



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Kesteven Uplands

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 75



## 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>).

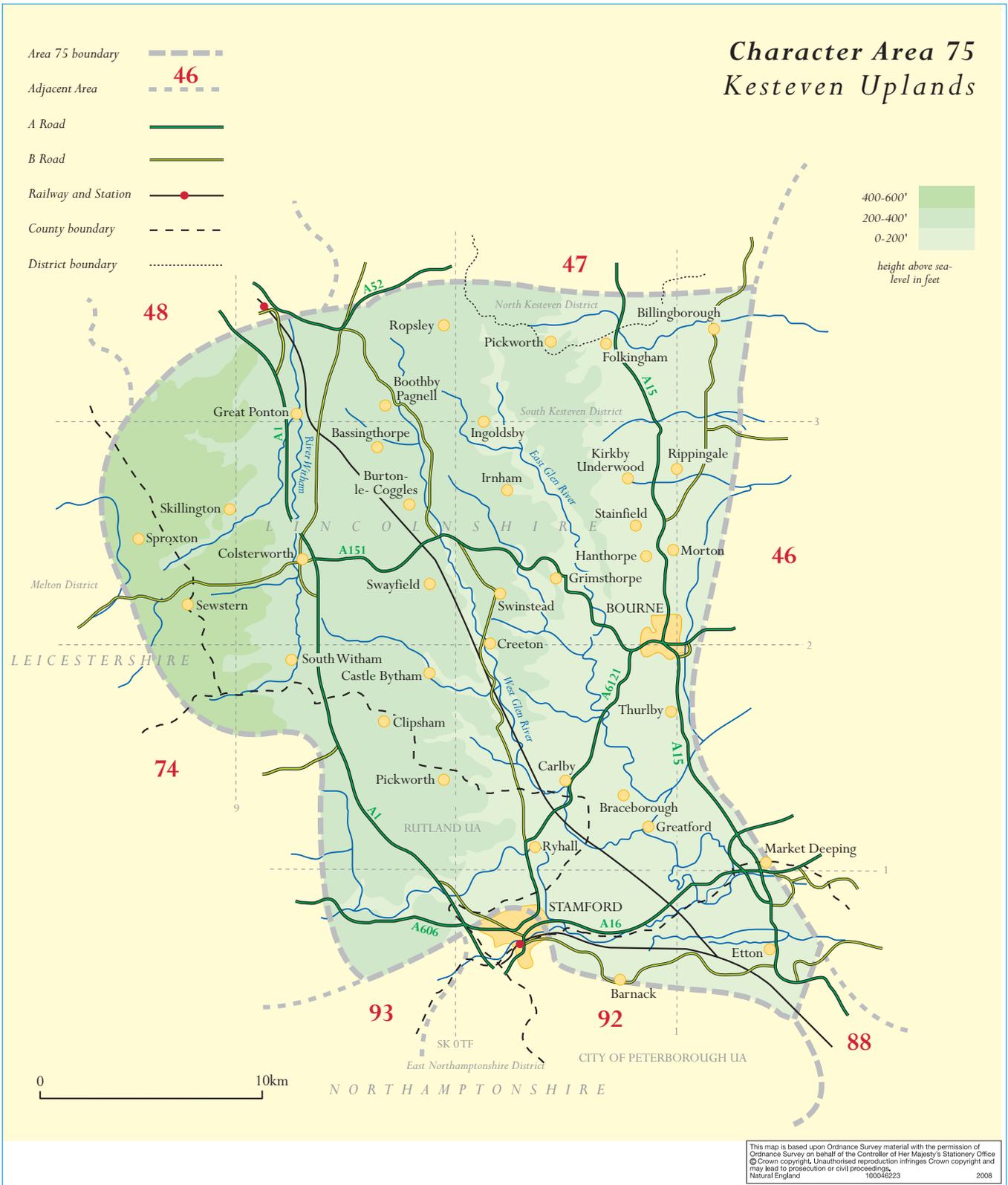


Woolsthorpe Manor, the birthplace of Sir Isaac Newton. This is an example of a prosperous 'yeoman' farm of the 17th century, with detached buildings (including a 17th-century barn) in a loose courtyard arrangement. The great wealth of the area was based on wool, and many such farms were supported in a relatively small area. The stone construction is typical of farmsteads of this vintage in the Kesteven Uplands. As well as being Sir Isaac Newton's birthplace, the house is historically important as the place where he discovered gravity and developed his theories regarding the refraction of light, during a year's break from Trinity College, Cambridge, to escape the plague. Photo © Locus Consultants

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**Front cover:** Grange Farm at Uffington, a planned group of c 1850 now in residential use with two courtyards, set in a landscape of estate-driven improvement with Casewick Hall and its parkland in the distance. Photo © Historic England 28556/022

# Character Area 75 Kesteven Uplands



This map shows the Kesteven Uplands 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 Kesteven Uplands is a rolling mixed farmland landscape dissected by the Rivers Witham and East and West Glen. It overlooks the flat Fens to the east and borders Rockingham Forest to the south, the Leicestershire Wolds to the west and the Lincolnshire Edge to the north. This is a deeply rural landscape which has only 2.6% of its area classified as 'urban'.

## Historic character

- A heavily wooded area containing many examples of medieval sheep enclosures, especially around villages and on 'marginal' soils.
- Heathland to the west of the Character Area was largely enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries, displaying a rectilinear pattern of fields with associated isolated farmsteads.
- Many villages include stately homes, parkland, and estate buildings from the 16th to the 19th centuries, reflecting the historic wealth of the area and relating also to the predominant pattern of piecemeal enclosure that had enclosed most of this area by the mid-18th century.
- There are several examples of planned 19th-century farmsteads established by 'improving' landowners, and these are frequently well preserved and sited in landscapes of regular or reorganised enclosure. There is also a strong influence of estates in parkland landscapes with associated design and architectural motifs employed on farm buildings.
- Farmsteads are typically arranged around loose or regular courtyards, although there may have been extensive redevelopment of older, linear and dispersed farmsteads into these forms throughout the area, reflecting change and adaptation from sheep farming to arable cultivation.

## Significance

- Farmsteads Mapping in Lincolnshire has shown that the area has an average survival of traditional farmsteads from around 1900 in a national context, but above-average for Lincolnshire – 65% have more than 50% of their historic form surviving (42.85% in Greater Lincolnshire) and 20% (28% in Greater Lincolnshire) retaining some but less than 50% of their historic form. The area also has a higher survival of 18th-century and earlier buildings than in Lincolnshire.
- There is potential for continuity of settlement from monastic granges through to 18th- and 19th-century planned farmsteads on certain sites.
- Some isolated farmsteads potentially sit on earlier sheep rearing sites, raising the possibility of enhanced legibility of medieval pastoral farming landscapes.
- Buildings are often constructed of local limestone and other high-quality materials. As a result, 18th-century and earlier buildings

survive well in this area due to their durability and historic character. Several older farmsteads are examples of post-medieval

yeomen houses associated with the early development of independent farming.

## Present and future issues

- The continued drive for more efficient operations and larger arable farming operations is resulting in redundancy and loss of obsolete buildings.
- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded an average proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (30.4%, the national average being 32%).

## Historic development

- The Character Area is one of the most wooded parts of Greater Lincolnshire, and it has been suggested that the name 'Kesteven' is derived in part from an ancient, pre-Roman word for woodland, 'coed'. Whether this is true or not, it seems likely from the surviving blocks of ancient woodland that the area was not as extensively cleared for farming in prehistoric times as were neighbouring Character Areas, perhaps due to the heavy and difficult-to-work clay soils that are found throughout the Kesteven Uplands. There is evidence for settlement and exploitation of the area in the Roman period, typically in the form of farmsteads and settlements along the course of Ermine Street, later known as the Great North Road, which traverses the area from north to south.
- A high proportion (over 40%) of recorded farmsteads are sited in villages. Most isolated farmsteads relate to 18th- and 19th-century enclosure. The relative isolation of the area also attracted monastic and other religious orders in the medieval period, including the Knights Templar at South Witham, and Vaudey Abbey near Grimsthorpe. It is also possible that much of the area was a designated Royal Forest.
- Over the course of the medieval period, significant areas of woodland cover were removed by assarting and other processes, creating a more open landscape which was exploited for sheep rearing from around the 14th century. Many of the irregular fields that are characteristic of the area date from this period, and it is possible that some of the older isolated farmsteads may also have their origins as monastic granges or early specialist sheep farms.
- After the Dissolution of the Monasteries during the Reformation, much of the land passed from the hands of the church to private landowners, who accelerated the pace of enclosure and deforestation throughout the Character Area. The economy of the area was largely based on the wool trade during the medieval and early post-medieval periods, and this encouraged early enclosure of common land and open field in pursuit of this profitable farming type. From around the 16th century, the wool trade supported many middle-class yeoman farmers, allowing them to construct large stone farmsteads of the type seen at Woolsthorpe, where Sir Isaac Newton was born. In this respect the area's history resembles other chalk and limestone plateau landscapes which developed into sheep and corn economies such as the Cotswolds, but a distinctive feature is the high number of one-and-a-half-storey, late 16th- to 18th-century houses and small threshing barns, suggesting the continuance of relatively small mixed farms into the 18th century.
- Later planned enclosure of surviving areas of the medieval sheep-grazing landscape, especially across the uplands in the south and west and in the wider vales, took place in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The process, noted by the local poet John Clare, reapportioned the earlier patterns of irregular

and open fields, and spurred the creation of new farmsteads with combination barns serving cattle courts, often set within these new enclosures rather than set apart from the villages. Much of the planned enclosure of the area was driven by a relatively small number of influential landlords, such as the Bertie family of Grimsthorpe and the Turnors of Stoke Rochford. Such landowners were very keen to introduce 'high farming' principles on their estates around the county, and there are several examples of planned pattern-book farmsteads in the Character Area, which employed industrial methods in the production of grain, the raising of cattle, and the collection and distribution of manure.

- Several of these large landowners used their wealth to create landscape parks and stately homes throughout the Character Area, with some having been designed by important figures such as 'Capability' Brown and John Vanbrugh. Farmsteads in the vicinity of these parks were often elaborately constructed of high-quality materials to reflect the aesthetics of the landowner, an approach that also extended to farmworkers cottages. A number of settlements in the area, such as Edenham and Creeton, can be described as 'estate villages', where the dominant architectural style is set by the local landlord, including the materials and design of most buildings.

## Landscape and settlement

- Although generally an upland landscape, the Character Area demonstrates significant variation, especially along its central east-west axis. To the extreme west, in the border area between Lincolnshire and Rutland, the landscape is broad and open, with large arable fields adhering to a largely rectilinear plan form. Further east, as the landscape becomes more rolling and hilly, the effects of the various rivers that traverse the Character Area are felt more strongly with shallow valleys of heavy clay soils running between hills of limestone. Towards the border between this Character Area and the Fens (NCA 46) to the east, the topography becomes shallower and flatter, with patches of gravel terraces rising a few metres above the surrounding clays.
- Small-scale, irregular fieldscapes exist in many areas, around the fringes of the smaller village settlements and within the valleys of the lowland vales and rolling farmland, often with mature and well wooded hedgerows. These reflect the early enclosure of the Character Area for sheep rearing. In certain places, especially on hill slopes and areas of marginal soil quality, the rectilinear fieldscapes of planned enclosure can be identified, although these are less prevalent than in adjacent Character Areas. These planned areas are broadly defined by formerly stock-proof thorn hedges and limestone walls, both of which have been much reduced in extent due to the intensification of arable cultivation in the later 20th century.
- The different geological strata that underlie the area have given rise to a thriving minerals industry, including quarries for limestone, ironstone, sand and gravel. This has strongly influenced both the built heritage of the area, as described below, and the modern rural landscape. In the south, around Baston and the Fen edge, large gravel pits have created a pattern of artificial lakes that are used for a variety of recreational and conservation purposes. Large areas of countryside around Colsterworth are in fact reinstated land on the site of former open cast ironstone mines. The infrastructure associated with mineral extraction, such as railway cuttings, embankments and haulage roads, is clearly visible from some stretches of main roads.
- By comparison to much of the rest of Greater Lincolnshire, this area is extensively wooded, with patches of ancient and semi-natural woodland scattered throughout. These patches are occasionally quite large, as is the case with Morkery Wood and Pickworth Great Wood, which also show signs of piecemeal felling and enclosure at their edges, indicative of assarting. The historic

tree cover is augmented by plantation and estate woodland associated with the many stately homes in the area. As well as the discrete woodland blocks, many of the roads through the area are bounded by trees and overgrown hedges, further enhancing the sense of enclosure. Plantations and copses provide a well-wooded appearance in many areas, particularly across the mixed farmlands, clustered along the watercourses and on the higher ground between the East Glen and West Glen Rivers.

- The varied landscape is reflected in the distribution of nucleated settlements across the area. Along the Fen border, a line of villages runs parallel to the Car Dyke, from Market Deeping to Folkingham. Across the rest of the Character Area, small villages and hamlets adhere to the courses of the

many streams and rivers that traverse the countryside. Some settlements to the west and centre of the area are found within dry upland river valleys marking the former courses of modern rivers. Deserted medieval villages are concentrated along the north part of the area.

- The Kesteven Uplands is particularly notable for the concentration of large, country house estates, such as Grimsthorpe Hall, and several smaller manor houses and gentry houses throughout the area. These are typically accompanied by area of designed parkland. Much of the parkland in the area has been converted to arable cultivation, but in most cases the parkland character remains evident from shelter belt woodland or isolated veteran trees within the modern arable fields themselves.

## Farmstead and building types

Some farmsteads have recorded medieval houses at their core, including manor houses, this area having a high proportion by national standards. Working buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries or earlier are rare, although the area has a high proportion by national standards. They are generally stone built, although re-fronting in brick is commonplace. 19th-century farmsteads in isolated areas are often built to pattern-book designs, reflecting the influence of 19th-century, 'high farming' principles. There are often strong architectural and design links between farmsteads owned by the same estate. On the Saltby estate, farmsteads were mostly rebuilt in ironstone with pantile roofs, while those on the Buckminster estate were typically brick-built and of a more regular plan form. Other indicative features can include date stones and crests.

### Farmstead types

- Small 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 (76% being regular courtyards, 13.6% loose courtyards) in the 19th century to allow for more effective arable cultivation. Farmsteads of large, regular courtyard types predominate.

### Building types

The history of early enclosure and farming prosperity is reflected in the number of 16th- and 17th-century manor houses in the rolling farmland and lowland vales and the high survival in a national context of pre-1750 farmstead buildings, mostly threshing barns. These earlier farmsteads are often associated with key ancillary buildings including:

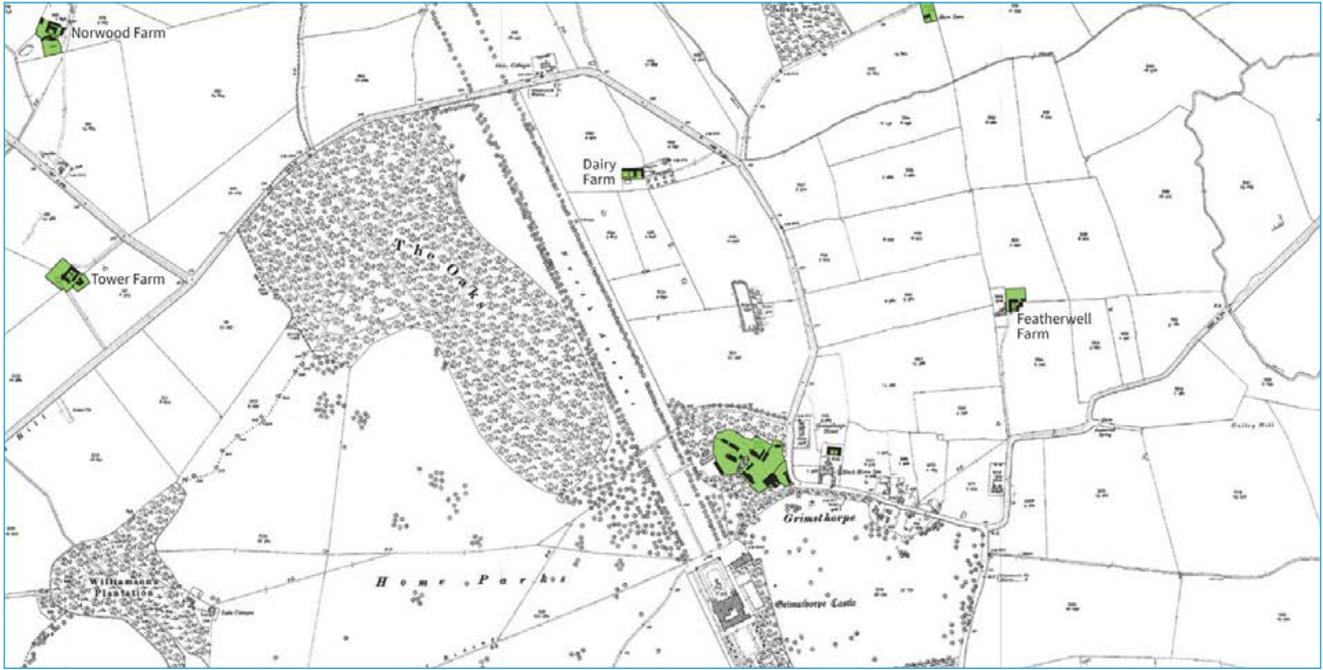
- ornamental or high status buildings such as dovecotes
- late 16th- and 17th-century barns and farmhouses, especially in the south of the area.



These farmsteads in the village of Bitchfield illustrate the development of village-based farmsteads in some parts of this area. Farmhouses (as here at Manor House to the centre of the image) and some barns illustrate the emergence of prosperous yeoman farms along village streets in ever-larger plots in the 16th and 17th centuries. This process of amalgamation and building courtyard farms continued over the 18th and 19th centuries. Photo © Historic England 28556/049



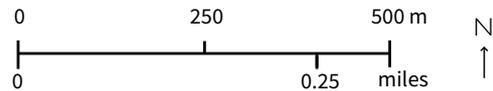
Old Park Farm, Stoke Rochford. A planned courtyard farmstead with associated farmworkers' cottages, and set in an estate landscape with shelter belts and plantations. The rather grand farmhouse is set away from the main complex, indicating that it was aimed at an 'improving' tenant of high social standing. The extensive shelter belts surrounding the farmstead limit views into the complex and accentuate the main access routes. Photo © Historic England 28557/017



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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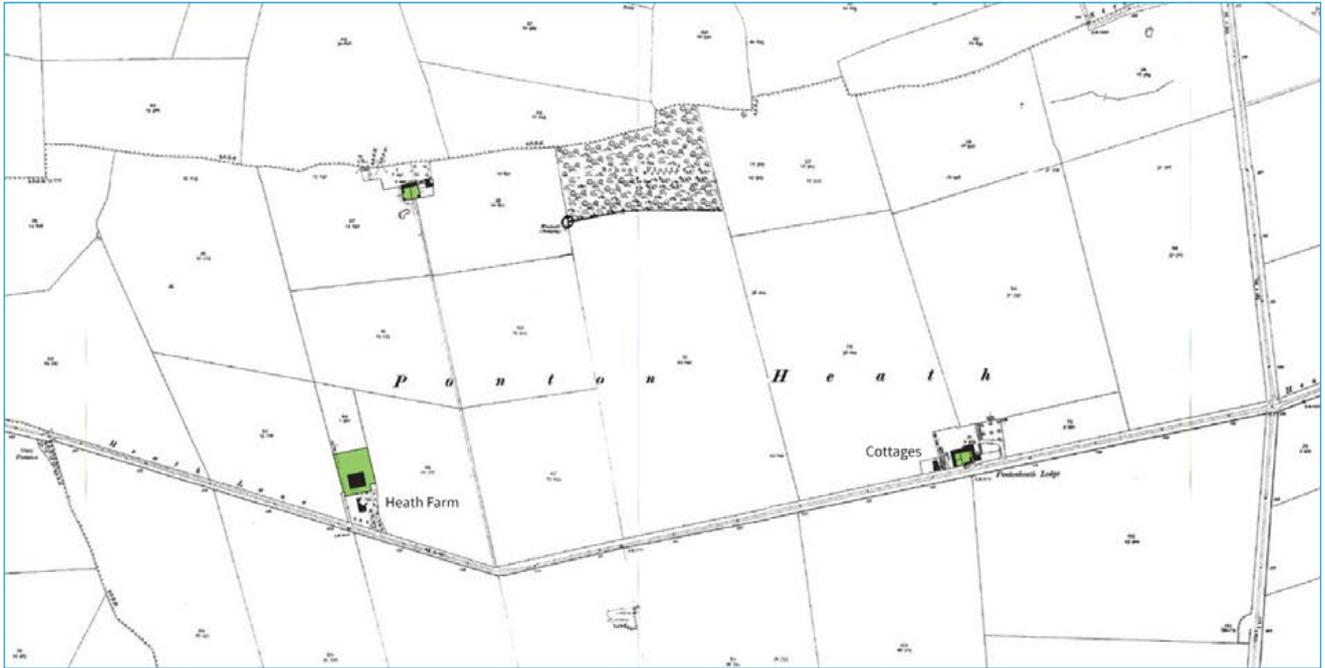


Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



## Grimsthorpe

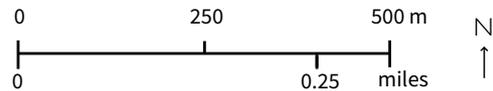
Isolated farmsteads around the Grimsthorpe Estate. The regular courtyard farmsteads are set in a designed landscape – with fox coverts, rectilinear field boundaries and straight roads – surrounding the Capability Brown park (and earlier, medieval deer park) next to Grimsthorpe Castle (a medieval castle adapted as a country house with a north front of c 1723 by Sir John Vanbrugh) at the bottom of the map. The cluster of buildings to the north-east of the castle includes a 17th-century stable block and other buildings for the management of the estate. The estate retains some earlier boundaries and fabric relating to the pre-improvement landscape. Norwood Farm to the north-west is the only farmstead that does not conform to the regular plans seen across the estate; it has a late 17th-century farmhouse and a late 18th-century barn, and developed on a more piecemeal basis.



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



## Ponton Heath

Although the overall character of the area is one of rolling hills and woodland, some areas of open heath can be found such as here at Ponton. As in other areas, these heaths were enclosed during the late 18th and 19th centuries for arable cultivation. The farmsteads seen here are regular courtyard types of the kind commonly associated with arable and mixed farming of the period, the manure produced by yard-fed cattle playing a key role in boosting fertility. Note the cottages for the agricultural workforce, and the covered yard (a type of building built from the 1850s) at Heath Farm.

In planned farmsteads of the 19th century, the house is generally separate from the ranges of buildings, which are laid out to fulfil specific roles in the mixed farming regime. Associated houses are often large and well appointed, reflecting the desire to attract wealthy and active tenants during the 'high farming' period.

Key building types reflecting the importance of arable farming are:

- extensive cart shed or granary ranges
- large 18th- and 19th-century combination barns and stables and smaller 18th-century and earlier threshing barns
- shelter sheds and loose boxes to cattle yards
- large farmhouses on tenanted farms.



A large Buckminster estate farm in Stainby, dated 1886. This comprises an E-shaped plan form with linked cattle housing set around two yards with a central range accommodating food storage and fodder preparation areas. The long rear range has open shelter sheds allowing cattle free access to the yards. A three-bay, open-fronted cart shed is incorporated in the east range. The buildings are of ironstone with brick dressings to doorways, windows and eaves. Photo © Jen Deadman



A fine, early 18th-century farmhouse with a classical brick façade. From operating a rural economy based on the wool trade, the area became more heavily dependent on arable farming, resulting in the alteration of buildings and the construction of new outbuildings for cattle and farm equipment, as seen here, to the rear of the complex. The later buildings are constructed in brick and pantile. Photo © Locus Consultants



Also on the Buckminster estate is this large industrial farmstead, rebuilt between 1885 and 1904, with covered yards for fattening cattle and – an unusual feature – a large water tower. Photo © Jen Deadman



Late 19th-century estate workers' cottages, at Cow Row in Buckminster. From the mid-19th century, farm workers were commonly housed in purpose-built housing erected by estates. The roofline is perforated by a series of pitched roof dormers with wavy bargeboards, and topped by a row of tall chimney stacks and pots. Photo © Jen Deadman



Mid-19th-century farm on the outskirts of Saltby. This farmstead is of a loose courtyard plan with buildings of ironstone set under pantiled roofs. Village farms on the Saltby Estate on the western limit of the area are numerous but frequently smaller and less developed than those of the Buckminster estate, to the east. Photo © Jen Deadman



This farmstead in Sproxton, one mile south of Saltby, exemplifies the development of farmsteads within the confines of medieval villages. Many farmsteads line the western side of Main Street, and remained in agricultural use into the 20th century unlike in some settlements where they fell out of use as large farms moved into newly enclosed or reorganised farmland. All are of a loose yard plan form and date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The farmhouses front the street and the yards run behind on narrow crofts. Here, the farmstead – dated 1810 – comprises a range of brick and ironstone buildings to the north with a large combination barn to the west. The farmhouse and adjoining building are sited on the road side, to the east. Photo © Jen Deadman

## Materials and detail

- Finely worked local limestone is a notable feature of the area (famous quarries at Barnack and Ancaster exported stone to Cambridge colleges and Ely Cathedral).
- Roofs are typically pantiles and occasionally Collyweston or Welsh slates in post 1860 buildings. Bottesford Blue pantiles are occasionally used in the west of the NCA.
- Ironstone is often featured as a primary building material on high status houses, especially when used in alternating courses with pale limestone.
- Timber framing is now mainly confined to towns.
- Estate buildings tend to be well constructed to planned forms, although often added to in 20th century.
- Estates show extensive influence on design and materials, both in aesthetics and farming principles.



# Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by Alastair Macintosh and Adam Partington, Locus Consultants, with Jeremy Lake and Jen Deadman.

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The **Greater Lincolnshire Farmsteads and Landscapes Project**, led by Historic England, has mapped the historic character, survival and use of farmsteads. For the Assessment Framework and reports of 2015 see [https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/lincsfarm\\_he\\_2015/](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/lincsfarm_he_2015/)

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