



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

Rockingham Forest

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 92



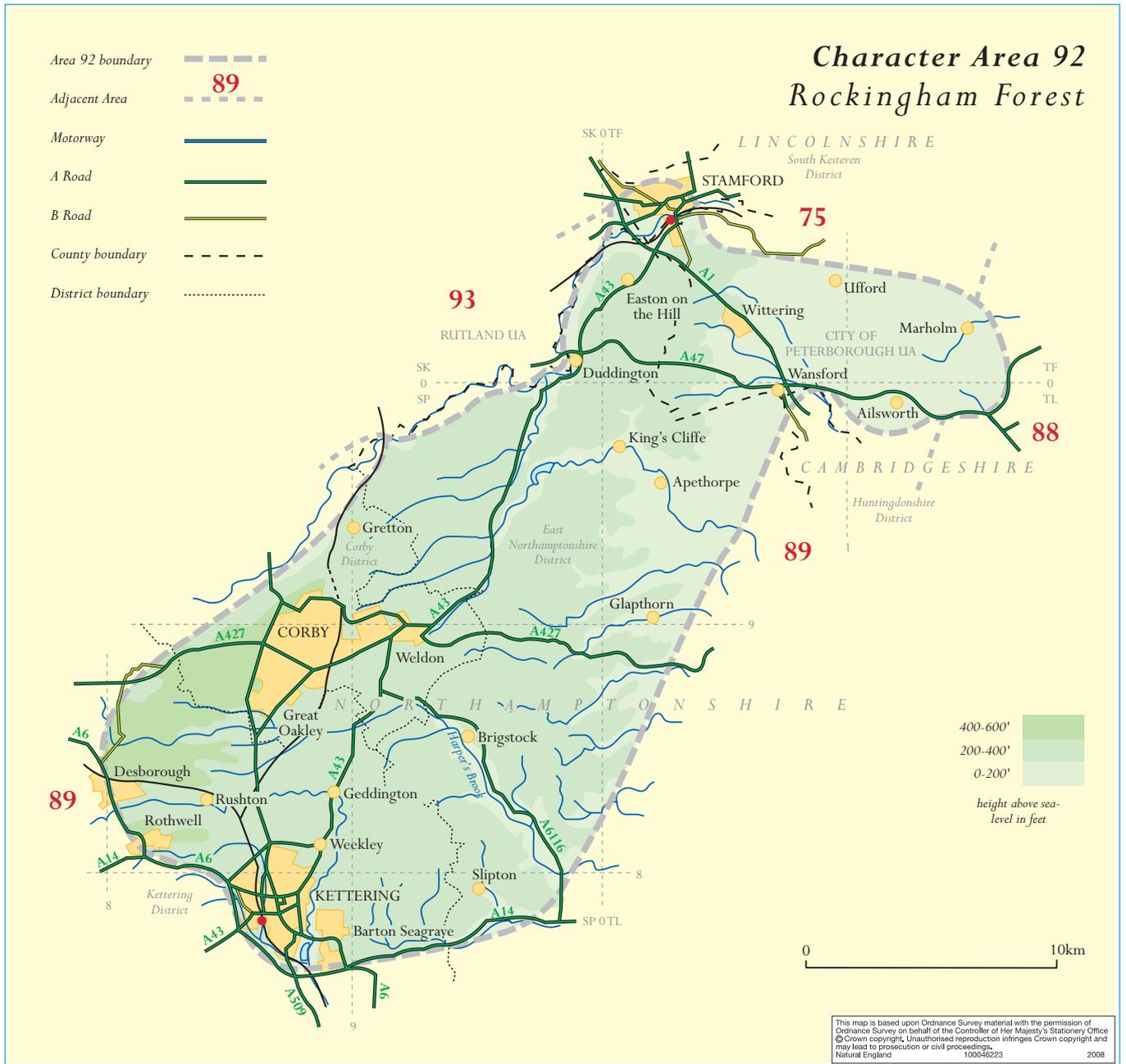
Introduction

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>).



Many villages in this area were dominated by estates, and by the 19th century were often dominated by a 'Manor' or 'Home' Farm resulting from the amalgamation of earlier farms. The 19th-century farm buildings at Home Farm, Deene, now form a small percentage of the site with modern, wide-span buildings located to the north. Late 19th-century Ordnance Survey maps depict an E-shape plan form with one yard covered by 1886, this being a typical arrangement for large farms in this area. The mid-18th-century farmhouse is set to the south in its own gardens. Deene village presents itself today as a small, linear development at the west end of which lie the two main estate farms, Manor with a 17th-century house and Home Farm. Both Deene and Deenthorpe are estate villages, belonging to Deene Park. Deene Hall, a 16th-century house constructed on the site of a 12th-century medieval grange of Westminster Abbey, was altered and modified in the proceeding centuries. The park is thought to have been emparked before the 1560s and enlarged in the 17th century. The medieval church lies to the east of the hall. The ornamental lake and linked fishponds are located south of the hall beyond which lies managed park land. Photo © Historic England 29180/026

Front cover: Nassington, showing a late 18th-century threshing barn and a 16th-century dovecote in the grounds of the 13th-century Prebendal Manor House. The Prebend of Nassington was established in Lincoln Cathedral in the 12th century and the endowment consisted of Nassington Church its land and tithes. The house was occupied by the Prebendary and his tenants until 1836 when the Prebend was dissolved. Photo © Historic England 29180/049



This map shows the Rockingham Forest 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 historic landscape of Rockingham Forest lies between Kettering in the south and Stamford in the north. The Character Area includes the neighbouring lowland farmlands to the west of Peterborough. Rockingham Forest is 13% woodland. It is nearly 9% 'urban' and includes the towns of Kettering, Corby, Stamford, as well as smaller settlements such as Desborough and Rothwell.

Historic character

- Traditional farmsteads mostly comprise regular and loose courtyard layouts, many with two or three cattle yards, set within landscapes of piecemeal and regular enclosure.
- Large barns, stables, cart sheds and granaries reflect the requirements of the large arable-based farms that developed in this area; extensive ranges of shelter sheds and loose boxes for cattle reflect the importance of fatstock and farmyard manure.

Significance

- The area retains some fine groupings of 17th- and 18th-century barns and houses, the latter often earlier in origin but together illustrating the emergence of large and prosperous sheep-corn farms in this period, further developing in the 19th century.

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 (35.5%, the national average being 32%).

Historic development

- There was extensive prehistoric settlement particularly in the Nene Valley, the fen edges near Peterborough and, in the Iron Age to Romano-British period, of the forested heavy clays which were exploited for their iron deposits. There is evidence for large villa estates. Saxon settlements, including royal manors, developed around the periphery of the enlarged, post-Roman woodlands.
- The Royal Forest, which had been defined before the Norman Conquest, extended from Northampton to Stamford by the time the boundaries were first recorded in the 13th century.
- The 15th and 16th centuries saw the further development of industries – stone quarrying, charcoal and iron manufacture – and the

enclosure of royal and private deer parks which provided the basis for a proliferation of landscaped parks and country house estates between the 16th and 18th centuries. Smaller manor houses and gentry houses, some of medieval date, are another distinctive feature.

- The forests of Northamptonshire in particular experienced massive population growth during the 16th and 17th centuries, with some villages trebling in size. Industrial expansion of a different order, based on quarrying, ironstone mining and engineering, led to the further urbanisation of forest edge settlements, most notably Corby, Peterborough and Kettering in the 19th and 20th centuries. The wealthy market town of Stamford, with its rich legacy of medieval

churches and town architecture, lies to the north.

- There is a strong contrast between the heavy clays of some areas, where ancient woodland is concentrated, and the area's limestone-based soils which have historically been the focus of arable cultivation and the folding of livestock. The landscape of mixed woodland, open field cultivation, waste and commons persisted up to the late 18th century, despite sporadic early enclosures of the open fields and forest clearances. The hundred years after 1750, however, brought great changes, linked to the enlargement of farming estates and heavy investment in the development of sheep-corn farmsteads.

Landscape and settlement

Although well wooded, the 'Forest' was also a landscape of cleared farmland surrounding nucleated villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads cut into woodland margins and extensive areas of waste and commons. Large areas of the Forest were felled or enclosed from open fields – replaced by regular fieldscapes defined by hedges and stone walls laid out for sheep and cereals, and accompanied by isolated brick farmsteads. There are some rare surviving fragments of limestone heaths and species-rich limestone grasslands.

There was much reorganisation of the pre-existing patterns of enclosure as a result of field enlargement and reorganisation (including regular enclosure) in the 19th century, leaving a variety of field shapes indicating their development over time. Particularly coherent survivals of earlier patterns defined by woody mature hedgerows are located:

- across the Rushden clay plateau, south and west of Corby - patterns of 16th century enclosure from open fields, including some which preserve evidence of medieval assartment from woodland
- on a large area of the limestone and boulder clay plateau overlooking the Nene floodplain centred around Fotheringay and King's Cliff, which has its basis in the enclosure of medieval townships in the mid-17th century
- around Stanion and Benefield within the core of Rockingham Forest, where some areas of parliamentary and earlier enclosure survive.

Kettering where the land has been reinstated after extensive mineral workings. These field systems often replicate or reflect the preceding patterns of hedged and occasionally walled parliamentary enclosure.

There are fragmentary survivals of ridge and furrow, and the earthworks of medieval settlements, within the old pastures around villages and elsewhere.

Extensive and formerly coppiced or otherwise managed ancient woodlands survive across the heavy boulder clays of the northern scarp and central plateau and reflect something of the former nature and extent of the Royal Forest.

Modern fields dominate the landscape to the north and south of Corby and south-east of

Mature landscaped parks greatly enhance the wooded appearance of the area. Estate villages

and architecture, including workers' housing, is a distinctive feature of this area.

Farmstead and building types

Villages and some isolated farmsteads on sites of shrunken medieval settlements and estate farms retain prestigious groupings of mostly 17th- and 18th-century houses and barns.

Farmstead types

- Farmstead types are large-scale, loose and regular courtyard farmsteads, with multiple cattle yards relating to barns being a characteristic feature of this area. Ranges often display evidence of being multi-phase buildings with straight joints in masonry and brickwork marking episodes of extension. Houses within villages may be attached to working buildings, and arched entries from village streets to farmyards are a distinctive feature.
- There are some outfarms on larger farms, these being of early to mid-19th-century date and built to regular courtyard L- or U-shaped plans.

Building types

These reflect the requirements of arable agriculture:

- Threshing barns are typically of five to seven bays, and may have two threshing floors.
- Stables dating from the 17th century may be large in scale, with lofts for hay, farmhands or storing grain.
- Granaries may be integral to barns, or sited over stables and cart sheds.
- Shelter sheds (often with distinctive arched entries) and loose boxes for cattle can be very extensive, and are typically of early to mid-19th-century date.



An early 19th-century, regular multi-yard farmstead in Nassington, with cattle yards and buildings set around a central combination barn. Photo © Historic England 29181/005



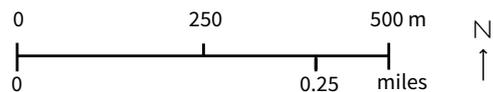
Nassington, view towards the church from the east. Photo © Historic England 29180/049



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.



Nassington

Nassington is sited on the west bank of the River Nene, in the Forest of Rockingham. The present parish includes the extra-parochial forest area of Sulehay, added in 1869. It comprises a large, U-shaped settlement with buildings sited on former crofts flanking the three streets on both sides. Crofts on the inner side are bounded by back lanes to east and west. Within the U-shape medieval strip, cultivation is evident: fossilised within later enclosure. Small areas of ridge and furrow are also visible within piecemeal enclosure around the village. As a wealthy prebend of Lincoln Cathedral in the 12th century, possibly due to its proximity to the navigable river Nene, the village grew to become a substantial settlement. Improvements to the navigation of the Nene in the early 18th century immediately gave rise to a modest trade in the village, mainly in timber, grain and coal, but the opening of the railway in 1879 diverted this trade away from the river.

At enclosure in 1778, there were no outlying farms except Old Sulehay Lodge which originated in the 15th century as a hunting lodge. All farm buildings which survive away from the village centre are of the late 19th century. Many of the 17th-century and earlier houses in the village represent the survivals of smaller farms that earned additional income from other trades such as brickmaking, as larger farms amalgamated and reorganised more farmland. The layout has changed little since the 18th century, with many of the crofts still in evidence bounded by the back lanes. The farmsteads are of a loose courtyard plan form, suggesting piecemeal development over a period of time. See 'Nassington', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire, Volume 6, Architectural Monuments in North Northamptonshire* (London, 1984), pp. 119-130. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/northants/vol6/pp119-130>.



Park Farm at Blatherwycke is set to one side of a deserted medieval village within the grounds of a park created in the 18th century. The estate invested in the building of housing for farm and estate workers in the mid-19th century and this regular multi-yard, dominated by a large combination barn, was rebuilt as part of this programme of investment. Photo © Jen Deadman



This mid-18th-century house and its 18th- and 19th-century farm buildings (note the threshing barn with an integral stable) survives from one of the farms which survived and had grown in size within the village of Southwick. Close to the farmstead, medieval ridge and furrow is evident, fossilised within a later enclosure pattern. Photo © Jen Deadman



An early 19th-century farmstead at Nassington set within fields enclosed in the late 18th century by low, thorn hedgerows. Photo © Jen Deadman



Blacksmith's Cottage at Deenethorpe appears on the estate map of 1747. Two other cottages lying adjacent to the right were demolished in the early 20th century. Small houses of this type often worked small plots of land prior to these plots being amalgamated by larger farms, a process usually complete by the later 19th century. Photo © Jen Deadman



The size of this late 17th-century stable block, altered and enlarged in the late 19th century, indicates the size of this farm. Walls are of coursed limestone and the roof of Collyweston slate. Photo © Jen Deadman



Cattle housing of the 19th-century often comprises cow houses for dairy cattle as on the right, and loose boxes with multiple doors for the loose housing of fatstock.



A late 18th- or early 19th-century farmhouse and attached farm buildings built of squared coursed limestone with Collyweston slate and 20th-century, plain-tile roofs. The farmhouse sits gable end to the road at the southern end of the west range. It is located outside the yard and faces away from the working buildings. A mid-19th-century cart shed and stable adjoin to the north, with a hay loft or granary above accessed by external stone steps. Note brick dressings to entries. Photo © Jen Deadman



Threshing barns are commonly located between former yards for stacking crops and straw yards flanked by shelter sheds and other housing for cattle, the straw being ejected into cattle yards after it has been separated from the grain in the threshing process. The barn on the right has a gable-end door for pitching in the corn crop and a double entry to the threshing floor. Photo © Jen Deadman



Mid-19th-century, open shelter sheds for cattle, with brick piers and brick dressings to the entries. Photo © Jen Deadman



A high-status, late 18th-century village farmstead at Ufford with large barns and a stable block (dated 1770) backing onto the road, forming the curtilage buildings of two loose yards. The walls are of coursed stone rubble and the roof is of Collyweston slate. Three unusual ventilation lunettes are ranged down the north elevation of the stables and two on the south (left). Further to the south (photo to the right), two large, five-bay barns, now converted to domestic use, flank the entrance to the yards. Photos © Jen Deadman

Materials and detail

- Local stone varies from limestone to the east, to brown ironstone in the west around Corby. Brick was used from the early 19th century. Roofing materials vary from thatch to pantiles, Welsh slate and Collyweston slate.



Historic England

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