



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Lincolnshire Wolds

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 43



# Introduction

The Farmstead and Landscape Statements will help you to identify the historic character of traditional farmsteads and their buildings in all parts of England, and how they relate to their surrounding landscapes. They are now available for all of England's National Character Areas (NCAs), and should be read in conjunction with the NCA profiles which have been produced by Natural England using a wide range of environmental information (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>). Each Farmstead and Landscape Statement is supported by Historic England's advice on farm buildings (<https://historicengland.org.uk/farmbuildings>), which provides links to the *National Farmsteads Character Statement*, national guidance on **Farm Building Types** and a fully-sourced summary in the *Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statements*. It also forms part of additional research on historic landscapes, including the mapping of farmsteads in some parts of England (see <https://historicengland.org.uk/characterisation>).



This combined granary (to the upper floor of the central block) and stables, part of an early 19th-century farmstead at Gayton le Wold, illustrates the scale of buildings for storing grain and motive power required for large arable-based farms in this area. Photo © Locus Consultants

**Front cover:** Manor Farm, Miningsby, is an example of the large-scale arable farming that came to characterise the Wolds in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The regular courtyard plan is built to an extended E-plan, typical of the largest farmsteads in this area. With cattle yards placed to one side of the long combination barn, granary, stables and cart shed range. The Dutch barn is built in the former rick yard. The main farmhouse in the foreground is associated with a large stable range, indicating the high status of the owner or tenant. Photo © Historic England 28519/038





This map shows the Lincolnshire Wolds, with the numbers of the neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

# Summary

See the National Farmsteads Character Statement for a short introduction to the headings below, including maps and tables.

The Lincolnshire Wolds is a rolling upland landscape in the eastern half of Greater Lincolnshire. An open, mainly arable area (only 4% is wooded), its distinctive topography and geology give rise to an interesting range of farmed landscape features. Only a tiny part of the area (1.5%) is urban and 62% is within the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

## Historic character

- There is extensive evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of barrows and trackways. Major market towns such as Caistor and Horncastle are of Roman origin.
- The nucleated settlement pattern was established in the early medieval period by Saxon and Danish settlement of upland areas.
- Settlements were often established in dry valleys or along spring-lines to access water sources with early farmsteads, and agricultural buildings occur within or adjacent to them.
- Earlier isolated farmsteads often result from settlement shrinkage or desertion, in which case they are associated with significant archaeological remains
- More recent isolated farmsteads often date from the 19th-century 'High Farming' tradition, and exhibit specialised building types and pattern-book designs.
- Landscape features from the 19th century remain highly legible, such as shelter belts to farmsteads, well-preserved planned enclosure fieldscapes and associated straight enclosure roads.
- This Character Area is notable for its high proportion of courtyard farmsteads, many of which show evidence of expansion and addition in the later 19th century. These additions include cart sheds, granaries and animal shelters, demonstrating a transition to intense arable cultivation following enclosure.
- There is extensive rebuilding in brick and pantile, with some use of chalk and ironstone.

## Significance

- The mapping of farmsteads in Lincolnshire has shown that the area has, in a national context, a below-average survival of traditional farmsteads from around 1900 – 50% have more than 50% of their historic form surviving (42.85% in Greater Lincolnshire) and 28% (28% in Greater Lincolnshire) retaining some, but less than 50%, of their historic form. Any pre-19th-century buildings are rare.
- In the area, 72 farmsteads are associated with a listed farmhouse or working building, of which 75% date from the 18th century or earlier (73% in Greater Lincolnshire).
- The Wolds is one of the most distinctive estate landscapes of the Agricultural Revolution in England, broadly comparable in terms of the date of the changes and their patterns (large

fields and courtyard-plan farmsteads) with the Yorkshire Wolds to the north.

- Isolated farmsteads derived from shrunken or deserted medieval settlements are an important link to former patterns of settlement and land use, especially where they preserve the names of lost villages, and can be found in the many dry valleys.
- Several examples of planned and model farmsteads can be found in the area,

## Present and future issues

- The numbers of principal farmers and full-time farm employees have dropped significantly since 2000, indicating an ongoing trend for amalgamation and efficiency.
- Construction of irrigation reservoirs to support cropping will impact upon local setting and character.

demonstrating the application of 19th-century industrial ideals within the historic rural landscape.

- There are some very rare examples of 18th-century yards and buildings for cattle such as at Psalter Farm, Skendleby.
- Some very rare examples of horse engine houses and mud and stud construction, the latter usually clad in brick.

## Historic development

- The earliest evidence for human habitation or settlement of the Lincolnshire Wolds dates from the Palaeolithic period. It is possible that the area was permanently settled in the Neolithic or Early Bronze Age, as there are many funerary monuments to be found in it, especially along prominent ridges such as the Bluestone Heath Road. The main settlements of the Wolds, including the market towns of Caistor, Louth and Horncastle, have been found to sit upon the remains of much earlier settlements, often with origins in the pre-Roman Iron Age. These settlements also appear to have been occupied into the Roman period, and the area is crossed by east–west aligned tracks that allowed access to the salt industry of the marshes. The Roman landscape is thought to have been one of extensive villas and estates, with few settlements apart from the main proto-urban centres.
- Over 18% of recorded farmsteads are sited in villages. Most isolated farmsteads relate to 18th- and 19th-century enclosure. Modern

settlement characteristics have their roots in the early medieval pattern of nucleated villages, which appears to have been in place by the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086. Much of

- the area was farmed according to a typical Midlands mixed farming regime of nucleated villages surrounded by open arable fields set in a wider landscape of common grazing and waste.
- This pattern remained dominant until the 14th century, when the local landowners began to depopulate and enclose the uplands of the Wolds for sheep-rearing. This resulted in a wave of settlement desertion and shrinkage, and around one third of all deserted medieval settlements identified in Greater Lincolnshire to date are in the Lincolnshire Wolds Character Area. Country houses and country house estates dating from the late medieval period are a further characteristic of the landscape, illustrating the wealth of individual

landowners resulting from early enclosure for sheepwalks.

- The focus on sheep farming endured for another two or three centuries as farmers continued to turn arable land to pasture in order to capitalise on the value of wool in the 15th and 16th centuries. This also led to strong links to the coastal marshes, where sheep reared on the ‘breeding’ grasses of the high Wolds were fattened on the richer grasses of the marshland in summer months. This process was facilitated by the extensive marsh landholdings of larger Wolds estates, such as Brocklesby, while smaller Wolds farmers rented grazing land from their marshland counterparts.
- The final phase of enclosure in the Wolds occurred during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, in areas that retained open field systems. This phase was largely planned and resulted in strongly rectilinear field patterns divided by hawthorn hedges for stock control. This period coincided with widespread and improved arable production, mostly based on provision of fodder crops for sheep, with barley fields fertilised by their manure. From

the later 18th and 19th centuries, general enclosure completed the transformation of the Wolds through the dismantling of village agriculture, the engrossment of small farms and the creation of fewer but more substantial tenant farms with associated farm workers’ cottages.

- This period also saw the introduction of new farming techniques to the Wolds. The application of these techniques was demonstrated in the construction of planned and model farmsteads, such as Manor Farm, Kirmond le Mire, and Binbrook Top Farm. ‘High Farming’ emphasised the use of intensive input methods, such as expensive oil cake feeds and mechanisation, to realise high outputs of grain and meat. These techniques also allowed the raising of cattle in large numbers, and therefore required larger farm buildings and yards for their accommodation in winter months. This also led to the development of large, tenanted farms of over 300 acres. The mechanised elements of threshing the corn crop and preparing feed were initially powered by horse engines or water power, but eventually steam engines became a common sight in the Wolds.

## Landscape and settlement

- The Lincolnshire Wolds forms a distinctive island of high ground between the Coastal Marshes to the east and the Central Lincolnshire Vale to the west. The underlying geology of the area, reflected to a great extent in the built heritage, comprises chalk deposits overlying clays, sandstones and ironstone. These different materials are exposed in bands across the Character Area, resulting in several distinctive ridges and valleys, each with their own character and patterning.
- The Character Area is divided by a central watershed running along its length. To the east of this, the land drains down to the Coastal Marshes through a network of chalk streams and rivers. The Bluestone Heath road runs along the top of the eastern ridge, providing strong north–south connectivity. To the west of the watershed, the streams and rivers, including the Rase, run down into the Central Lincolnshire Vale. The High

Street, which runs from Caistor to Horncastle, provides the main transport route from north to south along the western escarpment.

- The area is characterised by a strongly nucleated settlement pattern, reflecting the medieval landscape of villages and hamlets set within former open fields and common waste. There are many examples of isolated farmsteads to be found, some of which are the result of enclosure, while others are relics of the numerous shrunken or deserted medieval villages to be found throughout the Character Area. The Wolds have a nationally high concentration of sites of this latter type, with many villages outlived by a single farm or manor house carrying the village name.
- Settlements adhere to two main patterns. Along the western edge of the Wolds, settlements are located along a series of spring-lines, whereas those on the top of the

Wolds and to the east of the area are found nestling within the networks of dry valleys, some of which retain active chalk streams. Broadly speaking, farmsteads are larger in the north of the Character Area, while those in the south are more densely arranged and smaller.

- The south-western clayland edge retains a more varied mixture of regular and smaller irregular fields, reflecting a greater mixture of tenure and farming practices. Irregular ancient and piecemeal enclosure is more commonplace in the north-west of the area,

where poor soils precluded later arable expansion and reorganisation.

- Woodland mainly comprises broadleaf plantations and beech hangers designed to provide shelter and shooting cover across the late 18th- and 19th-century farming estates. A notable example of estate woodland planting can be seen in Brocklesby Park, a designed, 19th-century parkland that stretches over several parishes and forms the basis of an extensive hunting landscape.

## Farmstead and building types

There is a very low survival of pre-1750 farmstead buildings, although those that do survive include important examples of local mud and stud building techniques. Earlier farmsteads tend to be located within settlements, and there are examples of early 18th-century crew yards associated with some of these farmsteads, such as Psalter Farm, Skendleby.

### Farmstead types

- Small and mostly village-based farmsteads including those recorded as linear and dispersed plan types (10% of the total) have for centuries been amalgamated into larger farms. Many were extended and remodelled as courtyard plans in the 19th century to allow for more effective arable cultivation. Farmsteads of large, regular courtyard types predominate, particularly those of full courtyard, multi-yard, E- and U-plans, dating from the early to mid-19th century. These farmsteads (nearly 78% of those recorded) and their ancillary buildings are typically arranged around cattle courts. Loose courtyard farmsteads (13%) mostly have working buildings to three or four sides of the yard. Georgian-style estate farmsteads, notably those of the Brocklesby Estate, are relatively common in the Character Area. Later farmsteads provide important examples of both model and planned pattern-book farmsteads.

### Building types

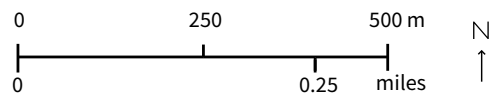
- Threshing barns, usually of early 19th-century or earlier date, are now rare.
- Mixing barns, with cart entries to one side of a lofted end for threshed straw and mixing fodder, are mostly mid-19th century.
- Horse engine houses (horse gins), which powered threshing and fodder-processing machinery in barns, are now rare.
- Combination barns are typically large in scale, with integral cattle housing and stables.
- Combined cart shed and granary ranges are a highly distinctive feature, similar in scale to those found in other areas of Lincolnshire and in the Yorkshire Wolds.
- One- and two-storey stable ranges indicate the scale of motive power needed for the arable farms of the Wolds.
- Shelter sheds and loose boxes for cattle are mostly of mid- to late 19th-century date.
- There are some field barns and outfarms with threshing barns and shelter sheds to single or multiple cattle yards.



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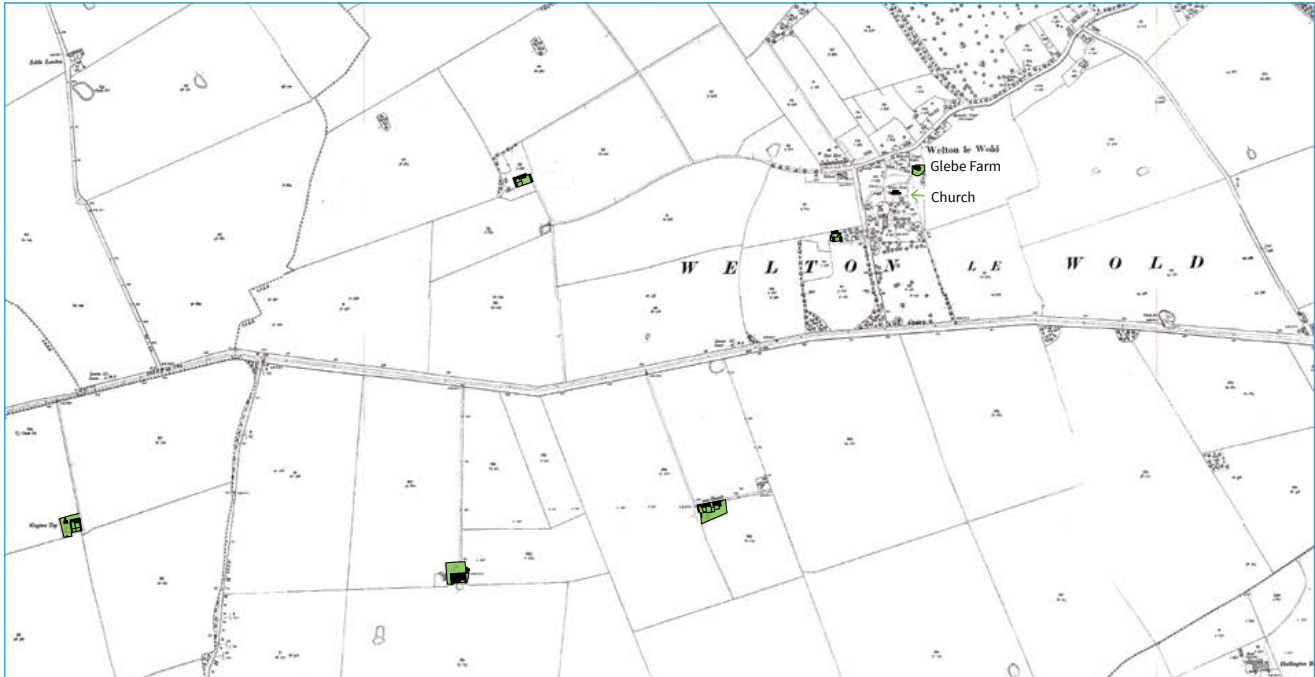
Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



## Cabourne

Isolated planned farmsteads on the High Wolds near Cabourne. The marginal land of the high chalk wolds was suitable only for sheep grazing and rabbit warrening until the advent of 'high farming' techniques of land improvement and management. Following the enclosure of these upland areas, new planned farmsteads were established in accordance with these methods, transforming the landscape into a productive arable region. Seen here, the correlation between these early to mid-19th-century regular plan farmsteads and the post-enclosure landscape with shelterbelts is clear.

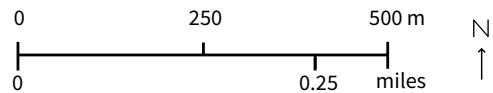




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Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



## Welton le Wold

Welton le Wold is an example of a village set within a dry valley, as can be seen from the long, sinuous field boundary to the west of the village. The isolated farmsteads and the outfarm to the north are situated on hilltops once used for rabbit warrens, but now sit within well-preserved landscapes of regular early 19th-century enclosure. Note the smaller scale of the farmsteads that remained in the village.



Manor Farm, Kirmond le Mire, is a very well preserved example of a planned model farmstead of the mid-19th century. The single phase of brick and slate construction sets it apart from the more organically developed and expanded farmsteads nearby. The rigorous planning of this farmstead makes it difficult to find appropriate agricultural uses in the present day. Photo © Locus Consultants



This outfarm on the Haxby estate was built in stages, reflecting the increased capacity required for arable-based farms in the 19th century. To the right is an early 19th-century threshing barn, and on the left a large, later brick granary sited over a four-bay cart shed. To the rear, facing east, are remnants of stock-fattening sheds. Photo © Locus Consultants



Cattle yard and sheds, Oxcombe. Behind the yard is a large combination barn for processing crops and fodder. Materials such as cast iron are indicative of the investment of capital in this farm complex. Note also the uniform colour scheme to doors and architectural detailing, which is a feature of estate-owned farmsteads throughout the Wolds. Photo © Locus Consultants



Part of a planned courtyard farmstead on the estate of Gayton Manor, an Italianate-style house built in about 1830. The combined granary and stable range (see p 2) is sited opposite a long cart shed and combination barn. Photo © Locus Consultants



The largest farmsteads often developed on a piecemeal basis as multi-yard farmsteads with three or even more cattle yards, with open-fronted shelter sheds, long stable and cart shed ranges, granaries and large barns for processing corn and feed. Photo © Historic England 28520/009

## Materials and detail

- Farm buildings are commonly constructed in red brick and pantile, especially in the northernmost parts of the Wolds close to the brickworks of the Humber bank.
- Brick buildings throughout the area are frequently rendered or whitewashed using local lime.
- Stone construction in the northern Wolds is typically Ironstone or Chalk (clunch) but typically used in larger, high-status buildings.
- Chalk buildings are often detailed with brick quoins and lintels.
- Southern Wolds farmsteads occasionally use Ancaster limestone, especially in ashlar construction.
- There are some surviving examples of farm workers' cottages constructed in mud and stud, often clad in brick. These are typically identifiable through roof form and plan type.



# Historic England

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