



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Town and
Regional Planning

Current Use of Historic Farm Property in the West Midlands: Introduction and Overview

Report for Advantage West Midlands and English
Heritage

University of Sheffield, Department of Town and
Regional Planning

May 2010



Preface

This technical report provides a detailed statistical analysis of the patterns of farmstead use across the West Midlands and their social and economic role. It focuses on the types and patterns of current use of the nearly 17,000 farmsteads across the West Midlands which retain some or all of their traditional working buildings from the late 19th century. These have been mapped as part of the *West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project*, and are now stored on the Historic Environment Records of the county and metropolitan authorities. This is a collaborative project, led by English Heritage in partnership with the Region's county and metropolitan councils and with the support of Advantage West Midlands. The Project has:

1. mapped and described the locations and characteristics of all farmsteads based on Ordnance Survey 2nd edition maps of c 1890–1900. These were published after the final significant period of development of traditional farmsteads and the general use of vernacular materials. Modern maps were then used to identify the rates of survival to the present day.
2. compared this information against a wide range of address and economic data to understand the role that historic farmsteads play in the economy of the West Midlands. This is the focus of this report.
3. developed guidance and a set of planning tools to help apply and make use of this evidence base, to inform spatial planning, land management and economic development at all levels.

The results of the whole project are brought together in a single report (*West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project. Summary Report*)

1 Current Use of Historic Farm Property in the West Midlands: Introduction and Overview

1.1 Farmsteads are a longstanding feature of the settlement geography of the West Midlands. About one third continue to be working farms. In much of the rural west, dispersed farmsteads have been the predominant form of traditional settlement, and today they form a very significant part of its building assets. (See Figure 1.1). At the southern margin of the Region, where farmsteads lie within settlements, they have been particularly suited to residential reuse as agriculture has restructured. Across the Region, historic farmsteads accommodate a broad range of business uses – often ancillary to a dominant residential use – and represent a distinctive part of its property portfolio. Later sections of this document argue that they are significant to both the rural and urban economy of the Region.

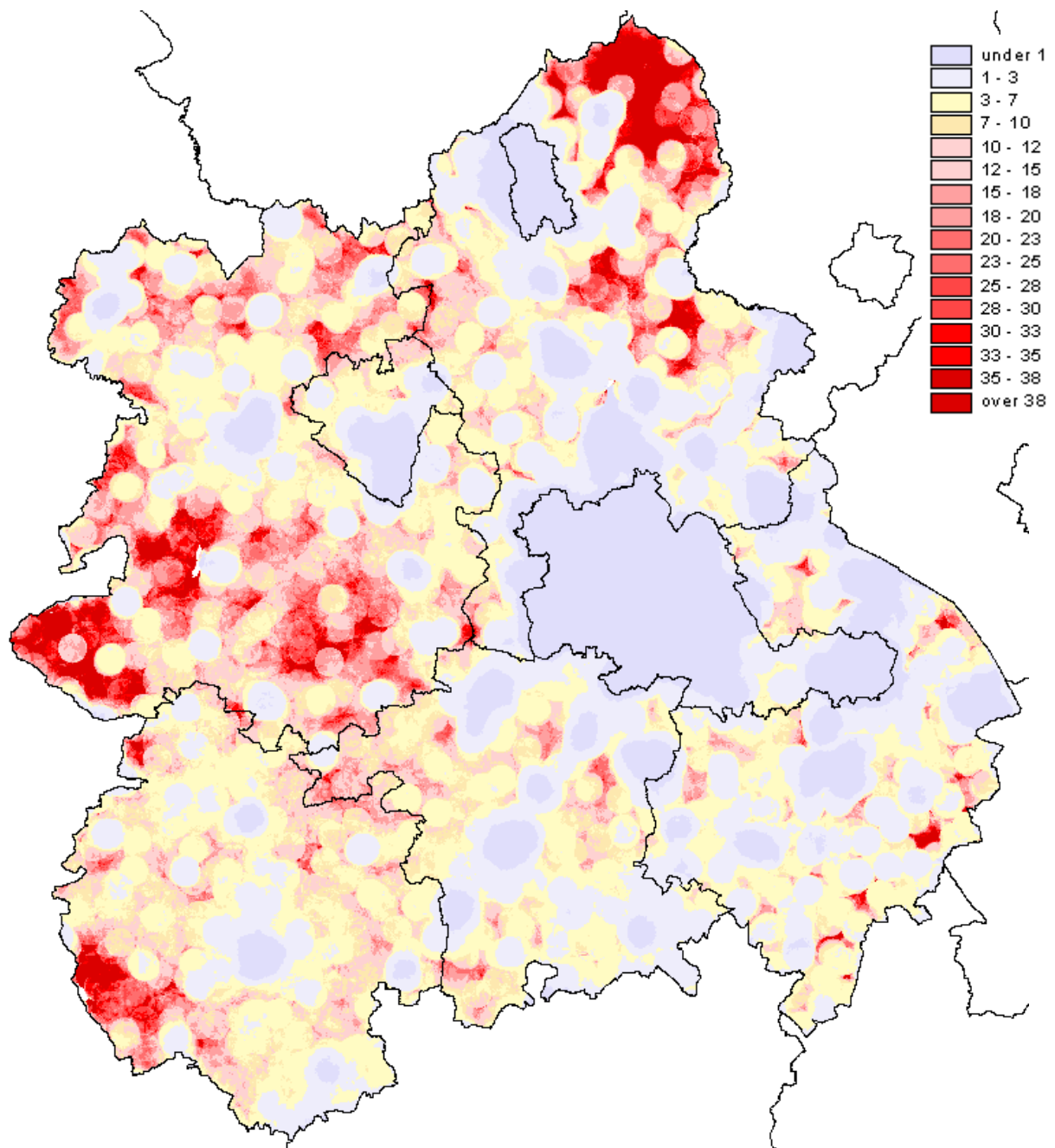
1.2 This document provides a summary of a programme of work, under taken to explore the current use of historic farmsteads by the Department of Town and Regional Planning at the University of Sheffield (TRP), as part of a broader study coordinated by English Heritage and involving archaeological officers across the Region. Technically, the work involved assessing the use of almost 17,000 properties across the Region is extensive and demanding as it involves:

- matching historic farm property names with current postal addresses,
- matching individual current addresses with a variety of sources of establishment level business information, and
- analysis of the relationship between uses identified and indicators of socio-economic characteristics of small areas.

1.3 The study builds on previous work at TRP which has sought to develop a range of socio-economic indicators for use at very fine spatial scales. These use information for individual properties or parcels of land (sometimes in combination with Census data at output area level) to provide indicators of:

- business participation (by reference to addresses of the registered offices of limited companies; inclusion within business directories; home addresses of directors of substantial companies)
- capital endowment (proxied by the value of capital service in buildings (CSB) estimated using VOA data)
- investment (proxied by the (net) increase in the value of capital service in buildings (IVCSB) estimated by combining VOA information for particular properties with information about physical change on particular land parcels estimated from LUCS data generated by Ordnance Survey for CLG)
- residential land value, distilled from value of individual property transactions recorded by HMLR

Figure 1.1: Historic Farmsteads in Current Use per 100 Dwellings



- 1.4 With the industrialization and urbanization of the Region many of its historic farmsteads became absorbed within urban development, particularly towards the core of the Region. Here many of the farmsteads shown on the First and Second Edition Ordnance Survey maps which form the point of departure for this study have been lost. In the rural west and the north east, by contrast, much of that inheritance has survived substantially unaltered. More generally, survival of historic farmsteads has tended to be lowest in those localities which have seemed to present the greatest opportunities as successive rounds of investment in new capacity have occurred. At a broad scale, this cumulative process has responded to and redefined the 'economic mass' of each of the places that constitute the Region - that is to say their capacity to provide labour and provide a market for goods and services. The detailed pattern of survival, however, reflects not only differential urbanization, but the varying extent of agricultural restructuring.
- 1.5 The economic mass of any point within the Region can be gauged by reference to the numbers of households within a 10 km radius of it. This measure is referred to frequently in this report and is important because the economic mass of a location in the sense just introduced and its endowment of commercial buildings measured by the value of capital service in buildings or CSB are very closely correlated. (CSB is defined as the aggregate annual rental value of all such property within ten kilometres). In parts of the West of the Region (particularly South Shropshire, North Shropshire and Oswestry), both economic mass and CSB are amongst the lowest in England (TRP 2008). Here farmsteads have survived, constituting a significant part of its building assets and potentially being key foci for future economic activity.
- 1.6 Towards the core of the Region, historic farmsteads constitute an insignificant proportion of its building stock. Nevertheless, quite apart from the continuing role of a minority at the core of agricultural businesses, they provide dwellings filling a particular niche in the Region's residential property portfolio. This latter role (which is supported and given added significance by Green Belt policy) also has some significance for the economy of the Region.
- 1.7 The remainder of this document describes the methods used and key results. Section 2 outlines the technical methods used firstly to link historic and current property addresses and secondly to assemble business information for individual property addresses. Section 3 sets out the key findings explaining the relationship between the use of historic farmsteads and their current socio-economic context (on the one hand) and their inherited character (on the other), while Section 4 draws conclusions.

2 Method

- 2.1 The work reported here depends firstly on matching historic farm addresses with current postal addresses and secondly on assembling business and related information for the addresses identified. As all linkage is at the individual property level, the computational demands are substantial.
- 2.2 The first step involves what is termed here a 'shallow parse', allowing for the structuring and interpretation of property addresses provided by the county archaeological officers. This served to regularise the information received from the several county teams which had (inevitably) prepared in accordance with varying conventions, employing somewhat different abbreviations and so on.
- 2.3 The shallow parse serves to separate farm addresses into types including:
- those which have a proper name and a facility name (eg 'Braggs Farm' or 'Lineal Cottage'),
 - those which have simply a property name (eg 'Linals')
 - those which have only a generic name (eg farmstead 200m east of X),
 - those which have street addresses (eg 12 Knowle Lane)
- and hence to determine:
- which historic farmsteads are potentially matchable with current postal addresses and
 - the most appropriate matching techniques to be used in subsequent work.
- 2.4 When historic farm names are matched with current property addresses it is necessary to account for:
- differences in spelling (including Welsh and English conventions in the Marches),
 - differences in word division (eg 'Thick Broom' and 'Thickbroom'), and
 - differences in what is made explicit (from 'Laysters' to 'Laysters Farm' or vice versa)
- 2.5 This was achieved using what is described as a 'deep parse', breaking the names of farms and other properties into fundamental place name elements. This allows for matching of pairs of names such as 'The Lorca' and 'Lorcas Farm', and for accommodating changes in names which involve gain or loss of affixes.
- 2.6 Historic names were compared with all property names appearing on Royal Mail's Postcode Address File, with the nature of every possible match summarised and ranked. Best matches (and further possible matches) were initially assessed computationally, but all non-exact matches used in subsequent work were clerically checked.

- 2.7 On this basis, 16,898 surviving historic farmsteads were matched with current postal addresses, and full postcodes added. In the remainder of this document, references to ‘current use of historic farmsteads’ refer to this set.
- 2.8 In two types of circumstance it is not possible to find a matching postal address for farmsteads believed to have survived. The first is where the name recorded for the farmstead has no plausible lexical or semantic link with a current property address (were for example ‘Dowsons’ to survive as ‘Hill End Farm’ or ‘Hill End House’). This is likely to have a random effect on assessment of the mix of current uses of historic farm property. The second type of circumstance is where a surviving farmstead is used solely for storage, and so is not a property to which Royal Mail deliver. The number of these cases are not known, but bias against proper recording of storage use will result.
- 2.9 Having identified the current postal addresses of surviving historic farmsteads, the next step in the procedure was to attempt to identify other economic activity at those same addresses. The matching here is considerably easier, as the problem can be restricted by reference to the unit postcode. Various pointers to current economic role were used, including
- i) the Postcode Address File itself (which includes names of occupiers considered by Royal Mail to be non-residential),
 - ii) the registered offices and trading addresses of 110,000 substantial companies for which accounting information is made available through the Financial Analysis Made Easy (FAME) database,
 - iii) the Valuation Office Agency's Rating List,
 - iv) the registered office address of limited liability companies, and associated summary information,
 - v) names and addresses of businesses which have been subject to credit reference checks, and
 - vi) (home) addresses of directors of businesses referred to at ii above.
- 2.10 This range of sources allows tracking quite different sets of economic roles. PAF proves helpful in providing information about business uses that require non-residential property, where those uses are immediately visible. Information about uses subject to industrial or commercial rating usefully supplements this. It allows both for the identification of farmsteads which have moved entirely out of farming into other non-residential uses and also for identifying those forms of on-farm diversification which involve the creation of business space.
- 2.11 The business data sources show the very limited use of historic farmstead property made by those substantial businesses referred to above, but the diversity of small businesses registered in historic farmstead property in essentially residential use. Moreover, directorship information is able to point to the linkages between historic farm property and substantial business in urban cores.
- 2.12 There are, of course, many businesses trading from essentially residential property that neither have limited liability protection nor will be visible as a result of having

applied for business credit. There is a continuum of activity which involves advertising in different places, and ranges down to part-time or occasional home-based working. Other work at TRP has shown a tendency towards systematic difference between the nature of limited liability companies working from essentially residential properties and other home-based businesses. Home-based limited liability companies are rather more likely to be providing professional services and are typically found disproportionately in high status residential areas (Bibby and Brindley 2008). Businesses visible only in directories tend to be provide a broader range of domestic services (including gardening, rubbish clearance, painting and decorating, and kindred activities such as driving tuition). Moreover, obtaining information about more ephemeral businesses is difficult and its processing is costly, as it is necessary to rely on (and compare) several business directories.

- 2.13 In the present study no general attempt has been made to reach beyond incorporated businesses. Nevertheless, some account is provided in Annex 2 of the character of such business base within historic farm property in Shropshire and Herefordshire. This account rests on work undertaken by TRP sponsored by the Commission for Rural Communities and supported by those counties and AWM (TRP2009)

3 Current Use of Historic Farm Property in the West Midlands

3.1 As the Region has developed and the farming sector has itself restructured, the economic output of its rural areas -and more particularly employment - has shifted away from its agricultural past, albeit that agriculture is the predominant user of land. Hence, within the Region today, only one historic farmstead in three remains at the core of an agricultural business. As the economy has developed historic farm property has increasingly passed into residential use. Today the Region's historic farmsteads might be grouped into five classes on the basis of their position on an economic spectrum:

- i) those which continue in purely agricultural use (29.5% of the total)
- ii) those where agricultural use continues but is supplemented by ancillary industrial commercial or related uses (2.7 % of the total)
- iii) those where agricultural uses have given way entirely to business activity occupying buildings converted to create commercial, industrial or warehouse space (4.5 % of the total)
- iv) those which have changed to residential use, but where there is evidence of home-based business (5.1 % of the total)
- v) those in purely residential use (58.2 % of the total)

3.2 This section is concerned with understanding this pattern of current use, and developing an appreciation of how their potential use varies in different contexts and differs between farmsteads with particular plan types. Before considering the current pattern of use in any detail, two critical points should be stressed. First, it is important to maintain a distinction between the economic diversification of rural areas and diversification on particular farm holdings (the latter being only a very small part of the former). Second, the fact that after-use for redundant agricultural buildings tends to be residential *despite planning policy*, merits repetition.

3.3 Traditionally, much discussion of the changing role of farms in the rural economy has focussed on diversification of activity within a basically agricultural operation, or on securing 'economic' after-uses' for redundant agricultural buildings. It is now widely understood that despite the traditional emphases of planning policy, after-uses tend to be residential. It is therefore not surprising that 63.3% of the Region's historic farm complexes are (in terms of the Use Classes Order) now in residential (C3) use. (This includes groups iv and v referred to in para 3.1 – with 5.1% of the total - accommodating economic activity considered ancillary to residential use for the purposes of the planning system). This section is, however, concerned with the whole spectrum of economic roles mentioned in para 3.1, and with aspects of the integration of historic farmsteads within the 'urban' economy.

3.4 Consider first the range of activity possible within those farmsteads described in para 3.1 as **remaining in agricultural use**. The material presented here will tend to underestimate the extent of diversification on those historic farmsteads continuing in agricultural use for two reasons. First, they may form part of larger business units extending beyond the historic farmstead. Second, a range of diversification possibilities can be realised without either the creation of rateable facilities requiring planning permission or producing indicators of business activity which might be

picked up using the methods outlined in Section 2. Activities such as small-scale bed-and-breakfast, or provision of space for caravans (on a small-scale basis or for use by exempt organisations) will not be revealed in this way. Income derived through allowing land to be used intermittently for car-boot sales, war games, clay pigeon shooting or motor sports (such as off-road racing) may also be overlooked. The sale of the farm's own produce through a farm shop (selling no other goods) or a 'pick-your-own' facility, or the processing of such produce on a small-scale are examples of further activities which may not have been revealed.

- 3.5 Other activity which does not require planning permission or entail liability for commercial rating includes provision of self catering holiday homes made available for less than 141 days of the year and bed and breakfast accommodation for less than six people where it is ancillary to the householder's residential use. The approaches adopted in this study will not pick up diversification of this type.
- 3.6 Traditionally, concerns about future use of redundant farm buildings have focussed either on more substantial **diversification of existing holdings** or their entire conversion to form business space. Such forms of reuse are in fact rather limited. Rather more than 1300 surviving historic farm complexes across the Region (7.8% of the total) include broadly industrial or commercial facilities that are liable to commercial rating (recalling that strictly agricultural uses are exempt). These constitute groups ii and iii in para 3.1, with rateable facilities being created alongside continuing agricultural use in one scheme in three (group ii). On one historic farmstead in twelve that has continued in agricultural use, diversification has involved the creation of a facility subject to commercial rating.
- 3.7 As is evident from Table 3.1, the character of the (non-agricultural) industrial and commercial facilities created within historic farm complexes tends to be broadly similar whether or not agricultural use continues alongside. Workshops are the type of facility most commonly created, being developed in one of four projects involving conversion to non-residential use, regardless of whether farming continues. Self-catering holiday homes apparently constitute the second most common type of property created through conversion (representing one fifth of all rateable facilities within historic farmsteads). Conversion to holiday homes is more likely to be found within historic farm complexes where agricultural use continues. The third most common type of rateable property found within historic farm complexes is office space, which (relatively speaking) is more frequently found where agricultural uses have entirely ceased. Alongside storage space, stables, riding schools and related equestrian facilities constitute further notable classes of rateable facility created within historic farm complexes.
- 3.8 Both the propensity for historic farmsteads to have remained in agricultural use and the propensity towards on-farm diversification through creation of rateable facilities show a systematic relationship to farmstead plan type. The likelihood that larger scale historic farm complexes will have remained in agricultural use is greater than is the case with smaller farmsteads (see Table 3.2). Thus if plan-types are grouped into four broad size categories, it is found that only a quarter of the smallest farmsteads have remained in agricultural use, compared with two fifths of the largest farmsteads. There is also a readily understood tendency for business units and similar facilities to have been created in (larger) farmsteads with regular courtyard plans (8.3%), rather

than (smaller) farmsteads with linear plans (4.2%). Generally speaking, on-farm diversification has been of very limited significance in the smallest farmsteads (there being only six rateable schemes for every hundred such properties). They are far more likely to pass into residential use. There are, however, within every hundred farmsteads in the largest band there are fifteen rateable schemes.

- 3.9 It is important to appreciate that while there are genuine systematic relationships between the physical scale and configuration of groups of historic farmsteads and their current use, it would be quite wrong to interpret them as reliable pointers to the potential use of any *particular* farmstead. (Put differently, use of multinomial logistic regression allows for quantification of these effects, but demonstrates that they account for only a small proportion of the variability in current use from farmstead to farmstead (about 3% of the total)).
- 3.10 While creation of business, workshop and related space on farms has been much discussed, relatively little attention has been devoted to forms of economic activity found when farmsteads are converted to **essentially residential use**; or to home-based business more generally. Previous work by TRP on the current use of historic farmsteads in the High Weald has drawn attention to the significance and diversity of professional homeworking in this setting (TRP 2007) .

Table 3.1
Rateable Industrial and Commercial Uses of Historic Farm Complexes,
West Midlands

Facility Class	No Associated Farming Use		Associated Farming Use	
	Number	Pct	Number	Pct
Animal Boarding	31	3.1	17	2.5
Caravan Site	44	4.4	33	4.8
Equestrian	76	7.6	60	8.8
Holiday Homes	154	15.4	144	21.1
Hospitality Uses	40	4.0	8	1.2
Offices	113	11.3	53	7.7
Open Storage	21	2.1	19	2.8
Outdoor Recreation	14	1.4	10	1.5
Retail	59	5.9	48	7.0
Storage	87	8.7	53	7.7
Tourist Accommodation	35	3.5	20	2.9
Visitor Attractions	11	1.1	3	0.4
Workshops	264	26.5	168	24.6
Other	49	4.9	48	7.0
All Facilities	998	100	684	100

Table 3.2 Broad Current use by Farmstead Scale

	Agriculture	Agriculture & Commercial	B1,B2,B8	Residential with Business	Residential	Total
Small Count	765	47	105	169	2154	3240
<i>Expected Count</i>	<i>1020.3</i>	<i>94.5</i>	<i>151.7</i>	<i>162.3</i>	<i>1811.2</i>	3240
Percentage	23.6	1.5	3.2	5.2	66.5	100
Small-Medium Count	1053	110	172	176	2141	3652
<i>Expected Count</i>	<i>1150.1</i>	<i>106.5</i>	<i>171.0</i>	<i>182.9</i>	<i>2041.5</i>	3652
Percentage	28.8	3.0	4.7	4.8	58.6	100
Medium-Large Count	1734	161	251	253	2578	4977
<i>Expected Count</i>	<i>1567.4</i>	<i>145.1</i>	<i>233.0</i>	<i>249.3</i>	<i>2782.2</i>	4977
Percentage	34.8	3.2	5.0	5.1	51.8	100
Large Count	1157	118	172	151	1486	3084
<i>Expected Count</i>	<i>971.2</i>	<i>89.9</i>	<i>144.4</i>	<i>154.5</i>	<i>1724.0</i>	3084
Percentage	37.5	3.8	5.6	4.9	48.2	100
Total Count	4709	436	700	749	8359	14953
Percentage	31.5	2.9	4.7	5.0	55.9	100

Small	Includes	DISPcl, LC1, LIN, LP, PAR
Small-Medium	Includes	DISPdw, LC2, RCL, ROW
Medium-Large	Includes	DISPmy, LC3, LCL3, RCf, RCL3, RCt, RCu, RCz
Large	Includes	LC4, LCL4, RC, RCe, RCh, RCL4, Remy

NB: 'Farmstead Scale' has only been assessed for farmsteads proper and excludes (former) smallholdings. For this reason absolute numbers of units are considerably lower than shown elsewhere (eg Table 3.3)

- 3.11 Professional homeworking should be distinguished from traditional outworking, and refers to a spectrum of activity ranging from occasional working from home on employers business, through participation in consultancy and related activity supplementing employment income to full-time engagement as principal of a business run from home. Both the degree of participation in home-based business and its economic value are difficult to measure, in part because of the volatility of the very smallest businesses.
- 3.12 Recent work at TRP (2009) has experimented with various ways of measuring home-based business including identifying limited liability companies registered at residential addresses, identifying businesses indexed by credit reference agencies, identifying businesses advertising in on-line directories and seeking specific postcodes on the worldwide web to find any URLs providing any evidence of business activity. The focus here is on the simplest approach - using the presence of

home-based limited liability companies as a proxy for professional homeworking. Across England there are on average, eight home-based limited liability companies for every 1000 households.

- 3.13 The tendency to find limited liability companies registered in residential property is greatest in high-status suburban and exurban areas, contributing to a pool of enterprise. Within the Region, rates are highest at the margins of the central conurbation and in the surrounding Green Belt reaching a peak in areas close to the junction of the M40 and the M42. As with other indicators of entrepreneurship, intensity of home-based limited liability companies tends to be much lower in large urban areas than elsewhere. Previous work at TRP has demonstrated a strong statistical relationship between the intensity of home-based businesses in an area and the intensity of directorships of larger businesses. On average across England, the number of directorships held by residents within 10km of any point is roughly double the number of home-based limited liability companies with 10 kms of that point (and accounts for 89% of the variability of the latter measure-TRP2008). Within the Region itself, a parallel but slightly weaker statistical relationship obtains (see below).
- 3.14 Within the Region's historic farmstead property, the tendency to professional home-based business, however, seems markedly higher than these general figures suggest. Eighty of every thousand historic farmsteads in the Region serve as registered offices of limited liability companies. In fifty-one of eighty such cases, the properties in question are treated as residential by both VOA and Royal Mail and should almost certainly be regarded as belonging to the C3 use class. Reference to the registered offices of limited liability companies, is therefore able to pick out a further set of 'invisible' small businesses (with seven in ten returning only an abbreviated balance sheet). While there is a weak tendency for company registered offices to be found more frequently in larger farm complexes (10% in the largest compared with 6% in the smallest), as Table 3.2 shows there is no such tendency where the principal use of the property is apparently residential. Historic farm property of whatever physical type is thus disproportionately likely to accommodate professional homeworking.
- 3.15 There are important differences between the profile of the immediately evident businesses and the less obvious forms of activity associated with professional homeworking (with a lesser emphasis on hotel and catering and retail), and a wider range of business, accountancy and management services. Thus, the registered offices of the Region's IT based businesses include historic farm properties styled: Baysham Court, Bellamont Grange, Bowling Green House, Carpenters Cottage, Chapel Cottage, Church Farm, Domain Farm, Easingmoor House, Fammington Court, Hampton Parks Farm Cottage, Hanley Court, High House, High Moor Farm, Holly Cottage, Humblebee Hall, Hurst Farm, Laurel Farm, Little Mearse Farm, Lower Farm, Manor House, Micklefield Farm, Mill House, Moor Court, Mostylea Farm, Peachley Court, Peaton Rough Cottage, Plas Madoc, Pool House, Rectory Farmhouse, The Berrow, The Courtyard, The Firs, The Old Manor, Upper House, White House, Wixford Park, Woodend House, and Yew Tree Farm. In only fourteen (of 50) instances are the properties in question apparently non-residential, and in all but one of these fourteen cases there is another more overt business use at the same address.
- 3.16 Rather less obvious is the tendency to find the registered offices of 'construction' businesses within historic farm property apparently in residential use (cf Dwelly et al

2005). The set of historic farmstead addresses yields ten times as many registered offices of construction businesses (presumably in the *coordination* of construction) as it does properties whose signboards or similar indicate them to be in construction use. It thus appears that apart from the non-residential uses obviously evident to Royal Mail (or the passer-by) there is a range of other economic activities to consider which are subordinate either to residential use or other non-residential uses. It seems important that proper account is taken of economic activity in the countryside which is not immediately visible, and that future work seeks to gauge its significance more fully.

- 3.17 The picture of this less obvious component of economic activity can be enriched by considering not only the registered offices of limited liability companies, but the offices of businesses recorded for credit reference purposes). This allows some measure of the extent of unincorporated business. Using a credit reference source, businesses were identified at 897 historic farm addresses provided by the trial match. These included businesses at 319 addresses at which company registered offices had already been identified (*and included within Table .33*). They also include reference to 280 further limited liability companies (with registered offices elsewhere) and an additional 578 unincorporated businesses based at addresses in the trial match set. The activity of these unincorporated businesses is not tabulated here as roughly half have no literal business description (simply having names such as ‘Armstrong’, ‘Barry Barker’ or ‘Berger Associates’). The activities that can be imputed are diverse with only 4.4% of the total (or 9% of those with a literal business description) relating to agriculture or horticulture

Place-to-Place Variation in the Current Use of Historic Farmsteads

- 3.18 It seems important to attempt to understand how the current and potential use of historic farmsteads differs from place to place and between properties of different physical character. Arguably, such understanding is significant both in assessing the future possibilities for maintenance and conservation of built heritage and in appreciating the potential contribution of this property to the economic well-being of the Region. The varying mix of current uses at the county scale is summarized in Table 3.3, and the changing balance of uses across the Region is illustrated in Figure 3.1a and b (showing the relative importance of the agricultural components and residential components respectively).
- 3.19 Understanding possibilities for future use requires discipline in the interpretation of graphics such as Figure 3.1. Residential use of historic farmsteads predominates everywhere across the Region. The Region *can* be differentiated with regard to the varying degree of dominance, but it *cannot* be partitioned into ‘agricultural,’ ‘residential’ or other zones. Strictures of this form become even more critical when interpreting graphics which show varying intensity of infrequently occurring phenomena such as farmstead-based limited liability companies.
- 3.20 At the conceptual level, current use should be considered as the outcome of competitive processes. In these circumstances, the tendency to release historic farm property for non-agricultural uses responds to a requirement to achieve economies in agricultural production, but is also sensitive both to the suitability of the buildings for continual farming use and to the prices to be obtained under other uses. Implicit

within the foregoing discussion is the idea that it is the larger farmstead complexes which tend to be most suited to continued agricultural use. The reigning price of residential property is a key consideration (and which varies systematically across the Region in the manner suggested in Figure 3.2).

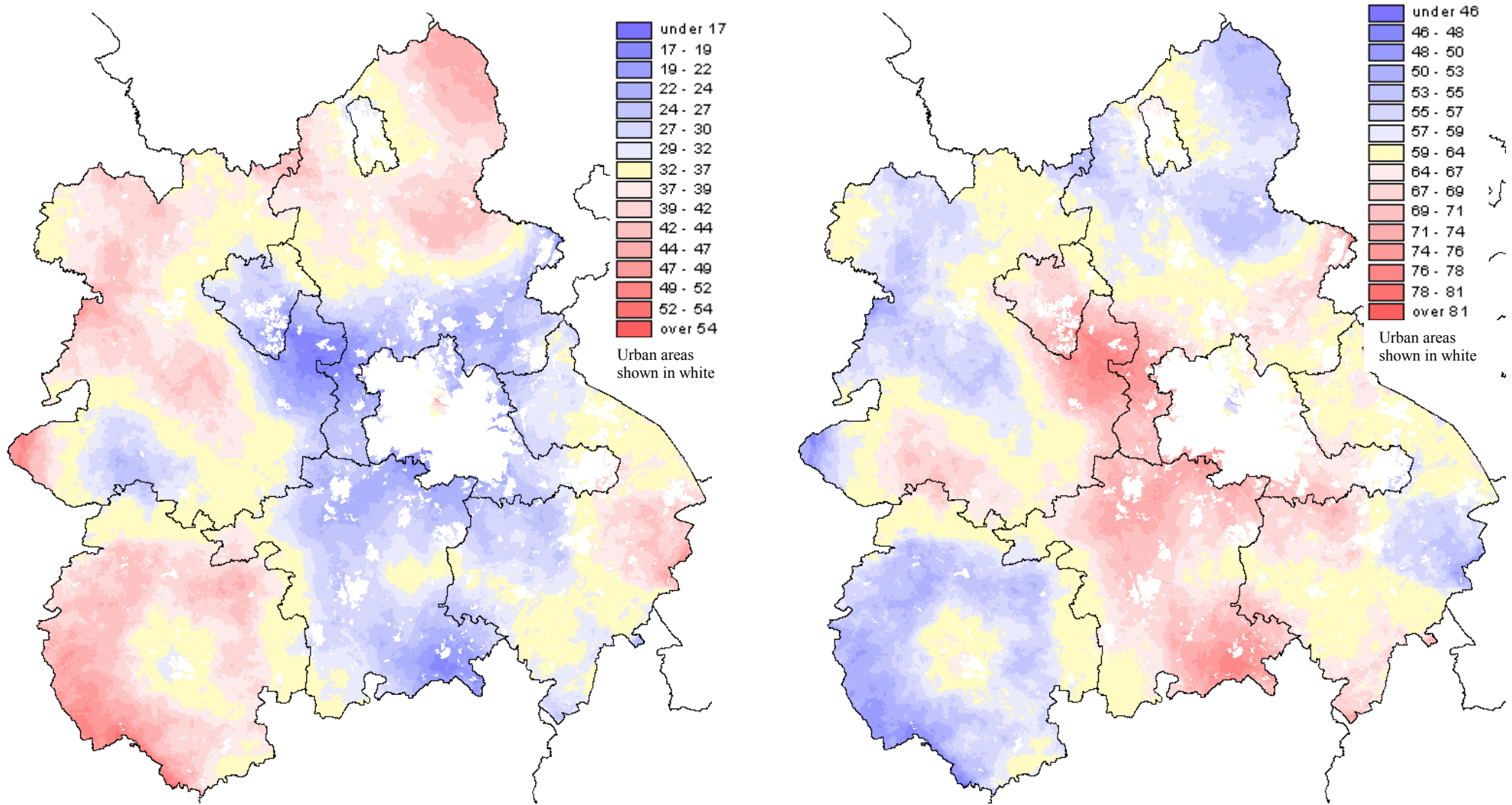
Table 3.3 Current Use of Historic Farm Property by Geographic County

		Agriculture	Agriculture & Commercial	Business Space	Residential with Business	Residential	Total
Conurbation	Count	18	6	13	4	54	95
	<i>Expected Count</i>	28.0	2.6	4.3	4.8	55.3	95
	Percentage	18.9	6.3	13.7	4.2	56.8	100
Herefordshire	Count	815	104	145	100	1423	2587
	<i>Expected Count</i>	763.6	70.4	116.4	130.9	1505.7	2587
	Percentage	31.5	4.0	5.6	3.9	55.0	100
Shropshire	Count	1566	97	182	218	3190	5253
	<i>Expected Count</i>	1550.6	143.0	236.3	265.8	3057.4	5253
	Percentage	29.8	1.8	3.5	4.2	60.7	100
Staffordshire	Count	1367	104	170	204	2262	4107
	<i>Expected Count</i>	1212.3	111.8	184.7	207.8	2390.4	4107
	Percentage	33.3	2.5	4.1	5.0	55.1	100
Warwickshire	Count	556	63	97	143	1092	1951
	<i>Expected Count</i>	575.9	53.1	87.7	98.7	1135.5	1951
	Percentage	28.5	3.2	5.0	7.3	56.0	100
Worcestershire	Count	666	86	153	186	1814	2905
	<i>Expected Count</i>	857.5	79.1	130.7	147.0	1690.8	2905
	Percentage	22.9	3.0	5.3	6.4	62.4	100
Region	Count	4988	460	760	855	9835	16898
	<i>Expected Count</i>	4988.0	460.0	760.0	855.0	9835.0	16898
	Percentage	29.5	2.7	4.5	5.1	58.2	100

3.21 When examining the effect of location it is important to consider both broad location within the Region (including accessibility to its major concentrations of economic activity) and relation to the settlement pattern at a finer scale (such as location relative to villages). There are very clear patterns of variation in the current use of historic farmsteads at the sub-regional scale, reflecting the broad character of historical and geographical development alluded to in Section 1. Nevertheless, some care need be

taken to distinguish contextual effects at different geographic scales, and it is particularly important to unravel the different effects of current context and farmstead type.

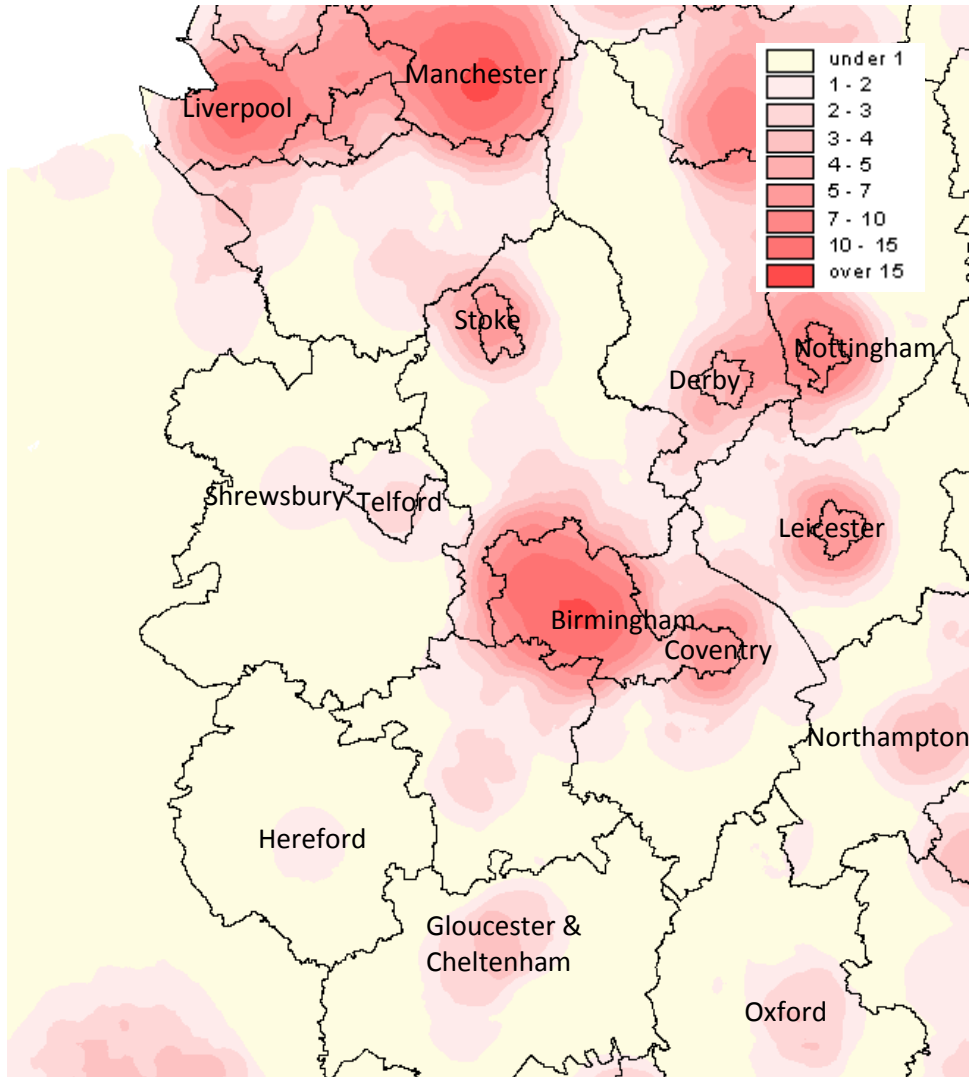
Figure 3.1: Percentage of Surviving Historic Farmsteads (10km Smoothing)



a) in agricultural use

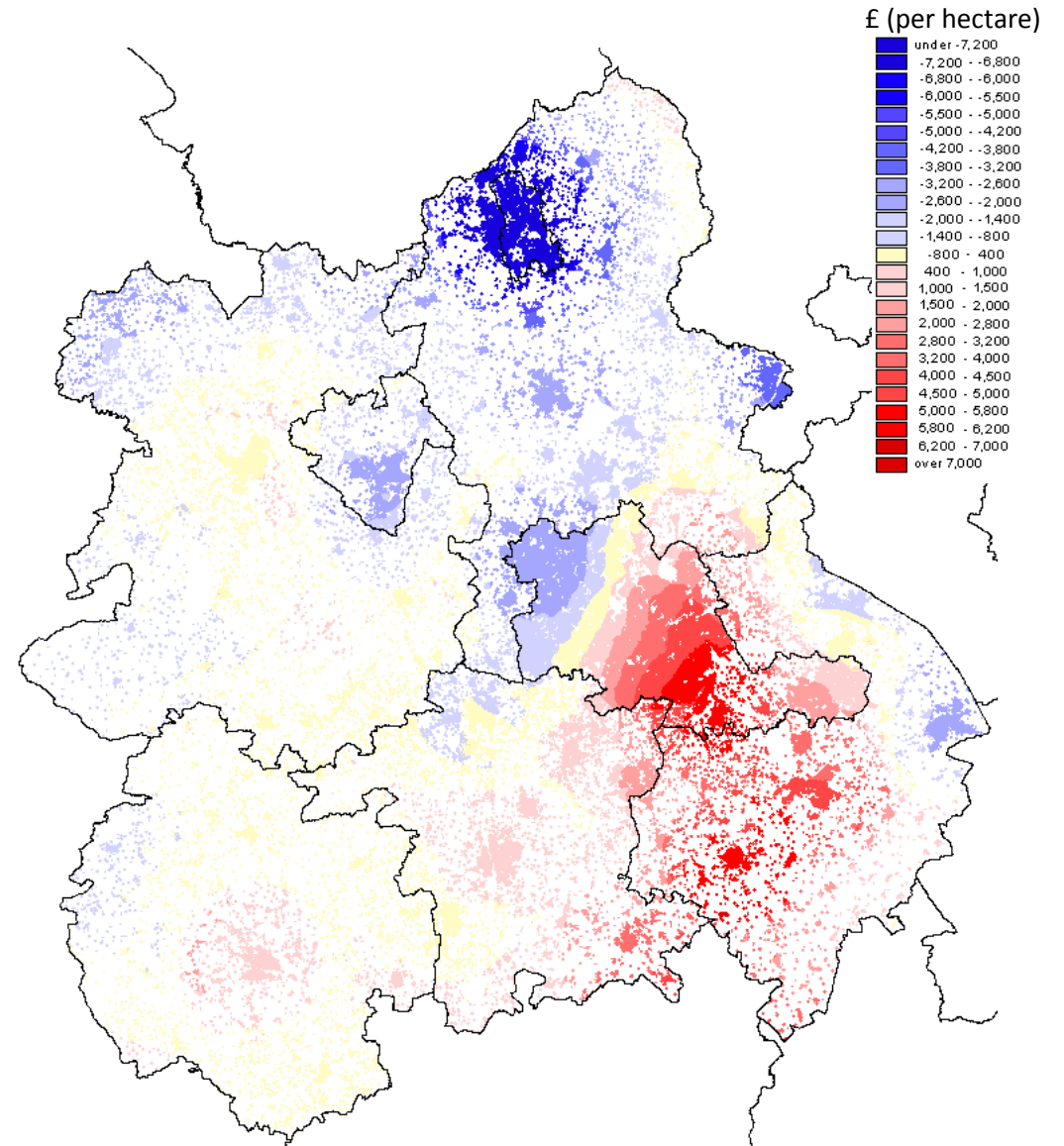
b) in residential use

Figure 3.2: Economic Mass



Economic mass is here expressed as density of households per hectare sustained within a 10km radius of any point

Figure 3.3: Sub-Regional Component of Dwelling Price



The sub-regional component of price refers to a value notionally attaching to land after the effect of differences of dwelling characteristics and characteristics of immediate neighbourhoods have been discounted

- 3.22 Overall, Figure 3.1 demonstrates that in the area surrounding the Central Conurbation, where demand for housing is high, the tendency for agricultural use of historic farmsteads to have given way to residential and other uses is strongest. Locally around Hereford, and Stoke too, the tendency for agricultural uses to have been displaced appears stronger. Broadly speaking the more remote from the regional core the greater the chance that a farmstead will have remained in agricultural use.
- 3.23 More generally there is a statistical relation between the economic mass of a locality and the current use of a farmstead in that locality; residential use being more likely in areas of higher economic mass and agricultural use being more likely in areas of lower economic mass. Generally the effect of economic mass can be captured by pointing out that the relative risk of being in residential rather than agricultural use increases by 1.11% for every household per hectare. Setting aside some subtleties discussed later, there is little systematic variation across the Region in the tendency towards the use of historic farm property to have been converted to create commercial or industrial property.
- 3.24 Beyond these general patterns, Figure 3.1 also hints at strong tendency for farmsteads to have changed to residential use at the southern margins of Warwickshire and more particularly Worcestershire (Wychavon). In these areas it appears that the high tendency towards residential use arises from three combined effects. Two are aspects of sub-regional context. First, the economic mass is higher than in remoter parts of the Region. Second, recent work by TRP for the West Midlands Leaders' Board shows that after taking account of variations in the character of dwellings themselves and of their immediate neighbourhoods, there remains a systematic tendency to higher property values across the subregion. The third factor is that in these areas, historic farm property more frequently stands in villages (rather than smaller settlements). Although the effect is not strong in statistical terms, historic farmsteads located away from settlements (isolated farms, and to lesser extent those in hamlets) are consistently more likely to have remained in agricultural use, even after the effect of economic mass is accounted for.
- 3.25 Figure 3.1 also highlights two tracts of country where the current balance between agricultural and residential use is rather more surprising, but the outcomes can be understood by reference to the same broad influences. The first is the area centred on Craven Arms and straddling the Shropshire Hills and Clun Forest. Here a smaller proportion of farmsteads remain in agricultural use than in neighbouring areas to the North or South. On the supply side, this seems attributable to agricultural restructuring, small (or medium) scale historic holdings being amalgamated to form substantial units devoted to extensive sheep and cattle rearing, releasing historic farm property onto the market. On the demand side, the high proportion of farmsteads located in settlements (both hamlets and villages, but particularly the latter) has made them more attractive to conversion. The mixture of farmstead plan types is also distinctive, with a higher than usual proportion having farmhouse and agricultural range attached (facilitating relatively straightforward residential conversion).
- 3.26 The other slightly surprising area lies between Rugby and Southam (in the Dunsmoor and Feldon NCA; Warwickshire). Superficially, its relative proximity to the Central Conurbation and high strategic road and rail accessibility to the South East perhaps suggest that a higher proportion of farmsteads might have passed into residential use.

The explanation does not appear to lie in the physical configuration of historic farmsteads (being similar to that of the Warwickshire Arden which has shown a strong tendency to residential conversion). Neither does the greater propensity for farmsteads in Dunsmore to fall within villages prejudice residential conversion. Although recent agricultural restructuring may have led to retention of large farm units, there seems a clear relation to the low sub-regional component of residential property price (Figure 3.3), suggesting relatively weak residential demand.

Directorships: Elite Residential Areas and Urban-Rural Interactions

- 3.27 The previous discussion confirms the need for reconsideration of the economic role of the Region's rural areas acknowledging that the significance of traditional rural diversification schemes is not as great as is sometimes assumed, and that the role of invisible economic activity – at least in historic farmstead property may be more significant than is often assumed.
- 3.28 The urban rural distinction, however, is one of milieu rather than economy and society. Historic farmsteads are thus integrated into the regional and broader economy whether through commodity price signals, work-travel flows, retail expenditure or electronic communication. These flows are essentially complementary.
- 3.29 It seems important to try to frame a more precise understanding of the role of historic farm property within the broader economy, though obtaining necessary information is difficult. In previous work by TRP, two pertinent indicators have been used to consider linkage at individual property level – one based on web visibility and the other on company directorships. The web visibility measure (implemented for EEDA) provides an indicator of the significance of electronic communication to a particular locality or property by quantifying the number of hosts across the world to which a particular full postcode or property is known (and broadly categorising the reason it is known). The second company directorship information provides evidence of a linkage between a home (such as a specific historic farmstead) and a place of business elsewhere.
- 3.30 Only the directorship measure has been implemented for this study, and it must be understood alongside the evidence of directorship linkages for all residential property and Census work-travel data at Output Area level. Restricting attention to participation in substantial business (defined as those with a turnover of more than £1.5 million per annum), there are on average 5.1 per 100 households. This ratio is higher in the rural domain (7.9) than in the urban domain (4.2) on the basis of Government's urban-rural definition. Residents of historic farmsteads in the Region, however, hold 22 directorships for every hundred such properties.
- 3.31 Critical to an understanding of urban-rural integration within the Region and beyond is an understanding of the geography of those historic farmsteads where such directorships are concentrated. Figure 3.5 immediately suggests that this responds to economic mass and residential desirability (reflecting in part landscape quality and reflected in the sub-regional component of house prices illustrated in Figure 3.2). The continuing importance of the possibility of physical presence in a remote place of business is suggested at once. Figure 3.5 highlights the relative sparsity of

directorships of substantial companies in the rural West of the Region. The findings of the present study reinforce those of related explorations (eg TRP2008) that the locational choices of directors do not simply reflect environmental quality, but show a strong preference for accessibility to major urban areas.

- 3.32 Directorship information provides some insight into the nature of the pattern of economic integration and the location of historic farmsteads within the broader economy. Figure 3.6 (a and b) provides some insight by showing the headquarters locations of the businesses in which residents of the Region's historic farmsteads participate as directors. This clearly demonstrates integration at both regional and national level.
- 3.33 This pattern of integration revealed by director linkages is relevant both to those parts of the Region which are physically 'urban' and those that are physically 'rural'. Some 31.7% of directorships of substantial business with headquarters in the central conurbation live in the rural domain, the corresponding figure for Coventry is 34.3%; for Stoke 39.9%; for Telford 40.2%. A very substantial proportion of those exercising a significant degree of control of business within the Region live within the rural domain or at least localities within it where an appropriate balance between accessibility and residential quality is found. Rather than being thought of in terms of accessible and inaccessible districts, it might more appropriately be considered in terms of a measure such as structurally implied travel distance shown in Figure 3.8.
- 3.34 More critically, it is important to appreciate that the agglomeration economies that are understood to underlie the productivity advantages of cities depend upon access to labour with appropriate skills, including management skills and enterprise. In framing an understanding of the 'urban' appropriate to consideration of productivity advantage, it is important to appreciate the significance of the 'exurban' – that area which is physically 'rural' but which fundamentally shares similar accessibility advantages to urban areas. Moreover, any analysis of urban productivity advantage – noting that productivity of labour is traditionally measured by its remuneration – should recognise the disproportionate tendency of the most highly paid to live within the exurban parts of functional urban regions. Historic farmsteads often form an important part of the residential offer of such locales. Figure 3.8 shows the location of the specific historic farmsteads that are the homes of directors of substantial businesses with headquarters in the central conurbation or Coventry. This suggests the significance of historic farmsteads as dwellings especially where – as in the Warwickshire Arden and the adjoining areas of Worcestershire – the legacy of history provides a rich resource of former farmsteads easily accessible to major urban cores and forming key parts of a system of dispersed settlement (with settlement nucleations typically of 19th and 20th century date) easily incorporated with Green Belt.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 This report has illustrated the range of uses which historic farm property now serves. Local variation in use responds to a degree to historic farmstead type, but even more strongly to sub-regional context. Historic farm property is significant in localities across the Region. It is important close to the conurbations because it extends the residential property offer and hence the attractiveness and competitiveness of localities and of the Region as a whole. It is important in the rural West as here historic farm property forms a very large part of the entire property resource. Patterns of current use reflect contrasts between different types of rurality; with location having critical implications for possibilities for adaptive reuse.
- 4.2 It is important to appreciate the rather low proportion of historic farmsteads remaining in agricultural use. Restructuring of agricultural activity has released the larger part of the historic farm property resource and its current and future role must be understood outwith the imaginary confines of idealized 'rural' economies. It must be recognized that the preponderance of historic farm property is in residential use. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence of 'hidden' ancillary home-based economic activity, and evidence that such activity is more significant in historic farm property than elsewhere.
- 4.3 It is not merely the case that understanding of the possible role of historic farm property depends on an understanding of locality and sub-regional context. Possible futures for localities as a whole depend in part upon releasing the potential of historic farm property. Historic farm property provides elite residential property options. The high level of economic integration of places within the Region and beyond is evidenced by home-work directorship linkages. In terms of economic geography, the productivity benefits associated with agglomeration should not be seen as deriving solely from city centres, but as a product of the *entire* agglomeration including, those parts of functional urban regions which are physically rural in character.
- 4.4 Examination of historic farm property exemplifies tensions between changing economic function and substantial continuity of physical form. The significance of these tensions is immediately obvious in planning casework and conservation practice. Understanding these tensions is, however, also important in framing policy within Local Development Frameworks to ensure that assumptions about economic uses are realistic, and that genuine economic opportunities are not thwarted.
- 4.5 This work has highlighted in some detail the diversity of local outcomes for historic farm property. It has sought to illustrate the manner in which such outcomes depend on one hand on the spatially fixed inheritance of surviving buildings, and on the other of opportunities responding to economic influences at far broader geographic scales. It demonstrates that local particularity is shaped by opportunities which can only be understood in much broader contexts. Appreciating local potential and empowering local action demands that these broader currents are understood. This report constitutes an exploration of how that understanding may be developed, but there is still far to go.

Figure 3.4: Historic Farmstead Registered Offices per 100 Historic Farms in current use

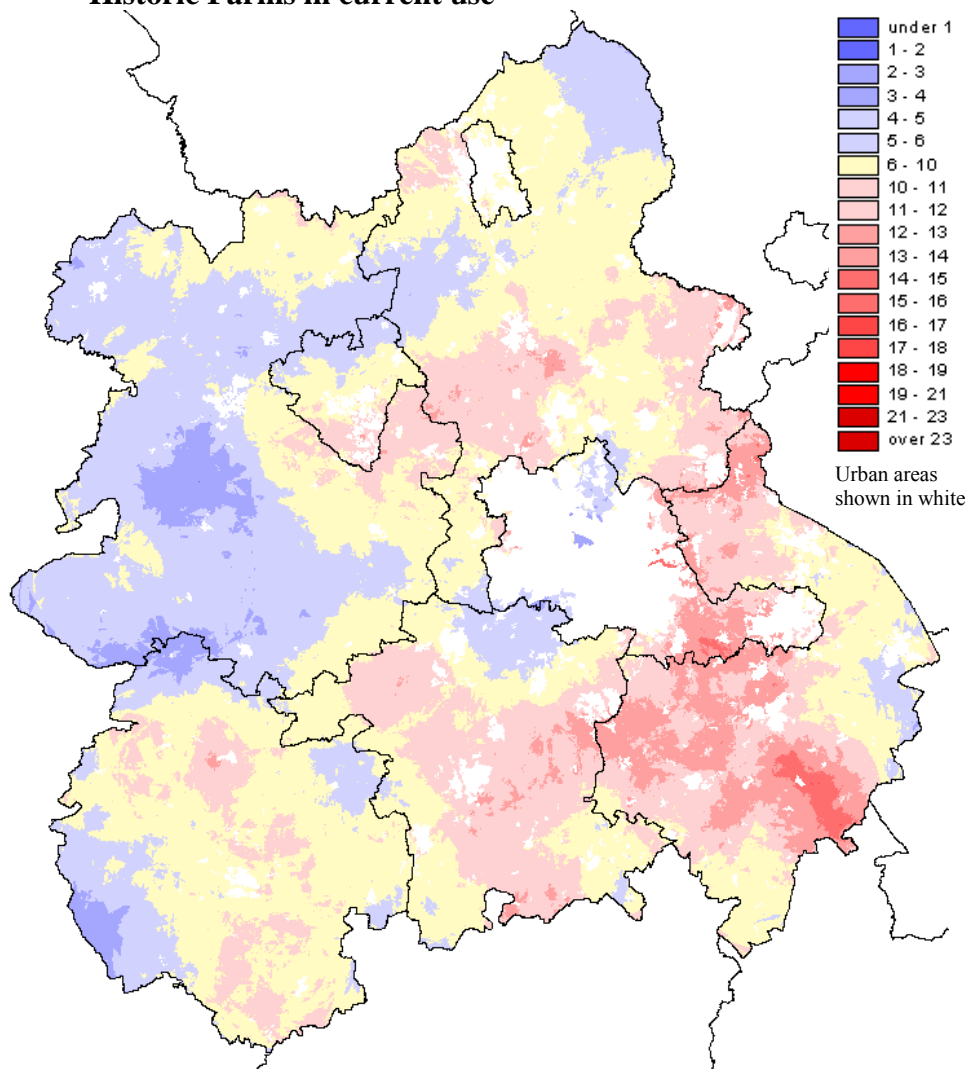


Figure 3.5: Directorships of Substantial Companies per 100 Historic Farms in current use

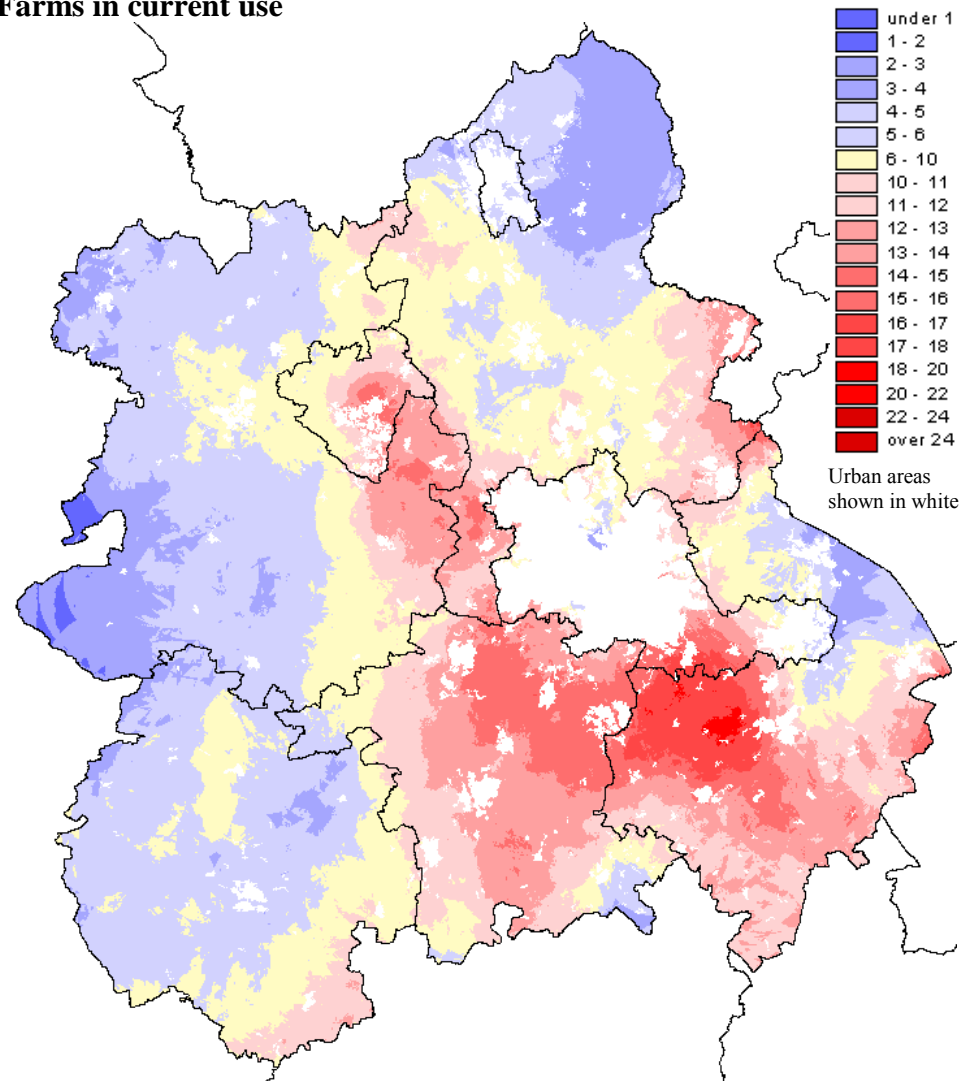
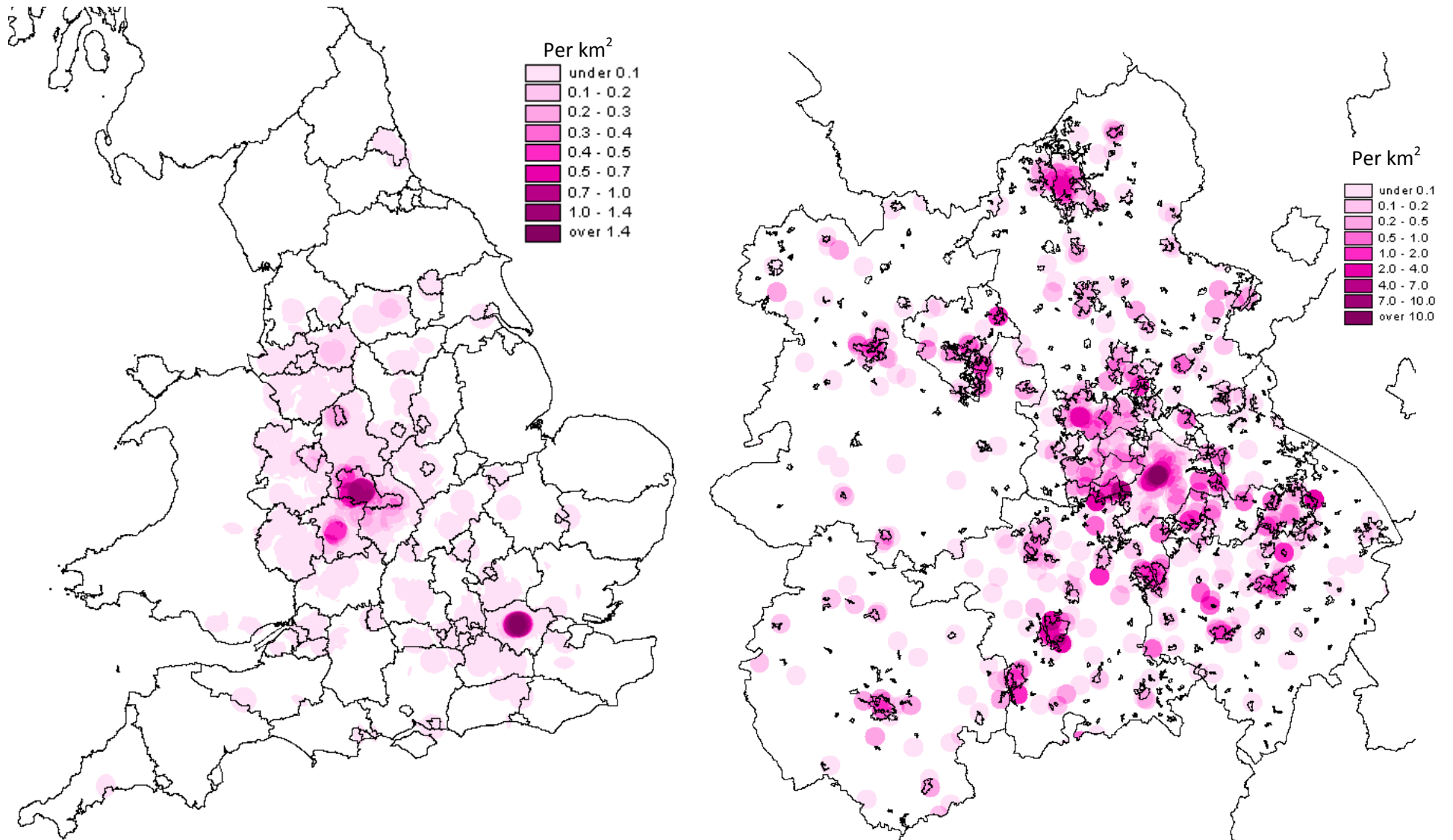


Figure 3.6: The Place of Business of Directors Living within Historic Farm Property in the West Midlands



a) For the whole country, 10km smoothing

b) Inset for the West Midlands, 2km smoothing

Figure 3.7: The Place of Residence for Directors Living within Historic Farm Property with Place of Business within the Conurbation or Coventry

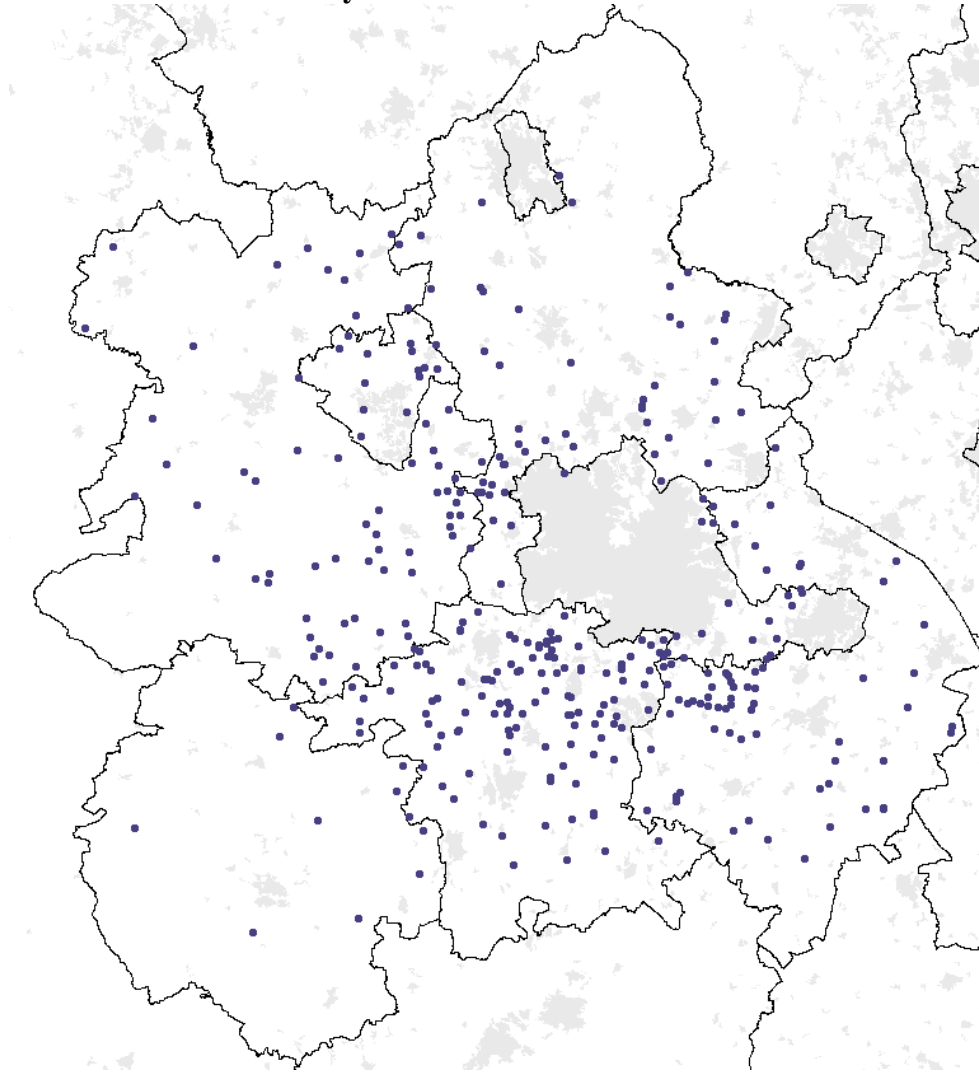
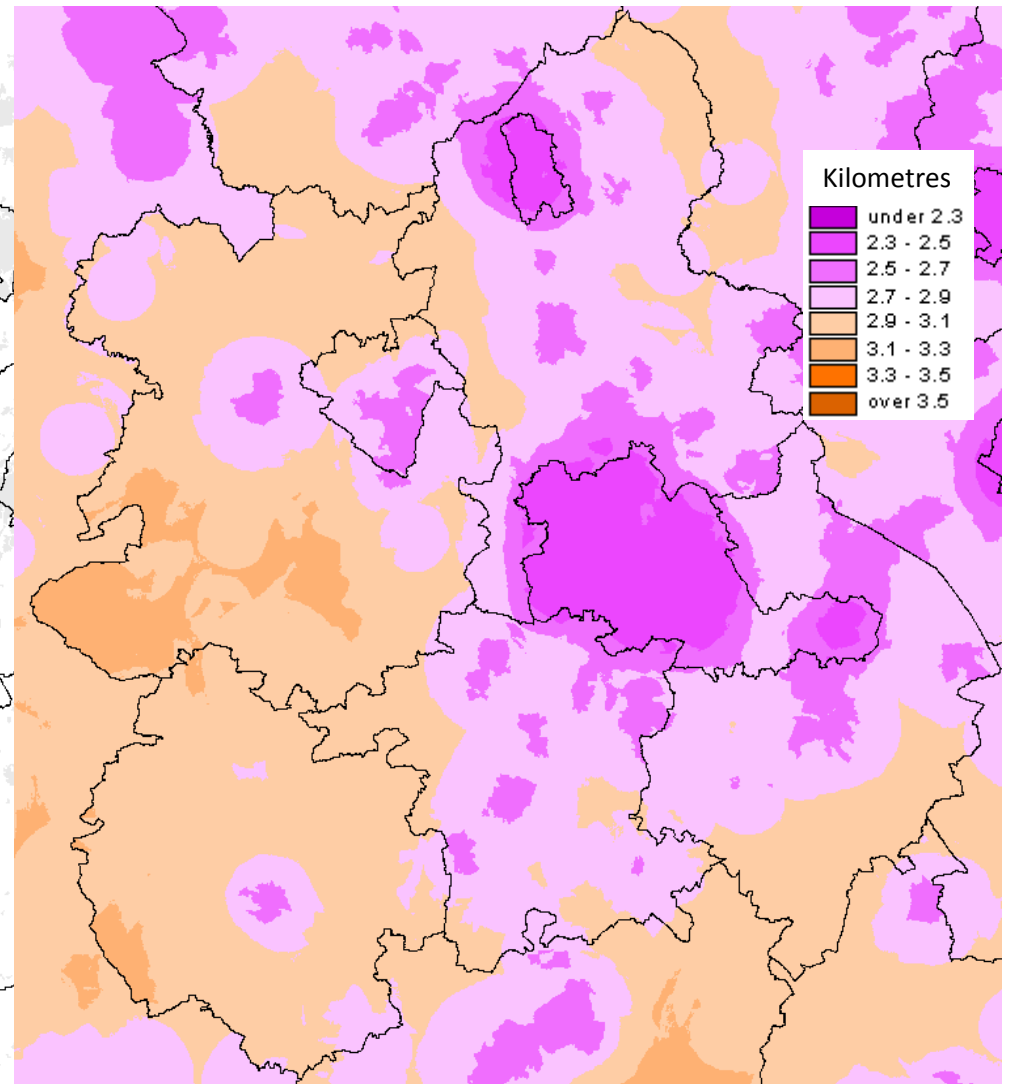


Figure 3.8: Implied Travel Distance



References:

Bibby, P, and Brindley, P, 2008, *Home-Based Business: Experimental Measures for Waverley, Surrey*. Report for the Local Government Association and Waverly District Council, Department of Town and Regional Planning, University of Sheffield

Dwelly T, K Maguire and F Truscott, 2005, *Under the Radar: Tracking And Supporting Rural Home Based Businesses*, Commission for Rural Communities, Cheltenham.

TRP, 2007, *Historic Farm Complexes in Current Socio-Economic Context: High Weald. Report for the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*. Report available at: http://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/doc_download/729-icoss-full-report.html

TRP, 2008, *Productivity, Peripherality and Place*. Report for the Local Government Association. Department of Town and Regional Planning, University of Sheffield

TRP, 2009, *Computational Approaches to Identifying Home-Based Business*. Report for the former Commission for Rural Communities (supported by Shropshire Council; Herefordshire Council; Telford and Wrekin Council; and Advantage West Midlands). Department of Town and Regional Planning, University of Sheffield

Illustration:

The maps within this report contain Administrative and Urban Area boundaries which are Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2010

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact
our Customer Services department:
Telephone: 0870 333 1181
Fax: 01793 414926
Textphone: 01793 414878
E-mail: customers@english-heritage.org.uk