

# **Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy**

## **Appendix 1: Theme 8 Farming & Farmsteads**

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## **Appendix 1, Theme 8 - Farming and Farmsteads**

### **1. Summary**

The historic farmsteads and farming heritage of the district illustrate the distinctive character of Kentish agriculture and its rural landscape. Kent is renowned for its topographical diversity and this has given rise to distinctive settlement patterns, land-use and husbandry practices going back centuries. The varied land-types, a gavelkind tenure system and various other influencing factors over time have resulted in a distinctive agricultural character in the county that is especially demonstrated within East Kent. Various farming practices are represented including sheep farming on the Romney Marsh and important arable farming highlighted by the surviving windmills and other arable-based farmsteads. Farming heritage within the district forms part of a unique collection of agricultural traditions and is significant in highlighting the rich farming history of the local area and the wider county.

### **2. Introduction**

#### ***The agricultural landscape of Folkestone & Hythe District***

The district is characterised by diverse landscapes that have largely dictated settlement patterns, land-use and mixed husbandry regimes. In the north and east of the District, the East Kent Downs, Postling Vale and Lympne areas fall within the chalk downland of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Folkestone area lays on the Vale of Holmesdale which is a composition of mainly gault clay and greensand. Moving southwest the District then forms part of the Chart Hills which is a greensand ridge made up of a mixture of greensand and sandstone. This ridge borders the northern part of the Romney Marsh which is an area of wetland that has been largely reclaimed from the sea over the centuries and is the largest wetland area in southern England.

Traditionally the Romney Marsh was predominantly used for sheep grazing and to a lesser extent arable production, although historically cultivation of wheat and barley was only done on a scale to serve domestic needs. The permanent rich grasslands and improved drainage of the land offer great resources for sheep farming that requires less intensive management but more resources than other livestock such as cattle. The settlement pattern was generally one of nucleated small villages with a number of isolated farmsteads within the village and in the surrounding areas. The Romney Marsh was significantly affected by the Black Death during the 1340s which resulted in the loss of some villages such as Blackmanstone and Midley and also had a great impact on the sheep farming. In 1939 there were around 200,000 sheep on the marsh, but this was then halved during the Second World War and the amount of arable farming has now increased to around 15,000 acres. For centuries the wool market was the most important part of trade for the Romney Marsh, but population pressures and the urban expansions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have produced new pressures and changed ways of farming.

The Kent Downs and Chart Hills are generally more difficult to farm due to the quality and composition of the soil. The greensand soils of the Chart Hills and Vale of Holmesdale are largely infertile heathland but when mixed with clay they produce a

lighter loam that could be used in mixed farming. The Kent Downs are also defined by mixed husbandry and have been used for arable and some pastoral farming. Farmsteads were typically small to medium in size and more were located within the villages than in some other areas of the county. In the eastern part of the Elham Valley the landscape is predominantly an intensively cultivated arable plateau. Pastoral farming of cattle and sheep is also practiced. The only two windmills within the District are located in the north-eastern part of the District at Stelling Minnis and Stanford which is further evidence for arable farming.

### ***The history of farming in Kent***

Historically, the varied topography of Kent has been a strong influencing factor in the structure and layout of farmsteads across the county and has largely shaped the rural landscape. A farmstead is defined as *the homestead of a farm where the farmhouse and some or all of the working farm buildings are located*. Some farmsteads will also have field barns or outfarms that are sited away from the main steading. These are significant heritage assets as they not only contribute to the local character and distinctiveness, but they form an integral part of the rural landscape and illustrate the historical development of farming and agriculture over time.

It is not as easy to determine the Kentish experience of farming prior to the sixteenth century as it is with later years due to a lack of documentary evidence. Some evidence is however available from monastic sites and archaeological evidence has also been able to determine that Kent had already established a system of mixed husbandry early on due to its varied topography and resulting settlement patterns. Farmsteads were scattered through the landscape around the areas of nucleated villages, and it would be population pressure and demand from urban centres that would later lead to the need for new land to continue cultivation and mixed husbandry. East Kent in particular embodies the agricultural experience of Kent which was distinct for reasons such as gavelkind tenure and the early enclosure of land that fundamentally affected the way that the land was used. The close integration of crops and livestock where one provided for the other was another distinct element of Kentish farming and this continues throughout its history.

Agriculture continues to respond to local topography, market conditions and to the demands of the estate during the early medieval era. Kentish demesnes stocked almost equal amounts of livestock and crops as well as maintaining large numbers of non-working animals such as horses and oxen that were essential to a successful mixed husbandry regime. The type of estate continues to be important to the nature of the farm as church, lay and royal estates tended to manage their farms differently. By the fifteenth century evidence suggests that increasing numbers of estate owners were leasing out their demesnes as opposed to managing them directly.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw significant changes in Kent due to its proximity to London, the continent and because of its vast coastlines that gave rise to extensive urban growth. By the end of the sixteenth century one third of the population lived in towns. The early enclosure of land in Kent had a significant impact on land use and it appears that by the seventeenth century Kent was almost entirely enclosed. As an example, fields in the Chart Hills area were often no larger

than ten acres and the average size was between three and seven acres. The gavelkind system had arguably encouraged further population growth in the county as well as population dispersal where all male heirs were provided for which further changed the use of land as well as demands on farming. By the end of the medieval era there was a large scale rebuilding of farmsteads which may suggest that the wealth of the county had also increased quickly. Agriculture continued to be a dominant force in Kentish society, but the impacts of urbanisation were being felt as would industrialisation later on.

Between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries agriculture continued to expand as population pressure persisted and means of travel via land and sea improved. The arrival of the railway for example meant that the more remote areas could access the market and transport their goods more efficiently. Many industries grew to meet growing demand, such as dairy farming and hopping, and the continued demand from London as well as from Kentish urban centres saw agriculture adapting and expanding to meet these needs in addition to the wider market. Fruit growing and market gardening developed on an industrial scale from the mid nineteenth century with orchards, nurseries and storehouses being established in areas largely concentrated along the fertile coastal margins of northern Kent. The hop industry is also a prominent form of farming in Kent from as early as the sixteenth century and reached its peak in 1878 though later sharply declined from the 1970s.

The years between 1750 and 1880, in particular 1840 to 1870, saw a sharp increase in the productivity of Kentish agriculture. As has already been mentioned, this is in response to population increases, urbanisation and industrialisation and continued to change methods of farming. The more recent history of farming in Kent saw a long though regionally varied period of depression that lasted until the Second World War. Farming now continues to form an important part of Kentish rural industry and culture as do its associated heritage assets. The historic farmsteads that survive within the district are important in illustrating this distinctive history of farming in Kent and they continue to form an important part of the rural landscape.

### ***The Farmsteads of Folkestone & Hythe District***

Historic farmsteads are integral to the rural landscape and settlement as well as how these have changed over time. They make a significant contribution to the rural building stock and form part of the unique local character of the district. Many farmsteads have continued to evolve in response to factors such as urbanisation, the economy of labour and changes in animal welfare laws. Whilst some have no longer kept their agricultural function and others have found new uses, they continue to make an important contribution to the rural economy and communities.

The Kent Historic Environmental Record identifies 659 total farmsteads and outfarms within the district. The term farmstead is used to describe the main homestead of the farm in addition to other working buildings. The district lies primarily within the Romney Marsh and North Downs National Character Areas (NCA) with a small part towards the centre of the District lying within the Wealden Greensand NCA. As is characteristic of southeast England, the rural settlement pattern of the District is characterised by isolated farmsteads and hamlets in a system of nucleated villages. Notably the smallest farmsteads within the county are found in the Weald and the

Romney Marsh. The *Kent Farmsteads and Landscapes Project* has identified the types of farmsteads found within the district as well as their distribution within the rural landscape.

A difference can be seen between the Romney Marsh NCA and North Downs NCA. The Romney Marsh NCA has a low density of farmsteads that are mainly isolated though there are some that are located within small villages, particularly in the south-west of the area where there is slightly higher ground. There were few landed families within Romney Marsh and the area has a lower population than other areas in the District. This has been due to events such as the Black Death during the 1340s as well as the area being relatively poor. The North Downs NCA is more densely populated with larger villages and urban centres and so sees a greater density of farmsteads that are larger in size and vary in form as a result of more intensive mixed husbandry.

The term outfarm describes individual or groups of buildings that are set within the fields away from the main farmstead. They were common on larger or dispersed farms or could also be the result of the amalgamation of former farmsteads. Only 9% of outfarms and field barns retain some or all of their historic form within the district and they are particularly vulnerable assets.

### ***Windmills***

At the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey map there were numerous windmills spread across the county, particularly in East Kent which was a major arable producing area. In Britain there are three basic types of windmill that were primarily for corn grinding, but they could also be used to grind other materials, seed pressing, thrashing, cloth production among other later uses. These main types are the post mill, the smock mill and the tower mill and are generally believed to have developed within Britain in that order.

The post mills were built with a body, also known as a buck, which rotated around an upright post to face the wind. They were supported on a base and all of the mechanics were contained within the main body. The later smock mills were more sophisticated in that the body of the mill remained still whilst only the top piece moved around into the direction of the wind. They were known as smock mills because of their similar appearance to the smocks that were worn as part of period agricultural costume. These smock mills were also placed on a stone base and often had eight sides and could be several storeys high. The mobile top piece allowed for the static body to become larger than its predecessor and could hold more stock. A further development produced the tower mills which replaced the wooden structure of both the post and smock mill with a circular stone or brick tower. An example of a smock mill and tower mill exist within the district.

## **3. Description of the Heritage Assets**

### ***Farmsteads***

The Districts historic farmsteads have been characterised as part of the *Kent Farmsteads and Landscapes Project* and the results will be summarised here. The

key patterns and farmstead types will be identified in this section rather than exploring each farmstead within the District individually. A full list of farmsteads is available at the end of this theme.

The **Farmhouse** is a key component of the farmstead. They are often detached from the other farm buildings and typically face away from the farmyard unless the farmstead is small where farmhouses are then seen to face into the yard. There may also be other separate houses that would have accommodated farm workers. In Kent, 72% of farmsteads have retained some or all of their historic character but there is marked regional variability within the county. These variations depend on a number of factors that include the adaptability of farmsteads to meet new demands of modern agriculture, tendencies to convert farmhouses to residential properties and the functional redundancy of traditional buildings. Within the district, there are 133 farmhouses listed for their historical importance. Of these 133, 7 are Grade II\* Listed Buildings and 126 are Grade II Listed Buildings. There is also evidence of a medieval farmstead at Brenzett in Pilchers Field that is designated as a Scheduled Monument. Ordnance Survey maps suggest that is probably dated to the sixteenth century and consisted of a farmhouse and barn. It appears to have been abandoned and then finally demolished in the mid-eighteenth century.

61% of the total recorded farmsteads within the district are noted as having heritage potential, 32% of these having high potential where they have retained more than 50% of their historic form. Unfortunately there has been a high level of change within this area and so only 20% of the farmsteads have a seventeenth century or earlier listed farmhouse, and only 2% have one or more associated seventeenth century or earlier working buildings. In 2006 the *Kent Farmsteads Guidance* found that the district had an above-average rate of conversion of listed farmstead buildings to non-agricultural uses, totalling 47% where the national average is 39%.

In the Romney Marsh National Character Area (NCA), part of which extends beyond the district into East Sussex, survival rates for historic farmsteads are lower when compared to the rest of the District. 32.4% of farmstead groups have had less than 50% changed since 1900. When compared to other NCAs, this is low and unfortunately a quarter of historic farmsteads are now only represented by a farmhouse. Pre-1750 farmstead buildings such as threshing barns are rare on the marsh and few other farm buildings such as 'lookers huts' now survive completely in their traditional form. The *Kent Farmsteads and Landscapes Project* has identified that in 1895 there were 293 farmsteads recorded on the Romney Marsh, and since this date 32% have remained unchanged or only moderately altered. 28% have had considerable loss of historical features, 25.6% show only the farmhouse surviving, 2.7% have no historic buildings surviving and 11.6% of farmsteads have completely disappeared. This clearly illustrates the low level of survival of the historic farmsteads that is typical of the District.

The basic forms of the farmstead – the ways the buildings are laid out in relation to the farmhouse, route ways and yards – are essential when identifying the overall character of the farmstead and then looking for regional patterns. Within the district, the farmsteads can be divided into courtyard plans and dispersed plan types. In Kent, 72% of recorded sites are courtyard plan farmsteads and 25% are dispersed

plan, with the remaining 3% comprising other layouts such as a linear plan that are rare within the county.

- **Courtyard plan farmsteads** are the predominant type in the district comprising 73.4% of recorded sites. Medium sized loose courtyard plans with working buildings to two or three sides of the yard are typically characteristic of the District.
- **Dispersed plan farmsteads** comprise 25% of the recorded total number of farmsteads within the district. These farmstead types are particularly characteristic of the Romney Marsh and were smaller in size when compared to other areas in the District. This is a relatively high number of dispersal plan types when compared to other Districts.
- Other plan types make up the remaining 1.6% of farmsteads within the District. This would have included **linear** type arrangements that are rare within Kent.

In general, the character of farmsteads in the district are small to medium in size and predominantly exhibit the courtyard plan with the dispersal plan becoming more common in the Romney Marsh area. The **North Downs** area of the District has been more difficult to farm due to the composition of the soil and so farms are smaller in scale. During the mid-nineteenth century and after 1950 a number of large arable-based farms were developed across the North Downs area and a mixture of regular and irregular field boundaries now exists due to the enlargement and reorganisation of many field boundaries. Extensive housing development during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has also largely affected the rural landscape in this area.

Moving westwards to the **Greensand** section of the District again the farmstead character is generally small to medium in size and is predominantly the loose courtyard plan with two or three detached working buildings around a yard. Regular L-plan and U-plan layouts are common and again the dispersal plan is also present but far less often. Many of the farm buildings here, particularly barns and cattle sheds, are nineteenth century rebuilds of farmsteads that some retain the old farmhouse. Regular multi-yard plans are also common in this area with L-plans whilst U-plans are not as prevalent within this area of the District.

The **Romney Marsh** is again characterised by small to medium scale farmsteads, mainly of the loose courtyard plan with some regular L-plans and U-plans of nineteenth century date. The dispersal plan is more common in this area than in many other parts of the county and dispersed multi-yard plans are mainly found in the south-west of the Marsh. There is unfortunately a low survival rate of pre-1750 farmstead buildings and those that exist are mainly threshing barns and farmhouses. The sheep folds and 'looker huts' are an important remnant of the shepherding culture that has been prominent on the Romney Marsh for some centuries. The permanent grassland and resources available within this landscape have allowed for large scale sheep and some cattle grazing that continues today though to a much lesser extent.

Farmsteads and farm buildings in Kent have continued to develop to serve a number of functions. The farmhouse and separate farm cottages provide accommodation for the farming family and farm workers. Farm buildings to provide crop storage and



processing were also needed depending on the function of the farm and these include barns primarily for corn storage and processing, granaries for the storage of grain and oasts for drying hops and storing fruit. Cattle yards and stables are also necessary for livestock, and fields supporting animals contained various outbuildings such as cattle sheds, cow houses and pigsties. Other ancillary buildings may also have been needed for various uses. Below follows a summary of the farmstead plans found within the district:

**Courtyard plan farmsteads** are the predominant type found within the district and can be subdivided into the following categories:

(a - d) *Loose Courtyard farmsteads* have the farm buildings arranged around one (a) or more (b - 2, c - 3, d - 4) sides of the yard and may also have scatters of other farm buildings nearby. The smallest examples of these tend to be found in the Weald area (a - b) and the largest in the North Downs, the North Kent Plain and along the edge of the Thames Estuary (c - d). These plans have typically developed in a piecemeal fashion largely resulting from the early enclosure of land in Kent and are the most common layout found in south-east England. Farmsteads within the district are predominantly characterised by the smaller to medium plan types with the largest consisting of two or three detached farm buildings loosely arranged around a yard.

(e - j) *Regular Courtyard farmsteads* consist of linked ranges that are formally arranged around one or more yards and are often the result of a single phase of building. These plans can be further subdivided into:

- L-plans (e) that are primarily found in the North Kent Plain.
- U-plans (f) that are concentrated in the western parts of the Weald.
- Larger scale plans that are built to F-, E-, T- and H- shaped plans (g - h); these are rare in Kent and are typically concentrated in heathland areas or other on land that has been improved by intensive farming during the nineteenth century such as the Low Weald.
- Full courtyard plans where the buildings completely enclose the yard (i).
- Multi-yard plans (j) are the largest and often have the highest status.
- L-plans with additional detached buildings around the third and fourth sides (k on plan) and are generally medium to large in size. They follow the same pattern as the regular multi-yard plans (j) and are common along the foot of the Downs in the Wealden Greensand, North Downs, North Kent Plain and Thames Estuary.

L-plans (e) and U-plans (f) are common types of the regular courtyard plan found within the district. The multi-yard plan is also common within the Greensand National Character Area.

**Dispersed plans** are concentrated within landscapes of irregular or small field systems. Within Kent, they are more concentrated in areas of cleared woodland and coastal marshland such as the Weald and Romney Marsh. They are also common in the arable areas including the North Downs. The arrangement is distinguishable by the seemingly random placement of buildings within a single farmstead boundary that is usually irregular in shape. This plan type comprises:

- (l) Dispersed clusters where the working buildings are arranged within the boundary of the steading. This is commonly found in the Romney Marsh, particularly in the south-west of the marsh.
- (m) Dispersed driftways where the buildings are grouped around route ways used for moving livestock. These are almost all concentrated in the Weald. There are no examples of this type of plan within the district.
- (n) Dispersed multi-yards are often larger scaled farmsteads that contain one or more detached yards. These are common within the Romney Marsh and are again primarily located in the south-west of the marsh.

The **other plan types** are rare in Kent and only comprise 2% of the total stock of farmsteads. They tend to be concentrated on smaller plots that have developed within settlements and areas within small fields. They comprise:

- (o) **Linear farmsteads** where the houses and working buildings are attached and in-line, or (p) have been extended or planned with additional working buildings to make an L-shaped range.
- (q) **Parallel plans** where the working buildings are placed opposite and parallel to the house and attached working buildings with a narrow area between.
- (r) **Row plans** where the working buildings are attached in-line and are concentrated in the Weald.

The most common traditional farm buildings encountered on farmsteads include:

- **Barns** are used for the storage and processing of harvested corn crop over the winter months. They are also used for housing straw after threshing and before it was then distributed as bedding for animals and used as manure once it has been trodden in the fields. Barns in Kent are typically timber-framed with brick or stone plinths and hipped roofs. There are some examples of high status medieval barns within the county as well as later aisled barns that date up to the nineteenth century. Barns are typically the largest and earliest of working farm buildings on the farmstead and are concentrated in corn-growing areas, particularly in east Kent and the coastal fringes of northern Kent. Many pre-1750 examples remain unrecognised within the county and are also unlisted. Whilst many were altered post-1970s in conversions or demolitions, future work may identify further examples of earlier barns in Kent.

- **Cart sheds** are a particularly distinctive feature on large crop-producing farms and are often associated with granaries. Cart Sheds are open-fronted buildings used for storage which will often face away from the farmyard and tend to be located in close proximity to stables and route ways.
- **Granaries** are buildings or rooms used for the storage of grain after it has been threshed and winnowed in the barn. They are typically set on mushroom-shaped staddle stones or brick arches or can be located on the upper floor of a multi-functional farm building such as a barn or cart shed. Free standing granaries are rare in Kent and are more common in East Anglia. Most examples are of late eighteenth or nineteenth century date but again are very rare within Kent. There are examples of granaries in the east of the district that are listed and are all of a nineteenth century date.
- **Stables** are concentrated in the corn-producing areas where farms kept horses that were used for ploughing and other tasks.
- **Yards, cow houses and shelter sheds** are used to house cattle and are largely of nineteenth century date. They may be found added to an earlier barn or detached as separate buildings in relation to yard areas. Open-fronted shelter sheds are the most common examples of cattle housing.

### ***Outfarms***

Within the district only 9% of outfarm buildings such as field barns and sheep folds survive. This is lower than the county average which is 18%. Those that do survive are often in remote locations; lack road access and have only retained some of their historic features. As has already been seen with the overall survival of traditional farmsteads, the district has suffered with higher than average levels of conversion of historic farm buildings to non-agricultural uses which has resulted in the loss of historic farm buildings and traditional features. A number of sheep folds have survived which illustrates the prominent sheep grazing that formed a large part of the rural economy within the district, and in particular the Romney Marsh. A full list of outfarms that have been identified is shown at the end of this theme.

### ***Windmills***

There are two surviving windmills within the district. The first is **Davison's Windmill** that is located in Stelling Minnis. It is a smock mill that was built in 1866 by the Canterbury Millwright Thomas Holman and replaced an earlier open trestle post mill. The mill is built on a low brick base and has eight sides, four storeys and is 43 feet tall. It has four patent sails and houses the only surviving 'hot-bulb' auxiliary engine of any windmill in the country. Davison's mill was notably the last commercially working windmill in Kent when it was closed in 1970. The windmill was constructed as a corn mill and is the only existing example of a smock windmill in the District. It was acquired by the Kent County Council in 1970 and subsequent restoration work commenced in 2003. The mill is currently managed by the Stelling Minnis Windmill and Museum Trust which came into being in 2010, and is open to the public on

Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays between Easter and September. Davison's Mill is a Grade I Listed Building.

The second windmill is the **Stanford Windmill** located in Stanford. It is a tower mill that was built in 1851 by millwright John Hill and later alterations during the twentieth century have been done. It is a brick building with five storeys on a cylindrical base. The original mill machinery and fittings survive in a condition that is rare in unrestored mills and is part of the reason for its listing as a Grade II\* Listed Building. It is an excellently preserved example of a tower mill and is one of eight surviving examples in Kent. It has an unusual two stage design and a rare carving on an internal beam commemorating the date it was built and its builder. The mill suffered minor damage during World War One and has had various alterations throughout the twentieth century such as the replacement of the timber cap by corrugated asbestos-cement sheets in 1961. It ceased to operate in 1969 and during the 1990s the land surrounding the mill was developed for new housing. The inside of the windmill has deteriorated since its closure in 1969 and is in need of future restoration work.

#### **4. Statement of Significance**

The significant historical character of traditional farmsteads and farm buildings as well as their settings can be retained and enhanced through sympathetic change and development. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stresses the following as being important:

1. Retaining and enhancing local character and distinctiveness.
2. Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

A number of farm buildings are protected as Listed Buildings where others remain as undesignated heritage assets. These undesignated assets can be of archaeological interest and so are treated as designated assets, and others could be identified on local listing that should receive the support of the Local Authority and so subsequently merit consideration in planning decisions.

There is a high proportion of designated farmhouses and farm buildings within Kent by national standards and an important number of these are pre-1550 buildings. However, there is also a large number of unlisted eighteenth century and earlier dated buildings which may fulfil national listing criteria but have not been properly identified. Future work to ensure that all of the appropriate farming heritage assets are listed or recognised on local listing will ensure that a greater amount of the remaining heritage is preserved.

The district's traditional farmsteads, developed pre-1900, make a significant contribution to the local character and rural landscape. They do this through their varied forms, use of materials and the way in which they relate to the landscape. Whether designated or not, they will have one or more of the following:

- Groups of historic buildings that contribute to the landscape and settlements within which they are developed.

- Groups of historic buildings where the buildings can be seen and appreciated in relationship to each other and the other open spaces of the farmstead.
- Individual historic building with minimal change to their traditional form.
- Locally distinctive building material.

Farmsteads that are dated from 1900 are far less likely to represent the historic character of the local area due to development and alterations. All of the substantially complete traditional farmsteads within the district are considered to be of **moderate significance**.

Substantially complete historic farmsteads are those that have retained more than half of their traditional buildings and historic footprint from the Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> edition maps of c.1890 – 1900. They are less common in the district than in other areas of Kent as this District has been particularly affected by development and changes of farm buildings to non-agricultural uses. The *Kent Farmsteads and Landscapes Project* have mapped a total of 6520 historic farmsteads within the county and 1920 outfarms (including field barns). Since 1900 it shows that:

- 32% of farmsteads in the district survive with more than 50% of their historic form.
- 20% of farmsteads have a seventeenth century or earlier listed farmhouse.
- Only 2% of farmsteads have one or more associated seventeenth century or earlier working buildings.
- The District has an above average rate (47%) of conversion of listed farmstead buildings to non-agricultural uses where the national average is 39%.
- Only 9% of outfarm buildings such as field barns and sheep folds survive compared to the national average of 18%.

Determining whether the whole group of farm buildings or an individual building is of historical significance can be difficult. The following are of particular significance on a county and national level:

- Farmsteads that are within or next to earthworks remaining from medieval or earlier cultivation and land use.
- Farmsteads that are within or next to archaeological remains of shrunken or deserted settlements and field systems.
- Farmsteads that have a clear historic relationship to historic parks and gardens.

- Farmsteads with eighteenth century or earlier working buildings, buildings other than barns being particularly rare.
- Large-scale courtyard groups with ranges of buildings representative of arable-based agriculture are highly significant.
- Dispersed clusters and multi-yard plan farmsteads that have been subject to low levels of change are rare and significant.
- Planned farmstead groups designed in a coherent style.

### *Farmstead Buildings*

- Eighteenth century and earlier working farm buildings other than barns – those with stables, granaries and cart sheds typical of arable-based agriculture are exceptionally rare.
- Aisled barns are a highly distinctive building type. The south east of England comprises a major concentration of aisled barns that extends into neighbouring parts of Europe. Some may retain evidence for internal subdivision into other purposes such as animal storage or granaries.
- Unconverted oasts retaining internal fittings and farmsteads retaining a range of structures associated with the hop industry are very rare and significant.
- Groups of buildings relating to the hop industry.

### *Materials and Detail*

- Thatched and eighteenth century or earlier brick are rare.
- Rare examples of surviving butted boarding of pre-nineteenth century date found inside barns and on former external walls.
- Stalls and other interior features within stables and cattle houses of an earlier date than the nineteenth century are rare in Kent.

Further guidance on the above can be sought in the relevant parts of the *Kent Farmsteads Character Statements*.

### ***Evidential Value***

The historic farmsteads have a great potential in providing important evidence for the agricultural and farming history of Kent and the district. They can do this through their layouts, functions and relationships to the landscape. These assets continue to make an important contribution to the rural landscape and economies of the local communities. Archaeological remains at these sites may provide further historic evidence for the evolution of farming within district and also provide material from

earlier phases that are rare in this area. A number of the farmsteads are also located on sites that were formerly related to historic manors and therefore contribute to the understanding of historical landownership and the medieval manorial system in Kent.

The buildings themselves within this District have often been extensively modified but detailed examination of the remaining fabric may reveal new evidence for the earlier phases of development. There is a need to reinvestigate the historic farmsteads in this region as there may be some that are not currently designated but that do meet the national criteria. A better understanding of the historical farming stock of the district would benefit these assets and also ensure that earlier evidence that is rare and significant is uncovered and properly recorded.

### ***Historical Value***

The historic farmsteads of the district make an important contribution to the local character and distinctiveness through their various forms, fabrics, settings and functions. They illustrate historical relationships to the landscape and reflect local responses to factors such as topography, population and economy. The size and functions of the historic farmsteads illustrates the distinct agricultural history experienced in Kent and can demonstrate historical influences such as gavelkind tenure, labour economy and the evolution of land ownership. Local traditions of estate policy, wealth and local management of resources can be further evidenced through these traditional farmsteads and the farming history of the district can be experienced by local people as well as visitors.

### ***Aesthetic Value***

Traditional farmsteads are often attractive buildings that make an important contribution to the aesthetics of the local area. The historic farmsteads and their associated historic buildings are valuable stocks of local crafts, skills and materials that are integral to the local character and distinctiveness. They often relate closely to their local geology and can often provide important habitats for wildlife that is particularly important within areas of the district such as the Romney Marsh that is of special scientific and conservation interest for its flora, fauna and sensitive geologies. These attractive historical buildings add to the landscape and panoramic views that attract a number of people to this area.

### ***Communal Value***

Historic farmsteads are significant contributors to the local rural character and communities. They add to the beauty and distinctiveness of the rural landscape which encourages a positive sense of place and the enjoyment of the area by its local people. They are also assets that can make a significant contribution to the rural economy when they are converted and reused as non-agricultural buildings. Historic buildings can add a premium to an area's local economy and these traditional farmsteads can play an important part in this, particularly in the district where there is a higher than national average level of conversion of listed farmhouses to other non-agricultural uses.

## 5. Vulnerabilities

The District's remaining working farms and historic farmstead buildings are under significant pressure from various factors. It has already been identified that the farming heritage assets of the district are suffering with a lower survival rate than compared to other areas within Kent. These assets are integral to the rural landscape character and illustrate the distinctive agricultural experience of Kent and the district. They make a fundamental contribution to rural settlement and allow people to experience the unique agricultural traditions through the varied forms, sizes and functions. It is therefore particularly important for the district that the remaining assets from this theme are recognised and protected wherever possible.

New farming regimes, industrialisation of farming practices and changing animal welfare laws are putting farmsteads under pressure to continue to adapt in order to survive. These new practices may ultimately lead to the redundancy of traditional farm buildings and the need to construct new warehouses, barns and livestock shelters. The new development of a farmstead can not only fundamentally change the character of the farm, but can also alter the setting of the farmstead and the significance of individual historic farm buildings. This is of particular relevance to the smaller farmsteads on the Romney Marsh that may be more difficult to convert sympathetically to meet new needs. Traditional farm buildings that cannot be adequately converted may become redundant and fall out of use completely. The layout, setting and function are all important components that collectively make up the distinctive character of a farmstead, and new developments to meet modern needs are threatening traditional farmsteads that are either not able to adapt and so become redundant, or they are changed too far from their original form that made them historically important and distinct.

As farming methods intensify and activities are required on larger scales, traditional farm buildings may be vulnerable to being abandoned and falling into a state of dereliction. The diversification of farming is further putting pressure on traditional farm buildings to modify their roles which again may leave them vulnerable to deterioration and decay through abandonment. Whilst some of the historic farm buildings are listed and so afforded statutory protection, many are undesignated heritage assets that could be vulnerable to neglect. Where buildings are not abandoned but utilised for lower grade uses they are often maintained to a lower standard and maintenance of the building is generally unsympathetic and of low quality. This will further damage the farming heritage of the district and may cause the further loss of this distinctive urban building stock.

The district has above-average levels of the conversion of farm buildings for non-agricultural uses, primarily residential. This puts these buildings at risk of poor quality conversions or work that is unsympathetic to the historical significance of the building. This is particularly relevant to farm buildings that are not listed and do not fall within conservation areas. The sympathetic conversion of traditional farm buildings is important in maintaining the historic character that is integral to the rural landscape and overall character of the local area. The assets in this theme are an essential part of the rural historic building stock and are under serious threat from a lack of adaptability to modern pressures and new developments being unsympathetic resulting in a loss of local character.



## 6. Opportunities

The district's traditional farmsteads are essential to the rural landscape character. This District in particular has a low survival rate of historic farmsteads and the associated historic buildings primarily due to many falling out of agricultural use and being subsequently converted for non-agricultural uses as either residential or for new businesses. There is an important opportunity here to sympathetically re-use historic farm buildings that will both alleviate pressures for development whilst also maintaining their historic character. This will significantly help to maintain the rural historic building stock that currently remains whilst also ensuring that the historic character of the rural landscape is not lost or diminished.

Re-using existing buildings is also an easy way to achieve sustainability without damaging the overall sense of place. It can have economic benefits as historic buildings are often desirable and can carry a premium for the area and local economy. When conversion work is required it should, where possible, use traditional materials and techniques that are in keeping with the existing fabric. Any new additions or alterations should be sympathetic to the historic building and the use of local methods to do the conversion work will further help to sustain local skills and businesses that can so often be lost in difficult economic climates. Maintaining the historic character of a traditional farm building also offers opportunities to incorporate the nostalgia of Kentish rural history into the new use of the building which may again add value and desirability.

Opportunities to enhance and protect historic farm buildings with the district should be sought. When working farms are no longer able to maintain the traditional farmstead, opportunities should be pursued to find sustainable new uses for the buildings to ensure sustainable development and the longevity of the heritage asset. Other means such as new listings or creating a local list can also be taken in order to protect more of the rural building stock in the district. The *Kent Farms Guidance* paper and the *Kent Farmsteads and Landscapes Project* offers advice for identifying and assessing significant historic farmsteads and recommends ways to best manage change to these assets. This is an important resource in planning for the future of the farming heritage within the district.

## 7. Current Activities

The current activity within the district relating to its farming heritage plays an important role in the conservation of the assets highlighted in this theme as well as in their continued promotion and place within current communities both rural and urban. These groups are of particular significance to this area because it has had a distinctive experience of farming and is also facing greater losses of the historic farmstead stock than is seen in other areas of Kent.

The continued promotion and conservation of farming heritage assets is being done by groups such as the Stelling Minnis Windmill and Museum Trust and Romney Marsh Visitor Centre. The Stelling Minnis Windmill and Museum Trust was formed in 2010 and they now manage the windmill and the associated museum which is

opened to the public on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays between Easter and September each year. The museum tells the story of the windmill, its millers and the general local agricultural history and then visitors are able to access the windmill. The Trust also holds various seasonal events that are aimed at wide audiences and aim to attract more people to the area and to highlight the heritage of the mill and local agricultural scene. The Trust is staffed by volunteers and there are opportunities to undertake training as a volunteer and subsequently join the group and work at the site. This is an important opportunity for local people to become more involved with their local heritage, gain a better understanding of the past and to obtain skills that encourage pride and ownership of this local farming heritage.

The Romney Marsh Visitor Centre offers further educational opportunities and provides information on the farming history of the Marsh. There is a replica of a 'Lookers Hut' on the site that provides an iconic image for the sheep farming that is so integral to the farming heritage of the area and brings it to life for visitors. The Centre is located in the Romney Warren Country Park that works to highlight the natural significance and history of Romney Marsh. This is important in promoting and encouraging an understanding of the natural landscape here and also in raising awareness of the importance of this area and its farming heritage.

Also, on the Romney Marsh is the Romney Marsh Wools company that was formed in 2008 by a farming family who have worked on the Marsh for six generations. They produce wool products from their flock of around 1000 ewes that are created not only to highlight the quality of British wool, but also to promote the history and pride of farming on the Romney Marsh. This is an important way to not only support local farms, but also to engage with the history of local farming enterprises and the heritage of the rural agricultural experience. A number of farmers markets are also held in areas around the district such as in Hythe and Elham which again illustrate the continued importance of farming to local communities and rural economies.

The Brockhill Park Performing Arts College has a working farm as part of the school site and offers learning opportunities as well as qualifications in Animal Management. The farm includes a variety of livestock and the students get practical experience in the rearing and welfare of farm livestock. The animals are reared for meat that is sold in the school's farm shop and students are also educated in crop production and management. There is a Young Farmers Club that meets regularly to take part in practical experience at the farm and the school also holds a number of public events around the farm and farm work. Again, this is an important educational resource that will raise the awareness of the importance of farming to local communities and visitors alike and can lead to a greater appreciation for the farming heritage within the district. The promotion of farming as integral to the rural landscape and community may raise the profile for the heritage assets from this theme and lead to the better conservation and preservation of these traditional farmsteads and farm buildings for future generations.

## **8. Sources Used & Additional Information**

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