

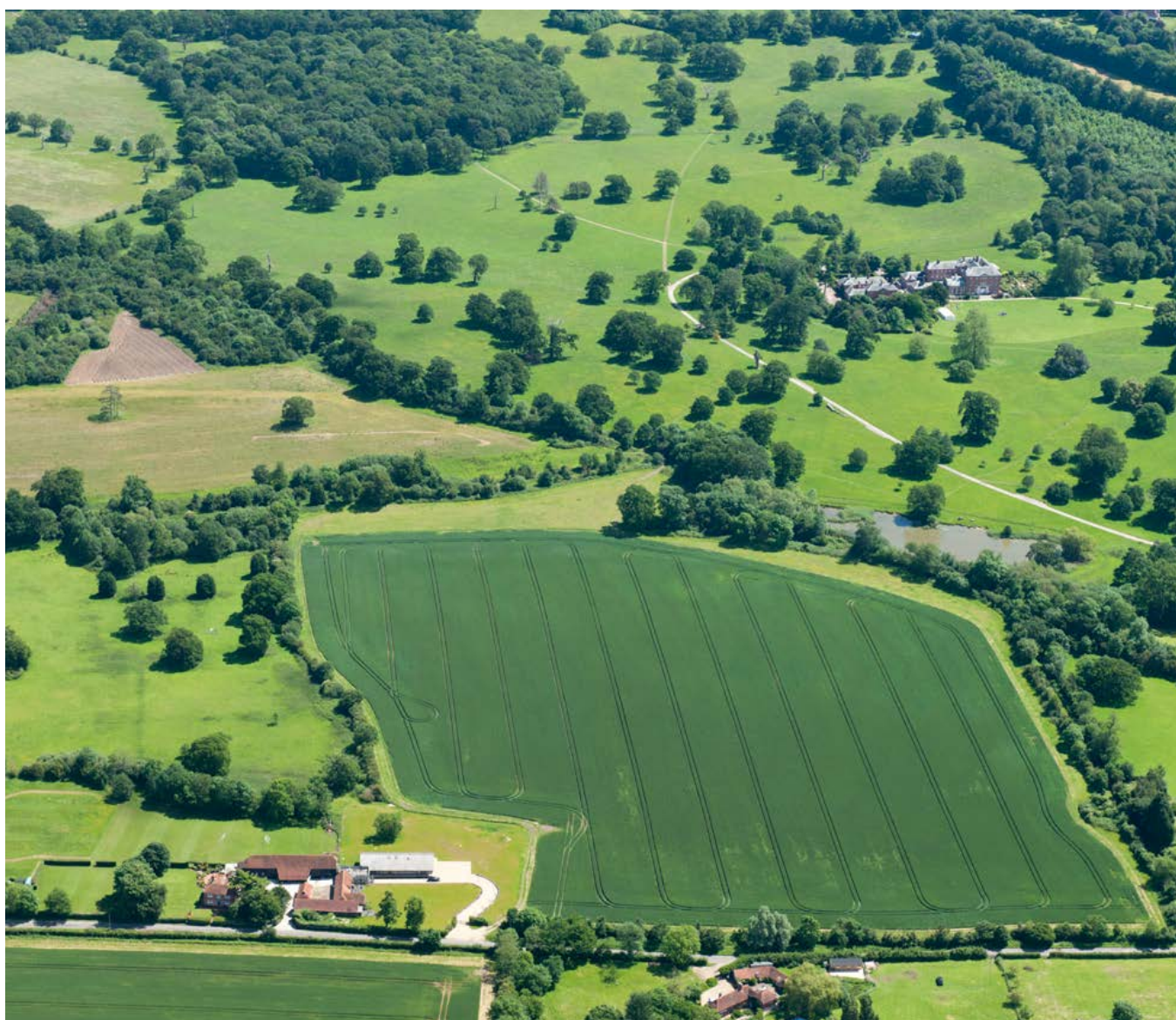


Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Thames Basin Lowlands

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 114



# 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>).

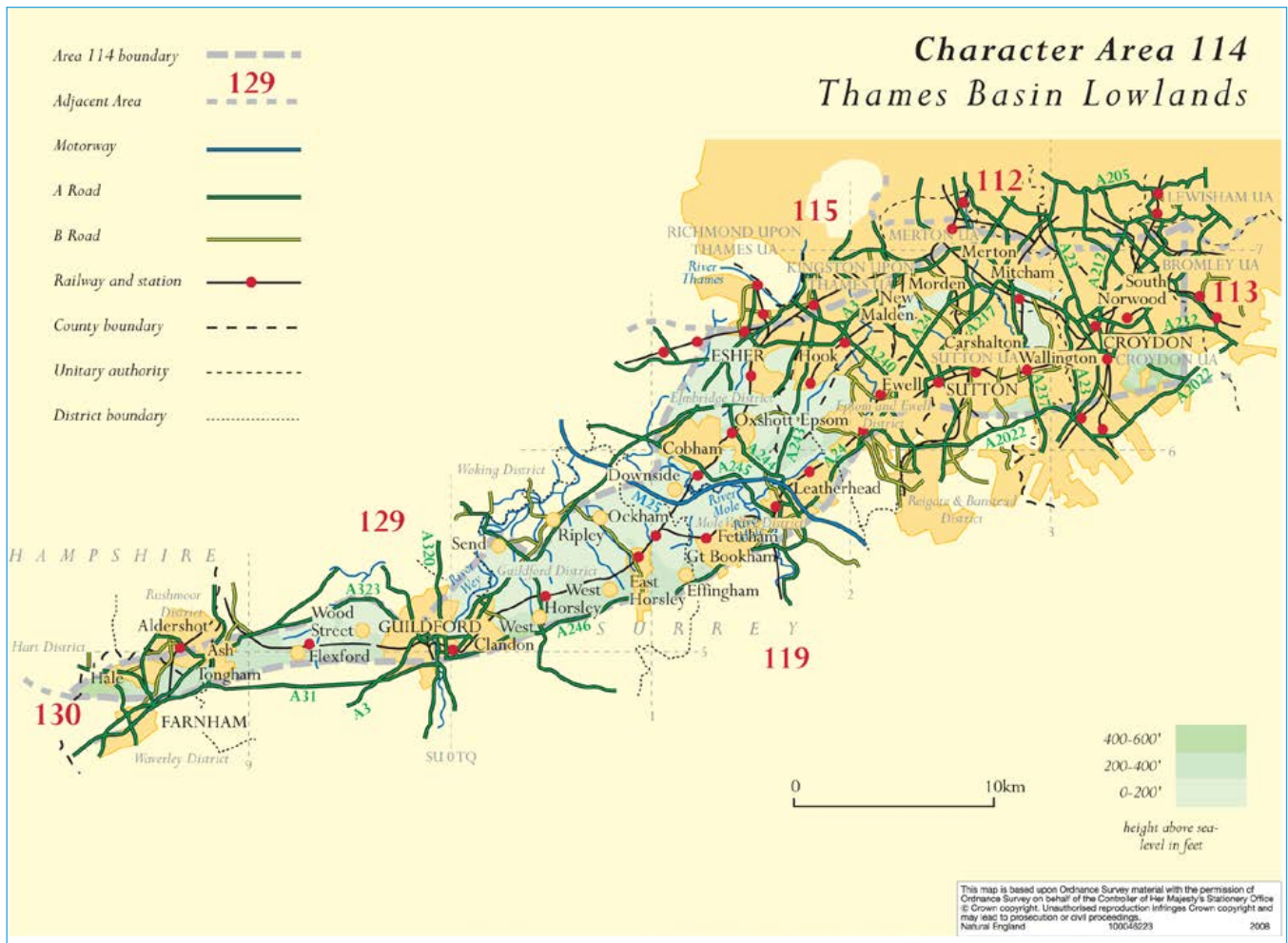


A view into the park of Hatchlands with its farmstead in the foreground, with a large stable. To the right the gable end of the barn is visible. The house can be seen in the distance. Photo © Bob Edwards

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**Front cover:** East Clandon, showing the country house of c1756-60 at Hatchlands built for the naval hero Admiral Boscawen set in the parkland that developed from one of the major properties owned in the medieval period by Chertsey Abbey. In the foreground is the Home Farm with its 17th-century aisled barn and house. Photo © Historic England 29166/013





This map shows the Thames Basin Lowlands, with the numbers of 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 Thames Basin Lowlands Character Area is a narrow band running along the southern edge of the Thames Basin between Croydon in the east and Aldershot in the west. It is a gently undulating area of farmland with small woodlands and meandering rivers making their way to the Thames. Of the Character Area, 38% is open countryside, and of this 63.7% is cultivated. As a result of the urban expansion of London across the northern parts, 62% of the area is urban, whilst 10.3% of the area contains woodland.

## Historic development

- There are high densities of small to medium-scale farmsteads in the areas of irregular fields enclosed from the woodland, contrasting with much lower densities of large-scale historic farmsteads surviving in the heathlands.
- There is a high number of historic parks, some of which relate to planned regular courtyard farmsteads.
- Buildings reflect the mixed agriculture practised, and as a result barns, granaries, stables, and cattle housing can be found.

## Significance

- There is a moderate survival of pre-1700 buildings in this area, predominantly farmhouses and barns.
  - Traditional farmsteads which retain most or all of their working buildings are very rare.
- Most smaller-scale farmsteads passed into domestic use in the 20th century, if they survived, and any coherent examples are extremely rare.

## Present and future issues

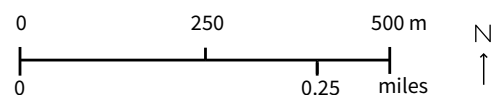
- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a medium proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (32%, the national average being 32%).



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.



## Ockham

Within this Character Area there are a number of landscaped parks, some of which had farmsteads associated with them. Guileshill Farm is a large, regular multi-yard plan farmstead on the edge of the Ockham Park to the east of Ripley, which was originally built in c 1638 for the Weston Family, whilst the photograph shows Fuller's Farm within the park of Hatchlands, East Clandon. Beyond these parks is a landscape of small to medium-scale fields that are generally the result of piecemeal enclosure, including woodland clearance undertaken by the 14th century – with areas of later, more regular enclosure or reorganisation of earlier field systems – usually undertaken by the estates or representing the enclosure of heathland.

## Historic development

- The farms within this area were generally small, except within estates which intensively improved their landscape in the late 18th and 19th centuries, and coppicing and other woodland activities were concentrated around the woodland based on heavy soils, much of which had been subject to clearance under licence from landlords, or assarting, by the 14th century. There were also extensive areas of heathland dating from woodland clearance in the Neolithic and Bronze Age, which also sustained seasonal grazing grounds for stock and common-edge smallholding and small farms until their development for military training and housing in the late 19th and 20th centuries.
- Until the 17th century, the wool trade underpinned the prosperity of the area, with fulling mills being based along the Wey and Tillingbourne rivers. Trade was stimulated by the growth of the London market and improvements to river and road access over the 18th century (including the river Wey navigation and the Guildford-Leatherhead turnpike).
- Access to London via rail stimulated urban, suburban and exurban development in this area from the mid-19th century.
- Historically, this area was characterised by a high density of dispersed settlement, much of it dating from the medieval period and relating to a complex mix of open-field strips, ancient enclosure from woodland and the planned enclosure of heathland in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

## Landscape and settlement

- Most isolated farmstead sites in areas of irregular enclosure from the woodland are of medieval origin, and include some moated sites. Some relate to fields with slightly curving boundaries, suggesting enclosure by agreement from medieval strip fields.
- There are some relatively small villages across the area, with much settlement focused in small hamlets, often clustered around small areas of common. The use of 'End' in place-names is often associated with settlements that developed in the Middle Ages as secondary settlements on or near marginal lands.
- In the west and central parts of the area there is both nucleated and dispersed settlement with a string of small nucleated villages, scattered farmsteads and mostly 19th and 20th-century houses, which are sited along the roads and clustered close to railway stations.



In the east of the area, suburban growth has subsumed many historic farmstead sites. Often this has led to the total loss of the farmstead, although occasionally the farmhouse and buildings such as barns can survive, but with almost total loss of their historic context. Photo © Bob Edwards



The villages were very small in scale, and developed into their present scale as service and residential centres over the same period.

- In the eastern part of the area there are some larger areas of heathland fringed and encroached upon by buildings dating from the 16th to the 20th century and by coniferous and

mixed woodland dating from the later 19th century. In some areas, it may be possible to see the phases of encroachment onto common land in the farmsteads that border it and those that were formerly on the common edge but are now some distance from it. Mixed and coniferous woodland is concentrated on the heathland soils to the east.

## Farmstead and building types

There is a medium rate of survival of pre-1750 farm buildings within this area, including some aisled barns.

### Farmstead types

- The farmsteads across most of the area tend to be small or medium in scale, ranging from courtyard to dispersed plans. Most of these have passed into residential use.
- The oldest, often timber-framed, farm buildings survive on the larger loose courtyard farmsteads, which include some moated, manorial and other high-status sites.
- Larger, regular courtyard plans of the 19th century are concentrated on the larger estates on the former heathland to the east.

### Building types

- Buildings reflect the mixed agriculture practised, and as a result barns, granaries, stables, and cattle housing can be found.
- A number of relatively large (seven- to nine-bay) timber-framed barns, including aisled barns, survive to the south close to the chalk downs where there was substantial arable production in the 17th and 18th centuries.
- The Domestic Revival style was a significant influence on the character of the area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including rural houses and some farmsteads.



A small, loose courtyard farmstead with a timber-framed house and barn and a later cottage.  
Photo © Bob Edwards



A courtyard group with an earlier, timber-framed barn and an added L-plan, single-storey range providing stabling and cattle housing.  
Photo © Bob Edwards



Some farmsteads were re-built or enlarged in the late 19th century in the Domestic Revival style of architecture that was popular in this area.

Photo © Bob Edwards



Some of the largest farmsteads in the area had regular multi-yard plans. This farmstead, associated with an adjacent park, has two yard areas enclosed by brick-built ranges but divided by a timber-framed barn. Photo © Bob Edwards



A large timber-framed barn on a manorial farm at the centre of a small village. The barn, which has been heavily converted, lies along one side of the adjacent churchyard. Photo © Bob Edwards



Five-bay barns are typical in the area. This barn, aisled to both sides, retains some elements of the timber studs of the aisle wall but has been largely re-built in brick. Photo © Bob Edwards



Settlement in this area consists of small villages intermixed with hamlets, some bearing 'End' place names, and isolated farmsteads. Some higher status farms are associated with the parish church. Photo © Bob Edwards





A manor-church group at Send Grove close to the River Wey, where the large-scale loose courtyard farmstead with its large threshing barn developed next to the 15th- to 16th-century Send Court. Photo © Historic England 29164/029



A large-scale double-courtyard regular courtyard farmstead, built around a central early 19th-century barn with Ockham House set in its remaining area of parkland. The farmstead developed in association with the enclosure of much of the parkland for agriculture in the early to mid-19th century. Photo © Historic England 29165/018





This large barn appears to have been a multifunctional building with a floored bay to the right-hand end, which probably provided stabling and a hayloft. Photo © Bob Edwards



A small stable with remnants of the timber-frame and a hipped roof. Photo © Bob Edwards



A large, mid-19th-century stable with hayloft over, forming part of an estate farmstead which was considerably enlarged and improved in the 19th century. Photo © Bob Edwards



Brick is the dominant walling material for farm buildings. The use of rat trap bond can be seen in the area, particularly for boundary walls but also buildings such as shelter sheds. Photo © Bob Edwards

## Materials and detail

- Timber-framing was widely used until the 18th century, after which time brick became the dominant building material.
- Some flint obtained from the nearby downs was used with brick in the 19th century.
- Plain clay tile is the dominant roofing material.
- Roofs are typically half-hipped.



# Historic England

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