

Summary

This area occupies most of the eastern part of Warwickshire. The area is bordered by Leamington Spa, Coventry and Rugby in the north. The area is bounded by the Northamptonshire Uplands to the south-east, by Arden to the west and the Cotswolds to the south. Dunsmore is a primarily agricultural landscape with extensive arable and improved pasture, although it retains a heathy character and has extensive woodlands. Feldon is characterised by open pastoral farmland on heavy clay soils. 7% of the area is urban, less than 4% is woodland. 1% of the area is in the Cotswolds AONB.

Dunsmore and Feldon is an area of village-based settlement and large estates with a low density of isolated farmsteads. The area contains two sub-areas:

1 Feldon – The Feldon is predominantly an open landscape and is sparsely wooded. Medium to large-scale, regular fields result from 18th and 19th parliamentary enclosure or the re-organisation of earlier piecemeal enclosure of the open fields. These are inter-mixed with pockets of surviving piecemeal enclosure dating from the 14th century onwards on the plateaux with smaller, more fragmented, field patterns around parklands and to the fringes where isolated farmsteads and hamlets were established before the 17th century.

2 Dunsmore – Extensive areas of piecemeal enclosure surround the sandy soils of Dunsmore which were subject to extensive 18th and 19th century planned enclosure, with larger, geometric, thorn-hedged fields on the former heathlands. There are large blocks of ancient woodland and game coverts planted for fox hunting.

Landscape and Settlement

- Strong pattern of nucleated settlement, with 22% of farmsteads in villages and 1.8% in hamlets.
- Medium-low density of farmsteads in the landscape, with higher densities in the Dunsmore area to north.
- Large (45.9%) and very large scale (29.4%) farmsteads predominant, with large-scale farmsteads concentrated in the Dunsmore area.

Farmstead and Building Types

- Medium to large-scale loose courtyard plans, mostly with working buildings to 3 sides of the yard.
- Loose and regular courtyard plans incorporating L-shaped ranges are another key feature of the area, most commonly with an additional working building to the third side of the yard.
- Regular courtyard multi-yard, L- and U-shaped plans, particularly in the Dunsmore sub-area.
- Five bay threshing barns, often with shelter sheds making an overall L-plan.
- Stables and granary/cartshed ranges.

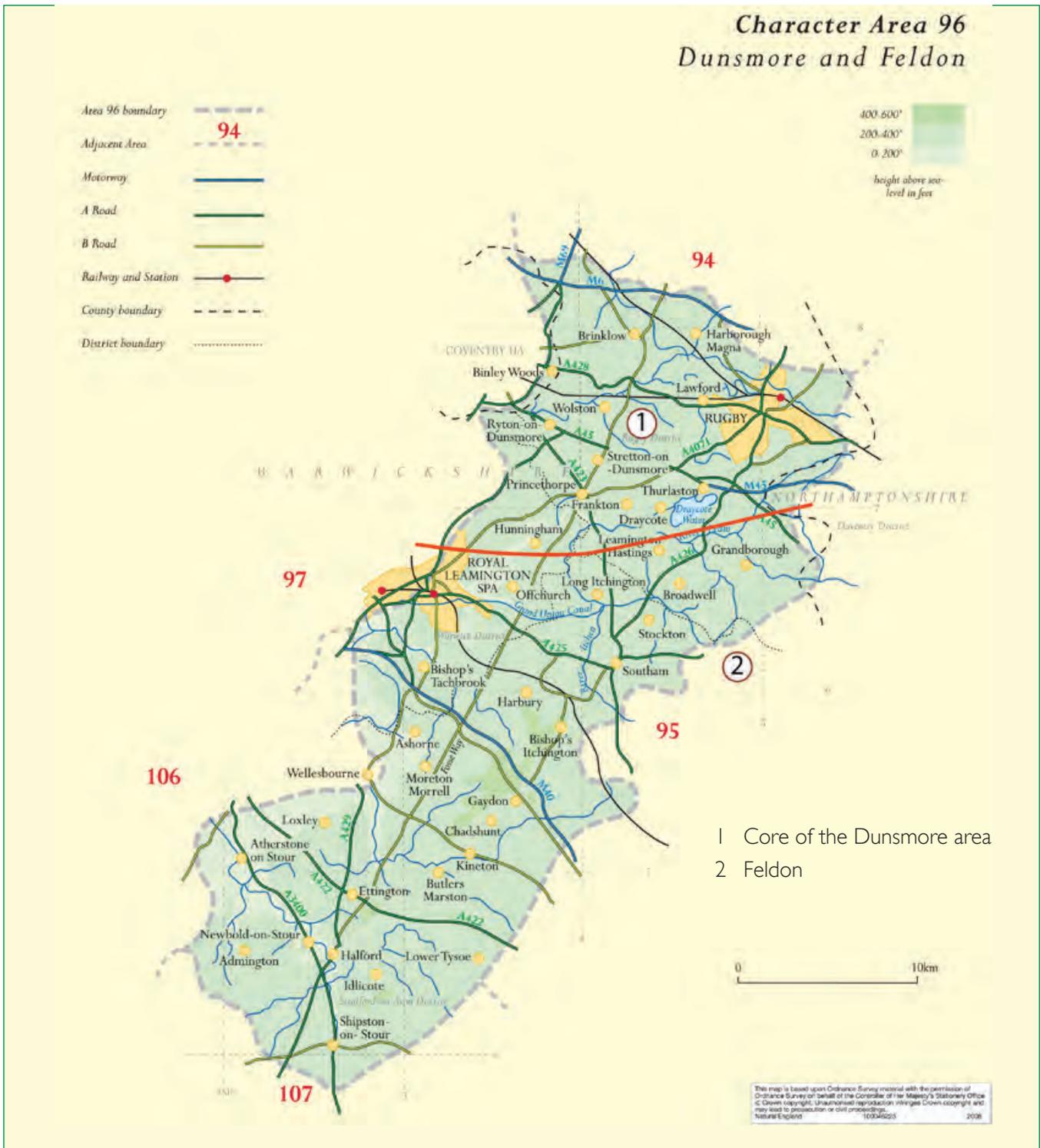
Rarity and Significance

- Medium rate of survival – some loss (10%) around towns and other settlements, but 73% of farmsteads recorded from late 19th century maps retaining more than half of their historic footprint.
- Medium to low survival of 18th century and earlier farmstead buildings. Recorded pre-1800 farmstead buildings comprise 14% of those recorded from late 19th century maps, most of these being of 17th-18th century date. Those that survive are primarily timber-framed and stone houses and to a lesser extent threshing barns, concentrated within or close to villages. Villages have a high potential for earlier timber-frames concealed in later brick or stone walls.

- Some examples of earth-walled buildings.
- Coherent historic farmstead groups within or on the edge of villages.

Drivers for Change

- This are proportion of farmsteads where offices and workshops have been created and by the high participation of farmstead residents as directors of substantial companies (52 directorships per hundred farmsteads).
- 15-20% of listed working buildings have obvious signs of structural disrepair; and 30-40% with visible adaptive reuse.



1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

- This area, dissected by the Fosse Way Roman military road, was extensively settled by the late Iron Age.
- Arable production and a sheep-corn economy was historically concentrated on the sandy soils of the plateaux summits and along the clay loams of the main river valleys. The shrinkage and abandonment of villages between the 14th and mid-16th centuries was accompanied by the emergence of wealthier farmers and landowners involved in extensive grazing for the wool trade.
- Enclosure with hedgerows accelerated from the late 17th century. It boosted fertility through rotating arable (sown with clover and rye grass) in combination with the fattening of cattle and sheep and, to a lesser extent, dairying. It was linked to the amalgamation of smaller farms and the appearance of large farmsteads in villages and also some in the open landscape. The 18th and 19th centuries enclosure of Dunsmore Heath, an area of inter-commoning, was focused on boosting arable production.
- Major urban areas are Rugby, which greatly expanded as a railway town in the mid/late 19th century, Dunchurch on the main London-Coventry road and the spa town of Leamington which developed from the early 19th century. The development of the canals and later railways enabled agricultural produce to be transported to the growing urban area of Birmingham.



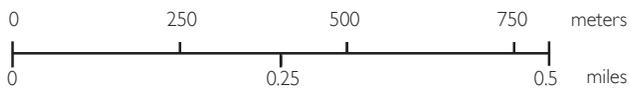
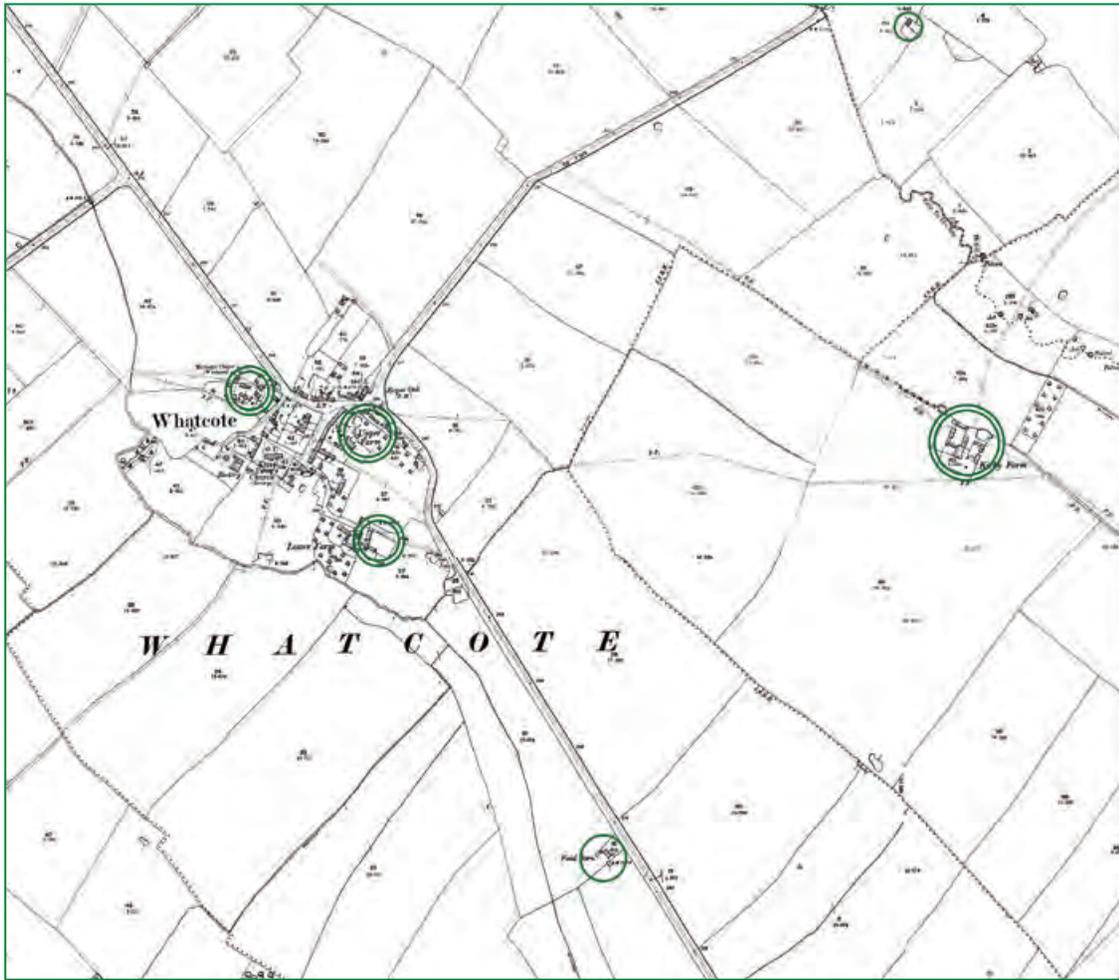
Village-based farmsteads remained as a characteristic feature of this area into the 19th century, but relatively few (concentrated as here in the south of Feldon at Tredington, where the open fields remained into the 19th century) are now still legible in the context of their settlements.

2 LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT

- Predominantly nucleated settlement pattern with a low density of isolated farmsteads sitting within landscape of piecemeal and planned enclosure of the open fields which extended from the villages over large parts of this area.
- Larger farmsteads developed within or on the edge of villages. Some villages have a strong estate influence, particularly in 19th century architecture of cottages and schools. Many historic houses within the villages originated as farmhouses, changing their function as new steadings were built in the newly-enclosed fields.
- The earthworks of pre-15th / 16th century former villages and shrunken settlements are a common characteristic of the area, together with the ridge and furrow remaining from the formerly extensive open fields which prior to enclosure covered large parts of this area (e.g. at Radwell and Tysoe).
- The great majority of isolated farmsteads were formed as part of the enclosure of open fields, between the 16th and early 19th centuries, with some on sites of medieval hamlets and villages. There are some earlier isolated farmstead sites in the Feldon in the south and the steep scarps to the west.
- Much of the woodland is planned. Ancient woodlands and large country houses set in mature parkland are concentrated to west.



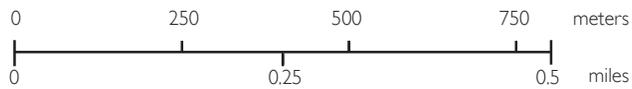
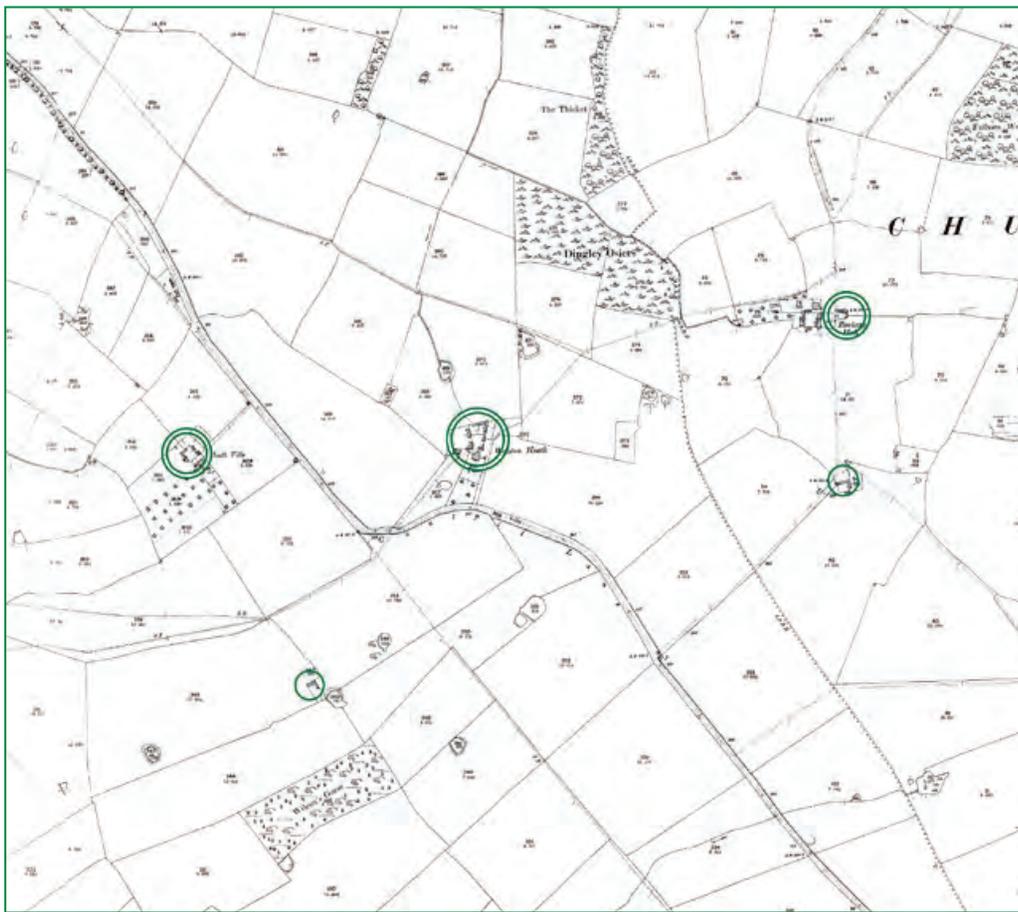
Many isolated farmsteads sited in landscapes enclosed in regular fashion from the 18th century were sited down their own straight tracks.



-  Farmstead
-  Outfarm

Whatcote

Whatcote is a typical Feldon village, formerly surrounded by the slopes of its open fields which have been subject to piecemeal enclosure, the boundaries following the lines of the medieval strip fields. Most of the medium scale farmsteads remained within the village after enclosure although Kirby Farm appears to have been relocated to sit within its enclosed fields. Field barns and outfarms serving some of the more distant fields were a feature of this landscape although many have been lost since the late 19th century. Map based on OS 2nd Edition 25" map © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2005) Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024



-  Farmstead
-  Outfarm

Wolston Heath

Whilst the Feldon was generally an area of nucleated villages and open arable fields, substantial areas of heathland and common characterised Dunsmore to the north. The irregular fields to the northern part of this area are of an earlier date than the more regular fields of the 18th/19th century. The medium scale regular courtyard farmsteads within the area lie on the boundary between the two phases of enclosure with outfarms and field barns serving some of the regular enclosure fields to the south. Map based on OS 2nd Edition 25" map © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2005) Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024

3 FARMSTEAD AND BUILDING TYPES

Medium to low survival of pre-1750 farmstead buildings. Those that survive are primarily timber-framed and stone-built farmhouses and to a lesser extent threshing barns, concentrated in villages. Survival of smaller and coherent groups are rare.

Farmstead types

- Medium to large-scale loose courtyard plans, mostly with working buildings to 3 sides of the yard. The smallest-scale steadings of this type, with a working building to one side of the yard, are the least common.
- Loose and regular courtyard plans incorporating L-shaped ranges are another key feature of the area, most commonly with an additional working building to the third side of the yard.
- Regular courtyard multi-yard, L- and U-shaped plans. These are associated with medieval and post-medieval piecemeal enclosure of heath and common in Dunsmore.
- Five bay threshing barns, often with shelter sheds making an overall L-plan.

- Stables and granary/cartshed ranges.
- Higher numbers of small plan types (L-plans with attached house and a few linear plans) in Dunsmore compared to the Feldon (where they are almost completely absent).

Building types

- Generally 5-bay threshing barns.
- Stables and granary/cartshed ranges, some of 18th century or earlier date, testify to importance of arable farming in area.
- Field barns and outfarms including some of 18th century or earlier date (very early by national standards) are a particular feature in the landscape. Field barns, including some purely for cattle, were a distinctive feature of the earlier enclosed landscapes of the Feldon where holdings were more intermixed than in Dunsmore to the north (where larger outfarm groups dominate).



Some of the isolated farmsteads in Dunsmore were built close to the sites of shrunken or deserted villages, and developed as the focus of enlarged farm holdings.



Farmsteads and outfarms, as here, can be prominently sited in the open landscapes of Dunsmore.



Mature and well-treed hedgerows, as here to the north of the Feldon area, are a feature of the fields that were enclosed in piecemeal fashion out of the communal fields that surrounded the area's villages in the medieval period. To the foreground are the remnants of medieval ridge and furrow.



Proximity to large urban conurbations enabled the development of exurban landscapes, with horse paddocks and converted farmsteads with a distinctive suburban character, from the middle of the 20th century.

4 MATERIALS AND DETAIL

- Timber framing used for buildings into the 17th century, subject to replacement by stone and brick. Timber frame is now relatively rare in the area.
- Red brick, sometimes with blue brick or ironstone details. Blue and White, blue/grey Lias in central part

- of area, with red/brown ironstone dominant near the western fringe of the Northamptonshire Uplands.
- Plain clay tile roofing.



Linear farmsteads survive close to surviving and historic areas of common land, as here in this 18th century or earlier range east of the Fosse Way in Dunsmore.



A linear plan farmstead in a village in the south of the area.



Loose courtyard plans are concentrated within villages and in areas that were gradually transformed through piecemeal enclosure. The villages close to the Cotswolds and the Northamptonshire are the most likely to have retained buildings of 18th century and earlier date, as here next to this 17th century house in the parish of Tysoe. (© Ben Morton/Warwickshire County Council)



A loose courtyard plan built of lias limestone to the south of the Feldon. The early-mid 19th century threshing barn and (to the rear) the threshing barn testify to the importance of arable farming in this area.



A regular plan farmstead in the Feldon where the buildings are interlinked, the threshing or combination barn being the largest in the group with early 20th century Dutch barns to the left.



A rare surviving example of a small-scale threshing barn, refronted in a distinctive mix of banded lias and ironstone in the 19th century.



A very rare surviving example – for this area in particular – of a large 16th-17th century barn, originally timber-framed, on the edge of a village in the Feldon area. Its scale testifies to the development of a prosperous class of Feldon farmers by this period, and has enabled the building to be adapted and used through the changes of the 19th and 20th centuries. Early barns are concentrated to the south of the area, close to the Cotswolds and the Severn and Avon Vales.



A late example of a threshing barn, built in the mid 19th century and now serving as the dwelling for a working farm.



A regular plan farmstead where the buildings are interlinked, its low profile being typical of the Dunsmore area where the rebuilding of farmsteads seems to have occurred at a later period in the 19th century than Feldon. Threshing barns are rare, suggesting that this rebuilding occurred after the introduction of mechanisation.



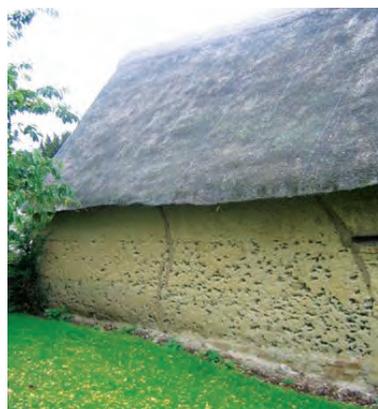
A combined cartshed and granary range, serving a large regular plan farmstead in Dunsmore.



A small field barn for cattle, of a type found in areas (as here) of large-scale regular enclosure - where large farms required structures sited away from the main steading.



Open-fronted shelter sheds are a distinctive feature of this area. Many of these with low eaves would have built to shelter sheep, which were a key part of the agricultural economy across those landscapes with the lightest soils. (© Warwickshire County Council)



Walling in cob is a distinctive feature of the eastern part of the Feldon area, part of a tradition extending eastwards into the Northamptonshire Uplands.

This is one of the **Farmsteads Character Statements** for the National Character Areas. Further illustrated guidance on historic character and significance, under the same headings, is provided in the **West Midlands Farmsteads Character Statement**. They result from *The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project*, which has mapped the historic character and use of farmsteads across the region, and developed planning tools to inform future change. A *Summary Report* summarises the results of the whole project for the whole region and sets out policy and land use implications, and recommendations and next steps for further work.

The *Rarity and Significance* and *Drivers for Change* headings, and other elements of the main text, are based upon the mapping and interpretation of historic character. These records are stored in the relevant local authority *Historic Environment Record* and there is a *Historic Farmstead Characterisation Report* for each county and the Central Conurbation. These have been used as a baseline to determine the patterns of current use, as summarised for each area in the *Drivers for Change* section. There is a *Farmstead Use Report* for the region.

Also under the *Drivers for Change* heading are percentages of listed working farm buildings with visible structural failure and evidence of adaptive reuse. These are based on comparison of 1980s with 1999-2006 photographs, from the *Photo Image Survey* (University of Gloucestershire for English Heritage, 2009). In the West Midlands 27% of listed working farm buildings have evidence for residential reuse (national level 30%), 3% other (national 4%) and 70% (national 66%) have no other evidence for other use. 18.9% have evidence for structural failure (national 8.9%).

The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project is a collaborative project led by English Heritage with the county and metropolitan authorities. This document has been written by Jeremy Lake of English Heritage's Characterisation Team with assistance from Bob Edwards of Forum Heritage Services. All photographs are by English Heritage and Forum Heritage Services unless otherwise acknowledged.



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