



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Potteries and Churnet Valley

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 64



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>).

Front cover: Biddulph Moor is typical of the upland and upland fringe landscapes to be found within this character area. There is a high density of small farmsteads associated with small fields. The regular nature of the field system both here and in the middle distance to the right is typical of landscapes enclosed in the 18th or 19th century out of moorland. Towards the centre of the photograph, on the lower lying land, shows an older landscape of smaller more irregular fields with mature vegetation. The land rises up from here to the upland moors of the Peak District. Photo © Historic England 27963/024

Area 64 boundary

Adjacent Area

A Road

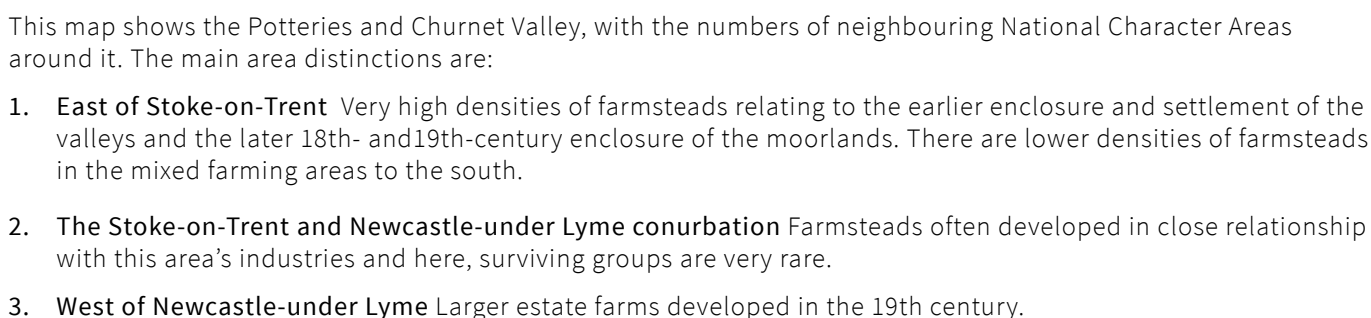
B Road

Railway and Station

County boundary

Unitary Authority boundary

District boundary



Summary

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

This is a very variable pastoral landscape that includes industrialised landscapes of the Potteries, dissected plateaux flanking the Churnet valley and the dissected slopes leading up to the Peak District. The area lies in North Staffordshire and is bounded to the west by the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, to the south by Needwood and the South Derbyshire Claylands and to the north-west by the Peak District. Of the area, 22% is urban, 7% is woodland.

Historic character

- There are high to very high levels of dispersed settlement and a very high density of farmsteads in the landscape, to the lower Churnet Valley and west of the Potteries. These are set within fields bound by hedgerows and dry stone walls, mostly resulting from 18th century and earlier piecemeal and irregular enclosure.
- The predominant pattern is of very small farmsteads (48%) and small fields, particularly around Biddulph Moor, with large-scale (21.1%) farmsteads and their larger fields concentrated to the west, in the Churnet Valley and in the lowlands to the south.
- Buildings for cattle predominate, from small cow houses attached to houses to larger two-storey buildings.
- Threshing barns, where present, form part of combination ranges.
- Field barns are a distinctive feature.

Significance

- Farmsteads Mapping (as part of the West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes Project) has shown very high survival of traditional farmsteads, with 70% of those recorded from late 19th-century maps (in Staffordshire) retaining more than half of their historic form – There are strong differences between higher loss (high proportion of the 15% across the area) and alteration around Potteries and to west, in contrast to very high survival in the moorlands and Churnet Valley.
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Present and future issues

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a medium to low proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (20.6%, the national average being 32%).
- A high level of loss of farmsteads is found in the area of the Potteries and on the western edge of the Character Area.
- High economic mass (proximity to the Stoke conurbation and other urban areas) has allowed conversion of three fifths of farmsteads to residential use, though participation of residents in business activity is relatively low.

Historic development

- Market centres developed from the 12th and 13th centuries at Leek, Cheadle and Stoke-on-Trent. The latter developed as a series of dispersed industrial centres from the late 18th century, and the old market centre of Newcastle-under-Lyme also developed as a wealthy residential area.
- Farming was often small scale and, already by 1700, combined with industrial activity including pottery manufacture around Stoke-on-Trent, coal mining and iron production in the Churnet Valley. Fireclays, pottery clay and coal lie near the surface along the valleys.
- A substantially sheep-based pastoral economy developed in moorland areas, but by the 19th century a large part of the area specialised in the production of butter and cheese for local conurbations as well as the London market. The supply of fresh milk became very important from the mid-19th century.
- Corn production was more important to the west of Newcastle and in the broad valleys south of Leek.
- Market gardening was a major activity in the area surrounding the Potteries, extending as far as Leek where potato growing was an important crop in the 19th century.
- The predominant settlement pattern is of high to very high levels of dispersal, with stronger patterns of village-based settlement in Churnet and Dove valleys to east.
- Colonisation developed in former Royal Forest from the 15th century.
- Small fragments of medieval strip fields and ancient woodland survive.

Landscape and settlement

- The predominant pattern is of small-scale, irregular and piecemeal enclosure, resulting from the clearance of woodland and the enclosure of strip fields which extended over large parts of the farmed area in parts of the area to the west (for example Rudyard, north-west of Leek, and in Dove Valley to the east of Cheadle).
- Patches of regular planned enclosure, dating from the late 18th century and including a high proportion post-dating the 1850s, are concentrated on areas of former unenclosed common grazing on the higher and more open land to the north.
- The landscape to the west of Newcastle-under-Lyme has undergone significant 19th- and 20th-century peri-urban change, including the development of estates.

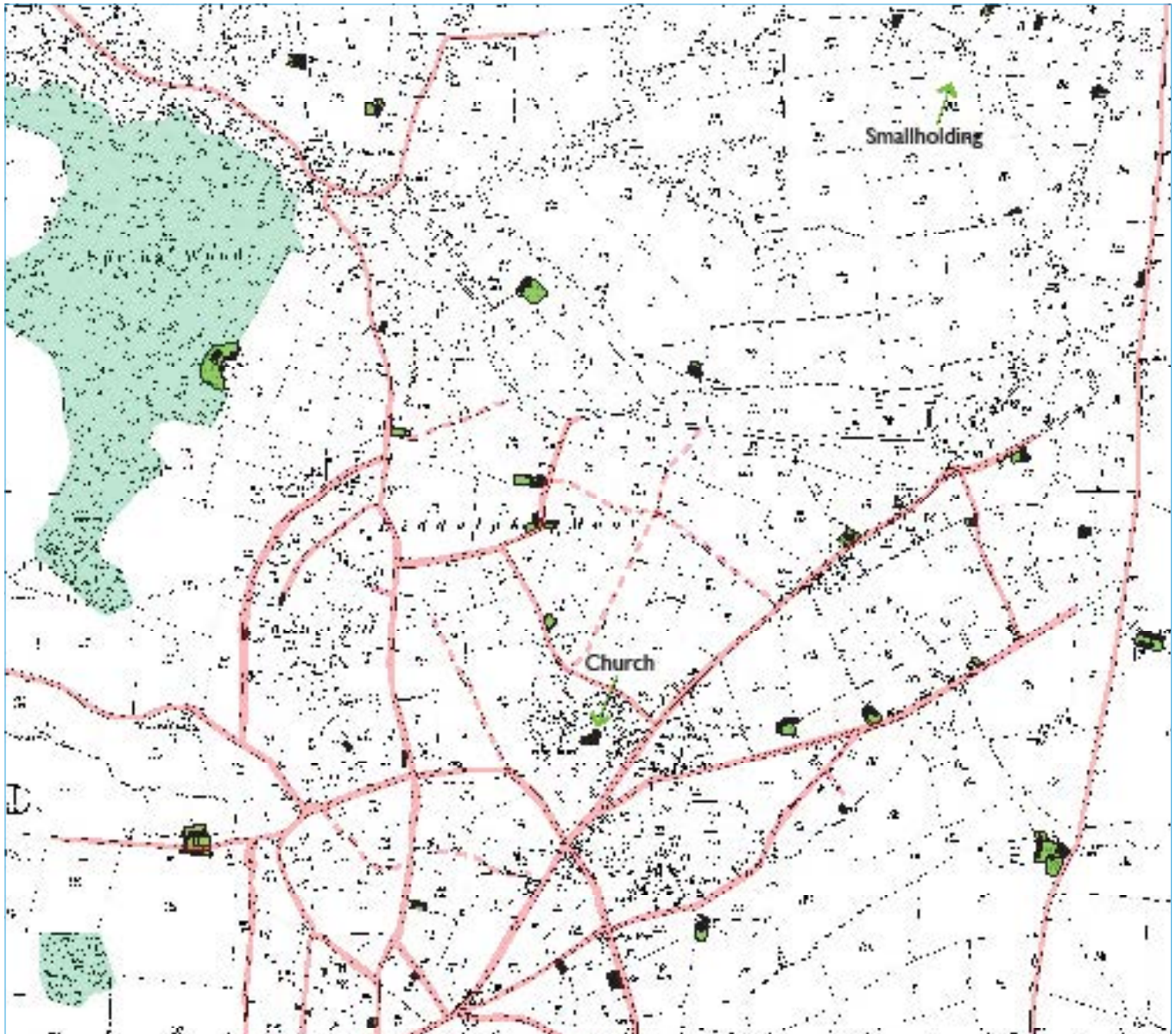
Farmstead and building types

Farmstead types

- across the area are small-scale, loose courtyard farmsteads (four times as numerous as those with working buildings to three or four sides of the yard), linear farmsteads, dispersed clusters, regular L-plans and L-plans with additional working buildings to the third side of the yard.
- Linear and L-plans with the house attached to a farm building, typically a cow house, are a major characteristic of the eastern part of the area. Many such small plan types probably developed from smallholdings.
- Small, loose courtyards with buildings to one or two sides of a yard are also a strong feature of the area, with larger examples of this type (with buildings to three sides of the yard) concentrated in the Churnet Valley and to the east of Stoke-on-Trent.
- Dispersed cluster plans are the most common form of dispersed farmstead in the eastern area with some dispersed driftway plans. These reflect their long development as sites for holding livestock en route to rough upland pastures and also into richer lowland areas for fattening.
- Regular L-plans are the dominant regular courtyard type in the area. They are strongly associated with medium to small-scale upland farms. To the south these often had developed by the late 19th century with additional buildings to the third or (far more rarely) fourth sides of the yard.
- Other medium to large-scale courtyard plans (U-plan layouts being the most common) are rare, mostly associated with planned enclosure, and not as common here as further to the south in the Staffordshire Plain (NCA 61) and south of Stone and Uttoxeter in the Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands (NCA 68).

Building types

- Buildings for cattle are present on most farmsteads, either as single-storey ranges, with a hayloft above or within two-storey combination ranges.
- Threshing barns are relatively uncommon; crop processing was typically incorporated into combination barns with threshing floors flanked by lofted cow houses and stabling.
- Pigsties were found on most farms.
- Field barns provided shelter for cattle or sheep, often at the junction of field boundaries. Many are ruinous or in poor condition.



Maps are based on 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England.
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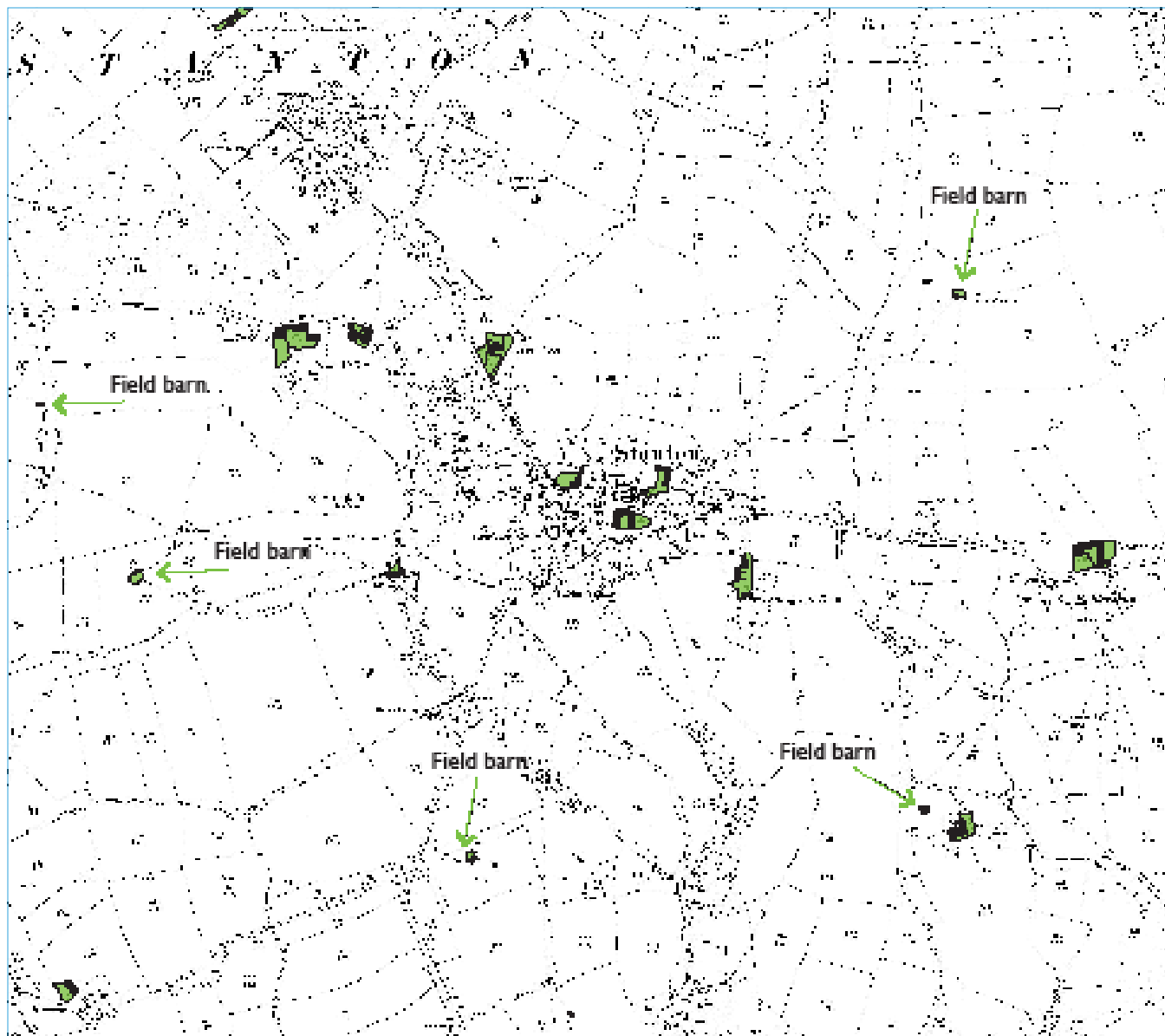
Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.

0 250 500 m
0 0.25 miles



Biddulph Moor

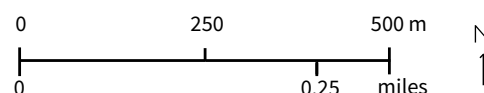
Biddulph Moor to the north was an area of open moorland into the 18th century but was subject to enclosure during the 19th century. In some areas, this enclosure took the form of regular, planned fields as on the east edge of Spring Wood but most of the area was enclosed with small, irregular fields associated with a very high density of small farmsteads and smallholdings, the farmsteads typically being loose courtyards with working buildings to one side of the yard or small L-plan yards. Small field barns were also built within some of the fields, possibly associated with the smallholdings. After enclosure, a small settlement to the south grew up with a church, chapel, school and public house; the farmsteads in and around this settlement are likely to pre-date it.



Maps are based on 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England. © Crown Copyright (and database rights) 2020. OS 100024900



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



Stanton

Stanton was formerly surrounded by its open fields, the presence of which can be seen in some of the curving field boundaries of narrow fields to the north and south-west, probably enclosed in the 17th and 18th centuries. Many of the farmsteads remained in the village after enclosure but some new steadings were built away from the village; the name Newhome Farm suggests that it was possibly built in association with the enclosures of the open fields. For most of the farms, outfarms and field barns around the village helped to save labour by enabling tasks such as threshing, storage of hay and straw and the housing of animals (and therefore the production of manure) to be undertaken close to the fields, saving carting back and forth from the main farmstead. To the north-west of the enclosure of the moorland in the mid- to late 19th century resulted in small, regular fields.



The landscape in and around the Churnet Valley comprises a number of steep-sided valleys still clothed with ancient woodland. Coniferous plantations, as shown, were established on the valley tops on the site of earlier woodland and heath, a process begun in the later 19th century. The small enclosures represent encroachment or assarting (the clearing of trees to create farmland), which is strongly associated with small 16th- and 17th-century farmsteads. The high numbers of such farmsteads within this landscape is likely to be due to the local iron-working industry which expanded during this period. Photo © Historic England 27967/010



An early to mid-19th-century linear farmstead in the east of the area. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Many smallholdings consist of the house and a small cow house attached to the gable, creating a small, linear plan. Photo © Bob Edwards



A small L-plan with attached house, as is commonly found in the eastern part of this area. The farm building element provides cattle housing. The farmhouse has been re-fronted in brick in the late 19th century. Photo © Bob Edwards



A small-scale farmstead in an upland hamlet, with a lean-to to the rear of the only working building. Photo © Bob Edwards



This farmstead, with working buildings to two sides of the yard, again displays many of the characteristics of southern Pennine farmsteads. To the right is a single-storey, late 19th-century cow house, and the long, mid-19th-century range to the left comprises a storeyed combination barn (with an upper floor granary and a central winnowing door to the threshing bay which was blocked in the late 19th century). They replaced earlier buildings, as the house is an example of mid-18th-century architecture. Photo © Bob Edwards



A loose courtyard farmstead with the buildings turned inwards towards the yard, to the south of the Churnet Valley. The 18th-century or earlier house was turned into a double-depth plan by the addition of the front block in the mid-19th century. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A linear farmstead to the south of the Churnet Valley, with a detached stable to the left. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A linear farmstead built with its own access track within a regular planned enclosure landscape with straight, thorn hedgerows. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A mid-19th-century estate farmstead west of Newcastle-under-Lyme, with low buildings to the cattle yards projecting from the taller barn. Photo © Bob Edwards



Two-storey, L-shaped ranges for housing dairy cattle and their fodder developed in the 19th century. Photo © Bob Edwards



The 16th-century Croxden Abbey barn was originally timber-framed but was largely rebuilt in stone in the 19th century when it was altered to serve as a two-storey cow house rather than a threshing barn. Photo © Bob Edwards



Two-storey cow house with gable end opening giving access to the hay loft from the road, which passes at a higher level than the yard. Photo © Bob Edwards



Single-storey cattle housing was often small-scale and housed young stock. Photo © Bob Edwards



Almost all combination barns date from the early to mid-19th century, when most of the earlier and smaller-scale working buildings on farmsteads were demolished and rebuilt. The central barn was converted into cattle housing in the late 19th century, when the windows flanking the winnowing door in the centre of the range were inserted. Photo © Bob Edwards



A covered driftway provides access to the farmyard in the angle of this L-shaped range. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Steps to a first-floor granary. Note the date inscribed into the lintel. Photo © Jeremy Lake



Manor Farm, Bradley in the Moors, Staffordshire. Photo © Jeremy Lake



A very small field barn that could only house one or two cows. This building stands close to a village. Photo © Jeremy Lake



The dispersed holdings of some farms were served by large combination barns, this one having an open bay for a cart to the left of the cattle housing. Photo © Jeremy Lake

Materials and detail

- Red brick and sandstone are the predominant walling materials of the Character Area. Millstone grit is seen in parts of the area.
- Plain clay tile (including large numbers of Staffordshire blue tiles) or Welsh slate was

used for roofing. There is occasional survival of Westmorland slate or stone slates.

- Surviving timber-frame is now very rare.



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The West Midlands Farmsteads and Landscapes
Project, led by English Heritage (now Historic
England), has mapped the historic character,
survival and use of farmsteads across the
whole region which includes this NCA. For
the Summary Report of 2009 see [https://
historicengland.org.uk/images-books/
publications/west-midlands-farmsteads-
landscapes/](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/west-midlands-farmsteads-landscapes/) For more detailed guidance on
farmsteads in Staffordshire see the Staffordshire
Farmsteads Guidance at [https://www.
staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/eLand/
planners-developers/HistoricEnvironment/
Projects/Historic-Farmsteads.aspx](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment/eLand/planners-developers/HistoricEnvironment/Projects/Historic-Farmsteads.aspx).

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