



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

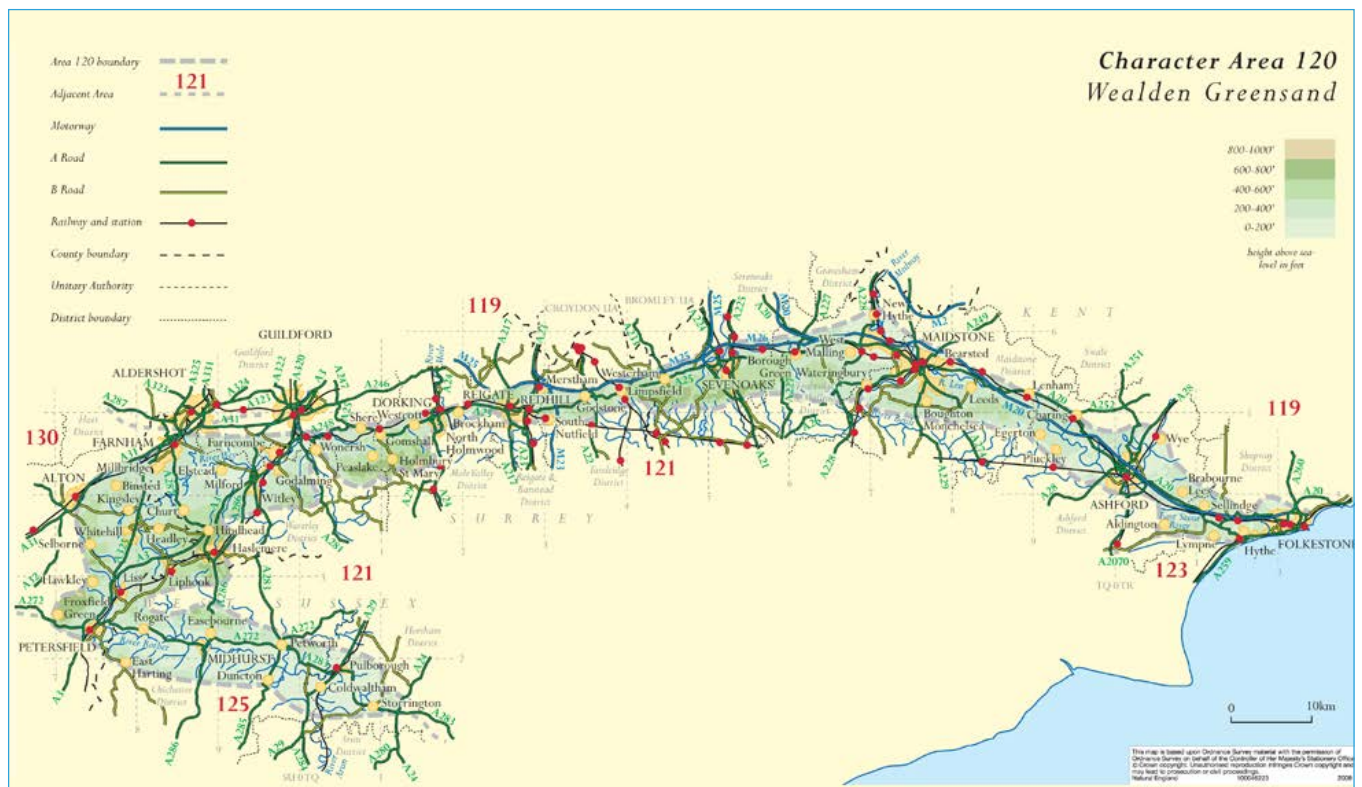
# Wealden Greensand

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 120



# 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 map shows the Wealden Greensand, with the numbers of neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

**Front cover:** A large farmstead set within a landscape of regular fields dedicated to fruit production. Beyond are large, irregular arable fields that have been subject to the loss of some boundaries. Photo © Historic England 27202/53

# Summary

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

The long curved belt of Wealden Greensand runs across Kent parallel to the North Downs and through Surrey, south to the Hampshire Downs and curving back eastwards, running parallel to the South Downs in West Sussex. Local character varies as a result of changes in topography, soils and land use but is unified throughout by the underlying geology and scarp or dip slope topography. The Character Area is well wooded (22%) although woodland is concentrated in the western part of the area. Of the land, 13.5% is classified as urban and 54% of the Character Area is agricultural land. A large part of the southern part of the area lies within the South Downs National Park and part lies within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

## Historic development

- There are medium to high densities of historic farmsteads in the landscape, set within a landscape largely of medieval origin but subject to a much higher degree of boundary loss than the High and Low Weald.
- There are loose courtyard plans, typically with buildings to two or three sides of a yard. Regular courtyard plans are typically L- and U-plans, some of which are developments from earlier, loose courtyard groups. Dispersed cluster plans can be found in the eastern part of the Kent Wealden Greensand.
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- Farmsteads developed with barns, stables, granaries and cattle housing, with oasts and other buildings associated with the hop industry.

## Significance

- Of recorded farmsteads, 65% retain some historic farmstead character and 56% of farmsteads retain more than 50% of their historic form.
- Of farmsteads, 30% have a pre-1700 listed farmhouse and 7.2% have a pre-1700 working building. Early working buildings are more common in the Kent part of the Character Area with the exception of the Chart area. Of farmsteads, 4.6% have both a pre-1700 farmhouse and one or more pre-1700 working buildings. These sites are of high significance.
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- Dispersed plan types that have been subject to little change are rare.
- Farmsteads that retain unconverted oast houses, early to mid- 20th-century hop buildings and features such as hop-pickers' huts are highly significant.

## Present and future issues

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a high proportion of listed working farm buildings

converted to non-agricultural use (56%, the national average being 32%).

## Historic development

- The variability of the soils, from fertile greensand to intractable clays, within relatively short distances made this an area of mixed farming but the balance can differ locally with elements such as dairying or hop growing having greater dominance in certain areas. In the Petersfield area, dairying for liquid milk was important; in the Rother Valley cheese making was important, whilst around Maidstone hop growing was common. Fruit growing is also important in the Kent part of the area where orchards are characteristic.
- The capital-intensive hop industry developed on an industrial scale by the 19th century in the eastern part of the area. The manure from cattle was important for fertilising hop gardens.
- The mixture of hops, fruit, dairying and poultry rearing and fattening insulated this area from the worst of the agricultural depression in the late 19th century.

## Landscape and settlement

- Isolated farmsteads, often occupying ancient sites (some moated), form the predominant settlement pattern, intermixed with small villages, often with 'Street' or 'Green' names suggesting secondary settlement.
- These farmsteads are associated with a landscape of small and irregular fields, created by assarting from woodland in the medieval period, or medium-sized and more regular fields created between the 15th and 18th centuries by enclosure through agreement of former arable strips. The latter are more common in the valley of the Rother in the south-west and in the central and eastern parts of the area.
- A mix of farmsteads of different scales is a strong characteristic of this area, the larger steadings relating to landscapes that have experienced field enlargement and reorganisation as well as farmsteads at the foot of the chalk scarp of the North Downs, which had access to the downs as well as the greensand.
- Many farmsteads in areas of heathland were created during attempts to improve the heath in the 19th century.
- There is some common-edge settlement with small paddocks and sometimes regular enclosure (for example, Bordon Heath) where smallholdings were common with commoners utilising the heath for grazing stock.

# Farmstead and building types

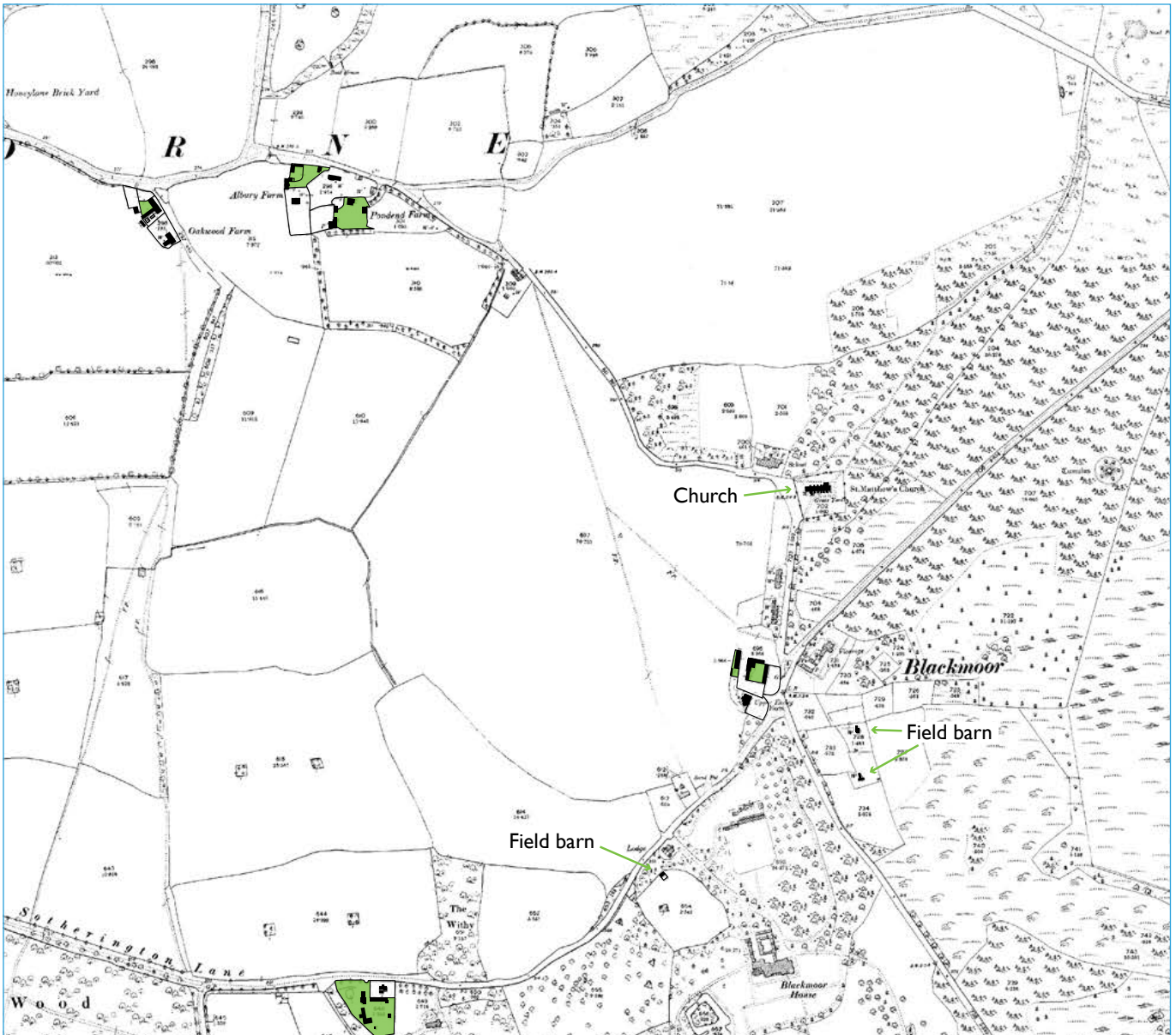
There is a medium to high density of pre-1700 buildings in the eastern part of the area. The western part of the character has a lower density of early buildings.

## Farmstead types


- As with much of south east England, loose courtyard plans, typically with one or two detached working farm buildings standing around a yard area are the most common plan form.
- Regular L-plan and U-plan ranges are a strong feature of the Character Area although these plan types are seen in fewer numbers in the eastern area within Kent. Some of these plans consist of a barn with a later cattle shed attached at right angles, but many are 19th-century rebuildings of farmsteads of pre-1700 origin that retain the old farmhouse.
- In the west of the area in particular, purpose-built covered yards were built in the late 19th century and the yard areas of a considerable number of farmsteads were covered over in the early 20th century.
- Dispersed cluster and dispersed multi-yard plan farmsteads are found in the Character Area but are not as prevalent as in the Low Weald or High Weald except in the eastern part of the area, where there is a higher concentration extending out of the Low Weald.
- Regular multi-yard plans are an important element of the character of farmsteads, particularly in the Kent part of the Character Area.
- There are few large, regular courtyard plan farmsteads even though there are several large estates in the area.

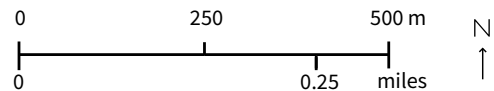
## Building types

- Barns in the area are typically of five bays with occasional larger examples extending to eight or ten bays. Barns dating from the 18th century or before tend to be fully aisled, this Character Area having one of the major concentrations of aisled barns in England. Some may contain evidence for internal subdivision for upper-floor granaries or stalling for animals (particularly cattle), this later feature being strongly associated with the Low and especially High Weald.
- Many of the 19th-century barns have an aisle to one side or are unaisled and typically have half-hipped roofs.
- Free-standing granaries are an uncommon building type in the area. Grain was probably stored in the farmhouse or in a loft in the barn or over a cart shed.
- Oast houses are a highly characteristic farm building type, especially in the northern (Kent) part of the area but also in the western (Hampshire) part of the area. Oasts are rare in the southern part of the area. Most Kentish examples date from the late 18th and 19th centuries although there are some examples of older oast houses built within earlier barns. The majority of Hampshire oasts are of late 19th-century date. Only a small number of unconverted oast houses survive. Farmsteads that retain unconverted oast houses, early to mid- 20th-century hop buildings and features such as hop-pickers huts are highly significant.
- Stables are found on many farms and are typically stone- or brick-built and date from the 18th or 19th centuries, although occasionally timber-framed examples may survive.
- Buildings for cattle include open-fronted shelter sheds often found attached to a barn, or single-storey, enclosed cow houses. Most cattle buildings date from the 19th century.



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.



## Blackmoor

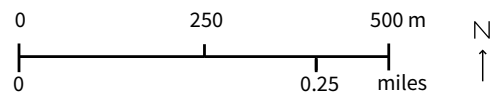
In the western part of the Wealden Greensand there were large areas of heathland which had been subject to encroachment and enclosure from the medieval period. The group of three farmsteads to the north-west area of the map are probably of medieval origin and may have once stood at the edge of the common, but subsequent encroachment has left them set back from the open heath. The fields to the south of these farms appear to be the results of piecemeal enclosure, although the occasional straight boundary indicates that there has been some reorganisation of these fields which may have origins in the 15th or 16th centuries. Blackmoor itself is a typical common-edge settlement which may have grown up around an early farmstead. Blackmoor House is set within a park that was probably taken out of the heath. Extending out into the heath are a series of small, irregular closes representing encroachment on to the heath by squatters and smallholders. Their small cottages were rarely associated with farm buildings.



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



## Lenham

At the foot of the scarp of the North Downs there is a strip of land which is characterised by large arable fields associated with manorial or high status farmsteads of early origin (Old Shelve and New Shelve represent estates that can be traced back to the Domesday Book). Many of these farmsteads have regular multi-yard plans created through rebuilding from the 18th century. These large farmsteads lie between the large fields at the foot of the scarp to the north, and the smaller-scale irregular fields created through piecemeal enclosure and woodland that typify much of the wood-pasture landscape of the Wealden Greensand. Here, there are smaller farms, typically of loose courtyard or small dispersed cluster plan. These farmsteads retain a high proportion of pre-1700 buildings. The large group at Lenham Forstal in the south-west was a farmstead with a brewery.



Farmsteads forming a loose cluster within a landscape of piecemeal enclosure. The gently curving field boundaries to the left foreground are suggestive of enclosed strip fields whilst the irregular arable field in the distance is the result of the amalgamation of several small fields assarted from the woodland. At the centre of the photograph is a small farmstead with a barn and attached range creating an L-plan with the modern farming operation being focused on the large farmstead with modern buildings in the foreground. This group stands on a historic farmstead site, all the traditional buildings having been demolished. Photo © Historic England 27204/028



The photograph shows a similar area of large arable fields to those shown on the Lenham map, with a high status farmstead at the foot of the scarp, west of Maidstone. Photo © Bob Edwards





A loose courtyard group with buildings to all four sides of the yard, the farmhouse set off to one side. Photo © Bob Edwards



Farmsteads with a single-storey range, usually a shelter shed, attached to the barn with a detached building to the third side of the yard are common in the area. Photo © Bob Edwards



The small, U-plan range of this farmstead has a shelter shed and a stable attached to the barn and may be the result of later additions to an earlier barn. Photo © Bob Edwards



A large, regular multi-yard plan farmstead, one of the yards now occupied by the large, modern shed. To the right of the picture is a large, six-kiln oast house. Photo © Historic England 27202/041



There is a good survival of timber-framed threshing barns in the Character Area, typically of five bays and with hipped or half-hipped roofs. Photo © Bob Edwards



The local sandstone was widely used for farm buildings in the 18th and 19th centuries, typically with brick quoins and dressings. Photo © Bob Edwards



In areas close to the chalk of the Downs, flint was available which was combined with brick. This 19th-century barn also used timber-framing. Photo © Bob Edwards



Brick was not widely used on its own for barns, usually being combined with stone. This five-bay barn was constructed in the early 19th century as part of a U-plan farmstead. Photo © Bob Edwards



A small, timber-framed stable, typical of some of the smaller farmsteads of the Greensand. Photo © Bob Edwards



Outfarms, usually consisting of a threshing barn and a shelter shed, are a characteristic feature of the area. Often located along side road, they tend to be more visible than in adjacent areas. Photo © Bob Edwards



In the western part of the Character Area, a number of farmsteads with covered yards were built by estates in the late 19th century. Photo © Bob Edwards



Oast houses are an important feature of the northern arm of the Character Area and, to a lesser extent, the western part of the area in Hampshire. Most are 19th-century in date. Photo © Bob Edwards



A cart shed and granary in the western part of the Character Area, where the sandstone, locally known as malmstone, is almost white in colour. Photo © Bob Edwards

## Materials and detail

- Timber-framing was typically used for medieval houses and barns with the barns being clad in weatherboarding. Timber-framing continued in use for some farm buildings into the 19th century, often combined with local stone for the plinth and weatherboarding for the wall covering.
- The greensand stone available in the area changes in character across the area, with malmstone, a soft creamy coloured greensand being widely used in the west, but harder, darker greensand being used in the central and eastern parts of the Character Area. Ragstone is also used. The use of stone gives the buildings of the area a distinctive character, especially when entering the area from the west, where across most of Hampshire there is no local building stone.
- Galleting, the insertion of small pieces of dark carstone or flint in the mortar between the stonework, is characteristic.
- In areas adjacent to the chalk downs, flint was used, typically combined with brick. Flint walling may also be galleted with small flakes of flint.
- Brick was typically used in combination with the local stone for quoins and for door and window openings.
- Many farmhouses are clad in painted weatherboard or plain clay tile.
- In the western part of the area, there is some straw thatch but generally plain clay tile is the characteristic roofing material. Welsh slate is found on some 19th-century buildings.



Galleting is the insertion of small pieces of stone into the mortar joints, here done for decorative effect. Although not common, galleting is a highly distinctive feature of the area. Photo © Bob Edwards



# Historic England

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