
- 2 Sevenoaks Greensand Ridge
- 3 Low Weald
- 4 West Kent Downs
- 5 Kemsing Vale
- 6 Medway
- 7 Hollingbourne Vale
- 8 Mid Kent Downs
- 9 Stour Valley
- 10 East Kent Downs
- 11 Postling Vale
- 12 Lympne
- 13 South Foreland

These summary statements can then be used, in combination with the Kent Farmsteads Guidance:

- as prompts for site layout and design within each of the defined character areas;
- to inform approaches at the earliest possible stage, thus minimising the risk of obstacles developing at a later stage.



Farmstead types



Large-scale loose courtyard farmstead, East Kent Downs (Area 10). Large farmsteads developed across the downs from the medieval period, often on the sites of medieval estate farms. They are typically marked by one or more large barns and a farmhouse of 17th century or earlier date, the granary, stabling and cattle housing built around the yard being much lower in profile.



Looking towards the yard of a large-scale mid 19th century regular courtyard farmstead in the East Kent Downs (Area 10). The low building to the right provides housing for cattle, and the large range is a barn for housing and processing harvested corn and milling feed for the livestock.



Detached buildings with hipped and half-hipped roofs are typical of most farmsteads across the AONB, as also are the low profiles of most buildings in the group except the house and the barn. Hythe Escarpment, Area 12.



A granary, in the foreground and marked by its mushroom-shaped saddle stones, on the edge of a loose courtyard group with a barn and stable in South Foreland (Area 13). This group is in commercial use (as a hotel), but it retains a mix of building types typical of arable-based farms which required large barns to store and process harvested corn, a granary for the grain and stables to house the horses which provided the motive power for working the land.



This group in the Hollingbourne Vale is typical of the smaller-scale loose courtyard farmsteads that developed in pockets of smaller-scale fields across the AONB. The mix of buildings – barn, granary and stable – is typical of the arable farms which characterised all parts of the AONB.

Building types



The distinctive profile of a large aisled barn. Aisled barns, as here at Lenham in the Hollingbourne Vale, date from the medieval period and continued to be built into the 19th century across the vales and downlands of the AONB.



The survival of aisled barns and fine timber-framed houses dating from the 15th century testifies to the growing wealth of a rentier class of farmers, particularly within and either side of the Stour Valley on the downs. This example is sited in the Mid Kent Downs (Area 7).



Looking into the yard of a small farmstead now in residential use in the Mid Kent Downs. In the foreground, to the right of the entrance, is the distinctive porch and projecting aisles of a 3-bay barn, and to the left is a 17th century or earlier house.



It was common for timber-framed barns to be reclad in brick, as here at Brabourne (Postling Vale, Area 11), or stone and for the roof to then be finished with a gable rather than the distinctive hip or half hip.



Small-scale unaisled barns with gabled roofs were scattered across the AONB but concentrated on the small-scale farmsteads that surrounded Sevenoaks.



Detached granaries of this type, raised on mushroom-shaped staddle stones, are found across the arable-farming vales and downlands of the AONB.

Building types continued



Oasts for storing and drying hops are found across the AONB, and most examples with square (as here) or round kilns date from the 19th century. Any earlier examples, including evidence for earlier timber-framed oasts, are very rare.



Small-scale farmsteads were a feature of the downlands and the area around Sevenoaks, being typically found in settlements and areas which were most difficult to farm, but few remained in farming use by the Second World War. They are a distinctive feature of the AONB, as well as the larger-scale farms that had developed since the medieval period.



A granary, in the foreground and marked by its mushroom-shaped staddle stones, on the edge of a loose courtyard group with a barn and stable in South Foreland (Area 13). This group is in commercial use (as a hotel), but it retains a mix of building types typical of arable-based farms which required large barns to store and process harvested corn, a granary for the grain and stables to house the horses which provided the motive power for working the land.

Materials and detail



WEATHERBOARD

Weatherboard is a typical cladding material for timber-framed farm buildings across the AONB.



GALLETING

Sandstone rubble with small stones used for the mortar joints, a technique called galletting. (© Bob Edwards)



BRICK AND FLINT

Brick quoining is a typical feature of the flint walling used across the AONB.



BRICK AND RAGSTONE

This shows the richness of detail found on traditional farmstead buildings – plan clay tiles to the roof, a plank door set within a brick-built upper floor and an earlier ground floor of coursed ragstone.

1 Darent Valley (Brasted to Farningham)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- An area with a long history of arable-based farming with a long history of estate management, extending to the Roman and Iron Age periods as at Lullingstone. Farms had access to a diversity of farming landscapes, from meadows around the Darent to the flanking greensand ridge and the downs.

Landscape and Settlement

- Low density of large farmsteads set within a landscape of large-scale fields inherited from the medieval period and earlier.
- Smaller fields to the scarps and the north west which result from the piecemeal enclosure of woodland and subsequent reorganisation.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Large-scale regular and loose courtyard farmsteads had developed in the Darent Valley by the late 19th century, including cattle housing, stables and granaries. Most have been rebuilt in the

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

early-mid 19th century, with the survival of occasional earlier large threshing barns.

- Smaller farmsteads (often to L-shaped and U-plan), often with earlier buildings, in the landscapes to the north west.

Materials and Detail

- Most farmsteads result from comprehensive 19th century rebuilding in flint and brick, those in use now marked by large groups of sheds. Timber frame is mostly confined to 17th century and earlier houses and some barns.

Rarity and Significance

There are high rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network and to shaws where they stand close to farmsteads.
- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

SUMMARY OF THE KENT FARMSTEADS GUIDANCE

PART 1 PLANNING BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

PART 2 THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

This is a checklist which will help inform an understanding of the key issues with planners if change is being considered. It will, when used with the illustrated guidance in Parts 4 and 5, help the user identify the character, significance and potential for change of a farmstead.

PART 3 DESIGN GUIDANCE

This is intended to be used during and after pre-application discussion, and aims to help approaches to design and new build to respect and grow out of the inherited character of the site and its surroundings. It can use the results of the Assessment Framework in Part 2, and use the guidance in Parts 4 and 5.

PART 4 KENT FARMSTEADS CHARACTER STATEMENT

This introduces farmstead character, and then provides illustrated guidance on the historical development and landscape context of Kent farmsteads, and their site and architectural character:

1. Historical Development
2. Landscape and Settlement Context
3. Farmstead Types
4. Building Types
5. Materials and Detail

Reference to this will help the user, in the Assessment Framework, to understand the sensitivity to and potential for change, and the significance of the site in its setting. **Significant farmsteads 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, which may be buildings or archaeological sites included on a local list, within a conservation area or within the setting of a designated national asset (a listed building or scheduled ancient monument).

PART 5 CHARACTER AREA STATEMENTS

These provide more detailed descriptions of farmsteads (under the same headings as Part 4) for each of the National Character Areas in Kent, with maps that help the user understand how they have developed in their landscape and settlement context. Listed below are the Kent Downs AONB areas, cross-referred to the National Character Areas that they sit within as outlined in Part 5 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance.

- 1 **Darent Valley** p 13
This area sits within the North Kent Downs on pp. 94-8.
- 2 **Sevenoaks Greensand Ridge**
This area sits within the Wealden Greensand on pp. 99-102.
- 3 **Low Weald**
This area sits within the Low Weald on pp. 103-6.
- 4 **West Kent Downs**
This area sits within the North Kent Downs on pp. 94-8.
- 5 **Kemsing Vale**
This area sits within the North Kent Downs on pp. 94-8.
- 6 **Medway**
This area sits within the North Kent Downs on pp. 94-8.
- 7 **Hollingbourne Vale**
This area sits within the Wealden Greensand on pp. 99-102.
- 8 **Mid Kent Downs**
This area sits within the North Kent Downs on pp. 94-8.
- 9 **Stour Valley**
This area sits within the North Kent Downs on pp. 94-8.
- 10 **East Kent Downs**
This area sits within the North Kent Downs on pp. 94-8.
- 11 **Postling Vale**
This area sits within the Wealden Greensand on pp. 99-102.
- 12 **Lympne**
This area sits within the Romney Marshes on pp. 110-112.
- 13 **South Foreland**
This area sits within the North Kent Downs on pp. 94-8.

2 Sevenoaks Greensand Ridge (Westerham to Ightham)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- The ridge extends either side of Sevenoaks, and was an area of medium-scale farms which by the late 19th century combined arable, grazing and fruit growing, together with the supply of liquid milk and other products by rail to London. Most farmsteads have from that period fallen out of agricultural use, the result being a high density of 19th century and earlier houses and of converted farmsteads that have become absorbed into the extensive residential exurbs around Sevenoaks.

Landscape and Settlement

- High density of farmsteads and dispersed settlement.
- The farmsteads relate to a wooded landscape with heaths, small orchards and fields with irregular boundaries relating to medieval woodland clearance. This was an area probably exploited during the prehistoric period but abandoned to woodland when the soils began to deteriorate, the open areas of common land being the result of use for grazing by outlying manors.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscape.
- Use split chestnut post and rail fencing.
- Reinforce ragstone walls to boundaries, the character of shelterbelts, cobnut plantations and orchards where they exist.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Farmstead and Building Types

- Predominant pattern of loose courtyard farmsteads with buildings to one-three sides of the yard, reflecting piecemeal development over time.
- Oasts and barns (including 17th century and earlier aisled barns) dominate the farmstead groups, with other working buildings being typically small scale.

Materials and Detail

- Predominant materials are 19th century brick and flint, with greensand/ragstone and earlier timber frame. Plain tile hanging and weatherboard to timber frames. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- Very high rates of conversion to residential use, including some of early and mid 20th century date reflecting the early suburban development of this area, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use.
- The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

3 Low Weald (Crockham Hill to Shipbourne)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- Larger farms and estates developed in this area than in the rest of the Low Weald, an area of medium-scale farms and dispersed settlement which by the late 19th century combined arable, dairying and fruit growing. Many farms in this area supplied liquid milk to London by this period. The great majority of farmsteads have fallen out of agricultural use and become absorbed into extensive residential exurbs around Sevenoaks.

Landscape and Settlement

- These fields mostly result from the clearance of woodland in the medieval period and have been subject to varying rates of enlargement and change since, and are interspersed with greens, commons and blocks of woodland including to the scarps.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Predominant pattern of loose and regular courtyard farmsteads, the latter to L and U-shaped plans and dating from wholesale rebuilding in the mid-late 19th century. Farmsteads are smaller in scale to the west, towards Crockham Hill.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

- The larger farms, which include a number of home farms in historic parks, have generally continued in agricultural use. Most are marked by large groups of sheds.
- Some oasts and barns, but multi-functional building ranges are predominant.

Materials and Detail

- Mix of flint, brick, ragstone and timber frame. Plain tile hanging and weatherboard to timber frame. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes.
- Reinforce the character of shelterbelts, chestnut fencing, cobnut plantations and orchards where they exist.
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network and to shaws, including woodland boundaries.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

6 Medway (from Birling to Cuxton, and Wouldham to Aylesford)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- The large scale of the farmsteads reflects a long history of estates, extending into the Roman period and Iron Age, that exploited the rich pastures and arable along the Medway with access to the downs.

Landscape and Settlement

- A low density of large-scale farmsteads had developed within the very large fields of this area by the late 19th century.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Loose courtyard and L-shaped farmsteads with shelter sheds to cattle yards.

Materials and Detail

- Predominant walling materials are flint, brick and tile. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing sparse hedge network.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

7 Hollingbourne Vale

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- This vale at the foot of the downs has a long history of settlement, with Roman and earlier estates. It provided rich arable land which combined with fruit growing encouraged the development of large farms.

Landscape and Settlement

- Low density of farmsteads which developed away from the villages on the spring line.
- Large-scale fields, with a mix of regular and earlier wavy boundaries.
- 20th century change has further reinforced the larger-scale open character of this landscape, with large groups of sheds to working farms interspersed with areas of post-1950 settlement expansion that are concentrated around earlier settlements.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Large-scale loose courtyard and regular courtyard farmsteads had developed in this area by the late 19th century, within a large-scale network of fields. Some pockets of smaller-scale farms,

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

usually in areas where earlier small-scale patterns of enclosure have been retained.

- Key farmstead building types are threshing barns (including large aisled barns dating from the medieval period), granaries, stables and oasthouses. Multi-functional ranges with cattle housing are typical.

Materials and Detail

- Predominant walling materials are brick with some flint and ragstone. High levels of pre-19th century timber frame, clad in plain tile hanging and weatherboard. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network and to shaws, including woodland boundaries.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

4 West Kent Downs (West Kingsdown to Shorne)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- The Kent Downs (especially to the east – see Area 10) were more difficult to cultivate for large-scale arable agriculture than the other southern English downlands, the result being the survival of large numbers of small-medium scale farmsteads into the 20th century.

Landscape and Settlement

- High density of dispersed settlement including medium to small-scale farmsteads mostly sited along the existing road network (medieval and earlier routeways), in part the result of 19th/20th century and earlier development on the edge of greens. Some medieval villages such as Cobham, but otherwise the larger settlements represent 20th century growth around major roads.
- Areas of medium-small scale fields dating from the medieval period interspersed with large-scale fields to plateaux – reflecting 19th century intensification of arable farming and the establishment of larger farms - with pre-18th century wavy boundaries. Thick shaws and blocks of woodland.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Farmstead and Building Types

- Predominant pattern of loose courtyard farmsteads, most traditional buildings being small-scale and dating from the mid-late 19th century. Some distinctive threshing barns, with granaries and stables.

Materials and Detail

- Predominant materials are brick and flint. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network and to shaws, including woodland boundaries.
- Reinforce the character of orchards and plantations where they exist.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

5 Kemsing Vale (Kemsing to Ryarsh)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- Historically an area of mixed arable and fruit growing with pasture. Larger farms developed in this area than in the adjacent Greensand Ridge.

Landscape and Settlement

- A low density of farmsteads relates to an ancient pattern (medieval and earlier) of very large-scale regular fields to the scarp foot of the downs and the smaller-scale and more irregular patterns of fields to the south, with trees to low hedgerows.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Large-scale loose and regular courtyard farmsteads. 20th century change has further reinforced the larger-scale open character of this landscape, with large groups of sheds to working farms interspersed with areas of post-1950 settlement expansion.

[For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance](#)

Materials and Detail

- Predominant walling materials are flint and brick. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network, interspersed with trees.

[Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance](#)

[Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook](#)

8 Mid Kent Downs (Boxley to Selling)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- The Kent Downs were more difficult to cultivate for large-scale arable agriculture than the other southern English downlands, the result being the survival of large numbers of small-medium scale farmsteads into the 20th century. These were interspersed with some large farms, usually sited off the road network and most likely to have remained in agriculture. Corn production and grazing was often combined with the growing of fruit and hops in large quantities.

Landscape and Settlement

- Fields result from a long process of medieval and later enclosure (woodland clearance and later enlargement and reorganisation) interspersed with blocks of ancient and conifer woodland.
- Some isolated farmsteads with shelter belts, and many sited close to orchards and hop gardens.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Regular and loose courtyard farmsteads had developed in this area by the late 19th century.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network and to shaws, including woodland boundaries.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

- Low survival of traditional farm buildings across this area, despite the presence of many houses of 19th century and earlier date including high numbers of 17th century and earlier houses.
- Most prominent traditional farm buildings are threshing barns, displaying a wide range of scales typical of this area.

Materials and Detail

- Timber frame commonly used for working buildings, but most 19th century examples of built of ragstone, brick and flint. Plain tile hanging and weatherboard to timber frame. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use.
- Unconverted threshing barns, especially those of 3 bays relating to small-scale farmstead groups, are rare.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

9 Stour Valley (Brook to Chartham)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- The Stour Valley has a long history of estate centres, extending into the Roman period and Iron Age, that exploited the rich pastures and arable along the Medway with access to the downs.

Landscape and Settlement

- Low density of isolated farmsteads, which result from development away from villages such as Wye and historic estate centres.
- Farmsteads relate to large fields, scarp-top woodlands and riverside pastures.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Large-scale loose courtyard farmsteads had developed in this area by the late 19th century, within the context of very large-scale regular enclosed fields. 20th century change has further reinforced the larger-scale open character of this landscape, with large groups of sheds to working farms interspersed with areas of post-1950 settlement expansion.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

- Large threshing barns, including aisled barns, dating from the medieval period. Other distinctive buildings are granaries and stables, as well as cattle housing.

Materials and Detail

- Timber frame commonly used for working buildings, but most 19th century examples of built of ragstone, brick and flint. Plain tile hanging and weatherboard to timber frame. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network and to shaws, including woodland boundaries.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

10 East Kent Downs (Crundale, Bridge, Capel-le-Ferne to Lyminge)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- A higher incidence of chalk-with-flints made most of this area more difficult to farm than the West Kent Downs, with more woodland. As a result large numbers of small-medium scale farmsteads survived into the late 19th century, but almost all most have since passed out of agricultural use.

Landscape and Settlement

- Large farms are usually sited off the road network and are most likely to have remained in agriculture. Larger farms reflect, particularly to the east and in the broad valleys and scarps, the development of large-scale and arable-based rentier farms from the 15th century.
- Some isolated farmsteads with shelter belts, and many sited in relationship to wooded slopes close to orchards and hop gardens.
- Fields result from a long process of medieval and later enclosure (woodland clearance and later enlargement and reorganisation) interspersed with blocks of ancient and conifer woodland.

Farmstead and Building Types

- In the East Kent Downs there is evidence of 19th century farmstead improvements creating regular L- and U-plan type

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network and to shaws, including woodland boundaries.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

- farmsteads but larger regular courtyard plan farmsteads are rare.
- Some large-scale loose courtyard plans reflecting a long history of development and the most likely to include 17th century and earlier barns.
- Threshing barns dating from the medieval period, including aisled barns. Granaries and stables, with cart sheds, on the larger farms.

Materials and Detail

- Timber frame commonly used for working buildings, but most 19th century examples of built of ragstone, brick and flint. Some use of cobbles. Plain tile hanging and weatherboard to timber frame. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

11 Postling Vale (Brabourne to Newington)

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- An area of mixed arable agriculture, with medium-sized farms.

Landscape and Settlement

- A high density of dispersed farmsteads with settlement nuclei developing in the 19th and 20th centuries around road junctions and occasionally medieval churches.

Farmstead and Building Types

- A mix of farmstead scales and types had developed in this area by the late 19th century, within the context of an equally varied scale of fields that date to the medieval period and result from later enlargement and alteration.
- Farmstead buildings display a range of dates, with large numbers of 3 to 5-bay 17th-18th century barns and later animal housing.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Materials and Detail

- Brick and tile are dominant, often recladding earlier timber frame. Plain tile hanging and weatherboard to timber frame where it survives. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network and to shaws, including woodland boundaries.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

12 Lympne

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- This area displays strong contrasts between the medium-large scale mixed arable and livestock farmsteads overlooking Romney Marsh, and the small scattered farms of the Marsh itself where large numbers of sheep and cattle from other areas were fattened over summer.

Landscape and Settlement

- Low density of dispersed farmsteads, sited along the road network and down their own tracks, with a few small villages that mostly result from post-1950 settlement concentrated around existing settlement nuclei.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Small-scale regular courtyard farmsteads on Romney Marsh had developed within this landscape by the late 19th century, mostly the result of earlier 19th century rebuilding. 20th century change has further reinforced the larger-scale open character of this landscape, with large groups of sheds to working farms.
- Large-scale and some medium-scale loose courtyard farmsteads, with distinctive large barns, on Lympne.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network around historic farmsteads.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Materials and Detail

- Predominant walling materials are ragstone, brick and tile with some early timber frame. Plain tile hanging and weatherboard to timber frame where it survives. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- High rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

13 South Foreland

FARMSTEADS CHARACTER

Set out below are the special characteristics of farmstead heritage in your area. This is intended to help you recognise what is special in your particular part of the Kent Downs AONB.

Historical Development

- An area of large-scale arable farming combined with sheep and cattle.

Landscape and Settlement

- Low density of dispersed farmsteads, sited along the road network and down their own tracks. Historically much of this area was open downland, with settlements concentrated in the fertile dry valleys. Large regular fields established from the 16th century follow the grain of the topography.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Large-scale loose courtyard farmsteads had developed in this area by the late 19th century, within the context of very large-scale regular enclosed fields. 20th century change has further reinforced the larger-scale open character of this landscape, with large groups of sheds to working farms interspersed with areas of post-1950 settlement expansion.

For further advice use Part 4 of the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Materials and Detail

- Predominant walling materials are chalk, brick and tile with some early timber frame. Predominant roofing materials are plain tile with some use of Welsh slate.

Rarity and Significance

- Extremely high rates of conversion to residential use, and of change to traditional farmsteads on working farms remaining in agricultural use. The result is that legible groups of traditional farmstead buildings are very rare.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Take opportunities to reinforce and enhance the historic character of farmsteads and link them to their surrounding landscapes
- Reinforce and link boundaries to the existing hedge network.
- Use shelter belts to isolated farmsteads.

Click to access the Kent Farmsteads Guidance [↗](#)

Click to access the guidance for this area in the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook [↗](#)

