

WORCESTERSHIRE FARMSTEADS RECORDING AND RESEARCH GUIDANCE

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COVER: Elevation drawing of hop kilns at Manor Farm, Powick. Drawing © Worcestershire County Council

I INTRODUCING RECORDING

Understanding the character and significance of a farmstead and its buildings is essential in developing proposals and making appropriate decisions about its future management. This will be required:

1. In support of a planning application and to inform the development of a scheme, once an initial assessment and discussion with the planning authority has identified potential for change within a farmstead.

and/or

2. Once permission has been secured, to make a record before and during the implementation of the scheme. The local planning authority may attach recording conditions to a planning or listed building consent to ensure that a record of a farmstead or building is made. Appropriate archaeological recording on groundworks may also be required.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the policy framework for recording.

Paragraph 128: In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

Paragraph 141: Local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment gathered as part of plan-making or development management publicly accessible. They should also require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

The results of any recording exercise should be submitted to and made publicly available through the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) at <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/historicenvironmentrecord>.

2 INTRODUCING THE LEVELS OF RECORDING

Recording should be proportionate to the known or potential significance of a building or site. English Heritage's *Understanding historic buildings: policy and guidance for local authorities* (2006) describes the various approaches to and levels of recording buildings. These work from Level 1, the most basic form of appraisal, to Level 4 which incorporates detailed requirements for drawn survey for the most significant buildings.

Basic survey

The summary of a site undertaken for the **Farmstead Assessment Framework** fulfils the requirements for a basic survey, **equivalent to Level 1 survey**. This will provide an important foundation for discussion with the planning authority and assist in the development of proposals.

More detailed appraisal

A more detailed appraisal may be required, prior to the application stage, for farmsteads which include **designated heritage assets** (which are shown to be of potentially greater significance) or where an **undesigned building is believed to be of greater significance than meets the eye**.

The more detailed levels of recording are:

- Level 2 which briefly describes the farmstead and its buildings, describes their development using historic maps and the buildings themselves, identifies their historic use and any features of interest and makes an assessment of significance. Both the exterior and the interior of buildings will be viewed, described, and photographed. Pre-application survey for sites with designated heritage assets will usually be at this level (see case study at the end of this section), although on sites that are shown to be of potentially greater significance more detailed levels of recording may be required.
- Level 3 is an analytical record, and will comprise an introductory description followed by a systematic account of any buildings origins, development, and use. The record will include an account of the evidence on which the analysis has been based. It will also include all drawn and photographic records that may be required to illustrate the building's appearance and structure and to support an historical analysis.
- Level 4 provides a comprehensive analytical record and is appropriate for buildings considered to be of the greatest (actual or potential) importance. The record will draw on the full range of available resources and discuss the building's significance in terms of architectural, social, regional, or economic history. The range of drawings may also be greater than at other levels.

Normally the applicant should contact the Planning Advisory Section of the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service for advice and the provision of a written brief detailing the minimum standards of recording required. The current basic requirements are outlined below, however, as standards, techniques and methodologies evolve it is worth consulting the service to ensure the most up to date requirements are employed.

Fieldwork must be carried out in accordance with the Requirements and Guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Worcestershire. Copies are available from the Planning Advisory Section on request.

The Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service is based at The Hive, Sawmill Walk, The Butts, Worcester. WRI 3PD (Tel: 01905 765560). See <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/waas> for general enquiries.

3 SPECIFICATIONS FOR DETAILED APPRAISAL

Historic Building Appraisal

The aim of a Historic Building Appraisal, which is broadly in line with a Level 2 survey, is to provide the local planning authority with sufficient information on the historic, architectural and archaeological significance of the heritage asset being assessed. Reasonable effort shall be made to understand the asset's significance, condition, and key attributes.

HER assessment

This must be carried out prior to any fieldwork being carried out. It will include consulting the County Historic Environment Record, all available maps (OS and Tithe), aerial photographs and archive material etc. Where their inclusion in the final report will aid interpretation then these should be plotted or reproduced in the final report. See <http://www.worcestershire.maps.co.uk> for digitised tithe and enclosure maps.

- Photography (35mm or high-resolution digital photography (minimum 6Mp) all with suitable scales) of all visible external elevations and ¾ views of the building, details relating to specific elements discussed in the text and illustrating the buildings relationship to surrounding buildings and setting. A suitable sample of these photographs must be included in the final report (min size 10cmx15cm).
- Inspection, description and photographs of all internal room spaces including cellars and roof spaces.
- Appropriate minor intrusive works (wallpaper /plaster removal) may be required to determine presence of timber framing or architectural features beneath existing plasterwork etc.
- Photographs
- An annotated floor plan based on existing survey drawings (if available). Should no accurate existing survey be available then a basic measured floor plan will be produced.
- A general description of the buildings form, principle phases, architectural features, date and condition.
- A summary description of the building in its current form in the format of a typical listed building description.

Full recording of historic buildings

This may be required before the application is determined for the most significant buildings and for those of the highest potential significance – for example, where a particularly rare building type has been identified. The specification below reflects the requirements for a typical building type.

Full recording of historic buildings

The survey will be based on a Level 3 record, defined as follows:

'... An analytical record, and will comprise an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the building's origins, development and use. The record will include an account of the evidence on which the analysis has been based, allowing the validity of the record to be re-examined in detail. It will also include all drawn and photographic records that may be required to illustrate the building's appearance and structure to support an historical analysis.' Refer to section 5.3 of 'Understanding Historic Buildings – A guide to good recording practice'. English Heritage 2006

The aim of this survey is to:-

- Provide an illustrative and descriptive account and interpretation of the building(s), including discussion of its local, regional and national significance.
- Address and feed into the relevant Research Objectives

The applicant or successor in title must ensure, where possible, that all debris, stored material, vehicles and excessive obscuring vegetation, (that will be removed as a course of the development) are removed **before** the commencement of the building recording. This includes all accessible internal spaces and land immediately surrounding the buildings being recorded. Fixtures and fittings contemporary with the building must remain in place.

The report must contain:

- **HER assessment.** This must be undertaken prior to any fieldwork being carried out. It will include consulting all available maps (OS and Tithe), aerial photographs and archive material etc. Where their inclusion, in the final report, will aid interpretation then these should be plotted or reproduced.
- **Archive Search.** Primary and secondary documentary sources, relating to the building must be consulted. These should include deeds, census data, sales particulars etc.

Building recording will consist of:-

- 35mm or medium format black and white and colour print photographs or high-resolution digital photography (6Mp or higher), all with suitable scales, of the following.
- All external elevations.
- All internal room spaces and roof structures (where accessible)
- Details of any architectural or functional fixtures, fittings and features relating to either the function or development of the building.
- Photographs illustrating the buildings relationship to surrounding buildings and landscape. This should include wider landscape views to the building(s) from a variety of viewpoints.

A suitable sample of these photographs must be included in the final report, and should include examples which illustrate not only the general character of the buildings, but details relating to specific elements discussed in the text. A general view of the structures in their wider setting should also be included.

A maximum of two 10cm x 15cm images shall be illustrated per A4 page.

The survey shall also include:

- The collation and annotation of existing survey drawings.
- A phased plan of the building, with photograph locations clearly marked, and a location plan related to the national grid. This may be based on an existing survey plan.
- Annotated elevation drawings. These may be based on an existing survey plan.
- Appropriate additional illustrations that help support findings and the interpretation of the buildings.
- Additional illustrations of dateable fixtures and fittings (mouldings, catches, hinges, latches etc).
- A record of historic carpenters' marks, apotropaic marks and graffiti.
- A summary description of the building in its current form in the format of a typical listed building description.
- A full written interpretation of the site which addresses the research questions shown in section 4 of this document.

The survey may also require one or more of the following depending upon the nature of the building(s) being recorded

- Intrusive investigation to determine location of timbers behind obscuring surfaces (subject to LBC)
- A measured survey at a scale of 1:20.
- Should primary timbers be suitable, then dendrochronological samples shall be taken. These samples must be taken and analysed by an appropriate specialist and follow guidance given in 'Dendrochronology, Guidelines on producing and interpreting dendrochronological dates.' produced by English Heritage. This shall be undertaken after the building has been recorded and the primary phase determined.

Publication

- A programme of Archaeological Building Investigation and Recording will determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the nature of the archaeological resource associated with a specified building, structure or complex. The results should inform the research cycle and should take into account local, regional and national research frameworks. Fulfilment of the research aims will be by the submission of a final report, in accordance with the IfA Code of Conduct, Principle 2.
- Should the structures be of sufficient interest then a summary report shall be published in a relevant journal or appropriate publication.

4 BELOW-GROUND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

In addition to the historic buildings on a farmstead, there are often other significant archaeological features present. While these may not always be apparent, they are an important part of the archaeological record and help in the understanding of the social and economic development of the site.

Occasionally therefore, where a site is of known medieval origin, or where other important archaeological remains are suspected, the applicant may be required to undertake an archaeological assessment or field evaluation prior to making their planning application. This will establish the presence and significance of any remains present so that they may be properly taken into account in the determination of any application.

Depending upon the heritage potential and significance of the site, further below-ground archaeological investigation may be required as a condition of consent. This will range from a watching brief where an archaeologist observes the ground works and is given the opportunity to record features of archaeological interest, to area excavation prior to building works starting.



Below-ground archaeological investigation associated with the re-development of a traditional farmstead. Photo © Worcestershire County Council

5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Listed below are research questions which aim to guide those researching the development of farmsteads, landscapes and settlements in Worcestershire, and which are relevant to those carrying out detailed appraisals.

Dating farmsteads and enclosure

The recorded date of farmstead buildings can supplement the information provided by place names and documents. In the case of fieldscapes created through a gradual or piecemeal process of enclosure, particularly where they are poorly documented and where the chronologies are difficult to establish, the recorded date of buildings can inform an understanding of their development.

- Worcestershire has a high proportion of farmsteads with 17th century and earlier recorded buildings, the vast majority being farmhouses and in some cases barns which in many instances are the principal surviving buildings on farmsteads (there being a correspondingly high rate of change). These are found across the county, and reflect the capacity of earlier buildings to be adapted for later uses.
- In areas of planned or regular enclosure, early recorded buildings may relate to earlier phases of development of the landscape that have been over-written through survey-planned enclosure.
- The scale of farmsteads and the recorded date of buildings may also complement other sources that relate to the development of farms over time – amalgamation and the growth of farm size at the expense of small farms in some areas and the persistence of small farms in others. These sources include historic estate maps, Tithe and Ordnance Survey maps, the 1910 Land Tax and the 1940 National Farm Survey. Buildings complement the documentary record in evidencing the development and restructuring of farms in the 15th-17th centuries.
- The location and orientation of the farmhouse may reflect the status of the owner or tenant of the farm, if for example it faces away from the working buildings into its own driveway or garden, with a prospect over a landscape in their ownership or tenancy. Some houses were remodelled and reorientated in order to face away from working buildings. To what extent are houses earlier than, contemporary with, or later than their associated farm buildings? How is this reflected in their siting – as detached houses that face away from the working farm, as houses that are attached to their working buildings or those sited gable-end or side-on to the yard?

Farmsteads and common-edge settlement

Worcestershire's Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has revealed the extent of common land that covered the county.

- Farmsteads and vernacular houses relate to successive waves of enclosure that have encroached onto common land, leaving some farmstead types associated with common-edge settlement (in particular the smallest courtyard farmsteads, dispersed plans and linear farmsteads including L-plans with integral houses) sitting on the boundary of late 18th and 19th century regular enclosure and earlier more irregular common-edge enclosure. Whereas farmsteads within the former are most likely to be of 19th century date, those revealed to be on the boundaries of these zones have a greater potential for earlier fabric.
- Smallholdings developed from the medieval period around the Wyre Forest, including as clusters around woodland, within mosaics of small fields (e.g. Huntsfield). Others may relate to the 19th century boom in orchard production (e.g. at Buckridge) and may also date from the County Council's policy for the establishment of smallholdings from the inter-war period.

Farmsteads and villages

- Early buildings are generally much sparser in distribution in those areas of England where settlement in the medieval period was dominated by nucleated villages and extensive communally-farmed fields, and where patterns of wealth were less evenly spread and more hierarchical in structure.
- What does the date, scale and alignment of buildings (including houses not associated with mapped farmsteads) reveal about the development of villages before the late 19th century? Many farmhouses, for example, were aligned to face main routeways, as was the case in high-status town houses, and occupied several amalgamated plots.
- The growth and development of larger village-based farmsteads had an impact on the form of these settlements. Older village-based buildings and farmstead layouts were generally less capable of adaptation to the demands of large-scale and capital intensive agriculture in the later 18th and 19th centuries.

Farmsteads and moated sites/ shrunken settlement

- Moated sites and shrunken settlements have high potential to reveal important material that will have been lost elsewhere through intensive cultivation and settlement, and that can be interpreted in relationship to standing fabric and farmstead form/type. Do the moats of medieval farm complexes serve a farming function, or simple drainage function, or are they very much defensive/status symbols reflecting which farmsteads were freeholds and higher status? Are there distinctive concentrations of moated farmsteads reflecting high water table and topography/geology or is there a broad chronological grouping?

Manorial and estate farms

- There are many high-status manorial groups close to the church, which usually developed into large-scale courtyard-plan or dispersed multi-yard plan farmsteads with large early houses and barns. How did they develop as estate centres and have they always been high-status sites?

Farmstead form and date

The dating of buildings and the plan form of farmsteads provides an indication of:

- Conformity to national models (particularly in the case of regular plan farmsteads) as well as the persistence of local trends and adaptation to local circumstances.
- How continuity or revolutions in farming practice either swept away or made use of the existing building stock, and the emergence of market-based and specialised regional economies. Across most of the county farmsteads did not begin to develop into their present-day forms until after the 1790s, and especially in the High Farming years of the 1840s to 1870s, when agricultural productivity was boosted by good manure from livestock increasingly wintered in yards or buildings. This is reflected in the low numbers of recorded working buildings other than barns. Tithe Maps, compiled in the later 1830s and 1840s, are particularly important at a basic level in showing the plan form of farmsteads before the 'High Farming' period.
- How earlier farmstead plans were absorbed within or transformed by traditional farmsteads as they developed up to the 20th century. Is there a relationship between the size of farmstead/plan layout and the status of occupants recorded from maps and documents such as the Tithe Maps? To what extent do these relate to transport networks, especially canals and railways?
- The development of farmsteads after the last major phase of traditional farm building construction, from the 1890s and including the development of county council smallholdings as well as the impact of restructuring, redundancy and conversion.

Farmstead types

- Courtyard plan farmsteads display a wide social range that testify to both the survival of small-scale farms in early enclosure landscapes and the development of large and high-status farmsteads from the medieval period.
- Dispersed plan types are rooted in the county's medieval past. The comparison of Tithe Maps of the 1840s and 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey maps of c.1905 show that many were replaced or reorganised into courtyard-plan farmsteads over the 19th century. To what extent do dispersed farmstead types relate to the development from farmsteads for the seasonal movement and/or holding of stock as noted elsewhere in the country? They may also relate to the historic enclosure of common land, for example around the Malverns.
- How did linear farmsteads, especially those with 17th century and earlier fabric, develop around areas of historic common land and also in relationship to deserted or shrunken medieval settlements?

Building types

- What is the dating evidence for the development of barns, and what functions do multi-functional barns include?
- What dating evidence is there for the development of cattle housing and stables including ox houses? How much pre-dates the late 18th century?
- How did hop kilns develop? Hop kilns in Herefordshire and Worcestershire often developed from timber-framed structures at the core of farmsteads, and often attached to farmhouses, in striking contrast to their frequent detachment from farmstead groups in the south east of England. Many also developed in close association with cider houses.
- What evidence is there for the early (18th century and earlier) development of farmstead buildings on larger holdings,

and did these in any way provide a model for others to follow?

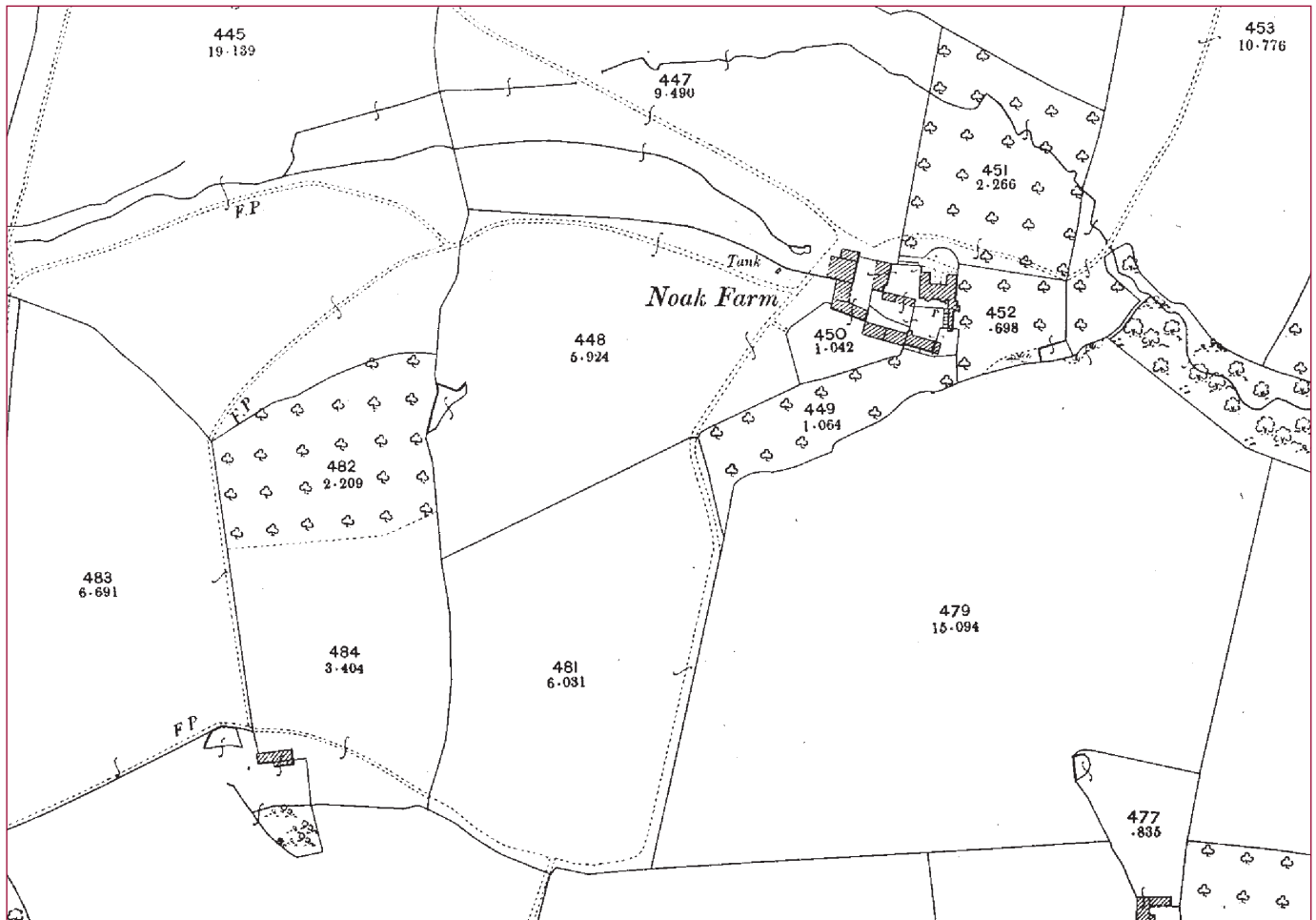
- How many recorded field barns relate to dispersed holdings managed from houses in large settlements rather than mapped farmsteads? It is clear that there are some early examples of field barns. Do these predate mapped patterns of enclosure and relate to the continuation of open-field farming or do they relate to the working of dispersed holdings in newly-enclosed fields managed from villages? What is the evidence for these being threshing barns, sheep shelters, orchard buildings, cattle shelters or a combination of these functions? What is the chronology for the establishment of outfarms?

6 EXAMPLE OF DETAILED APPRAISAL OF A WHOLE SITE

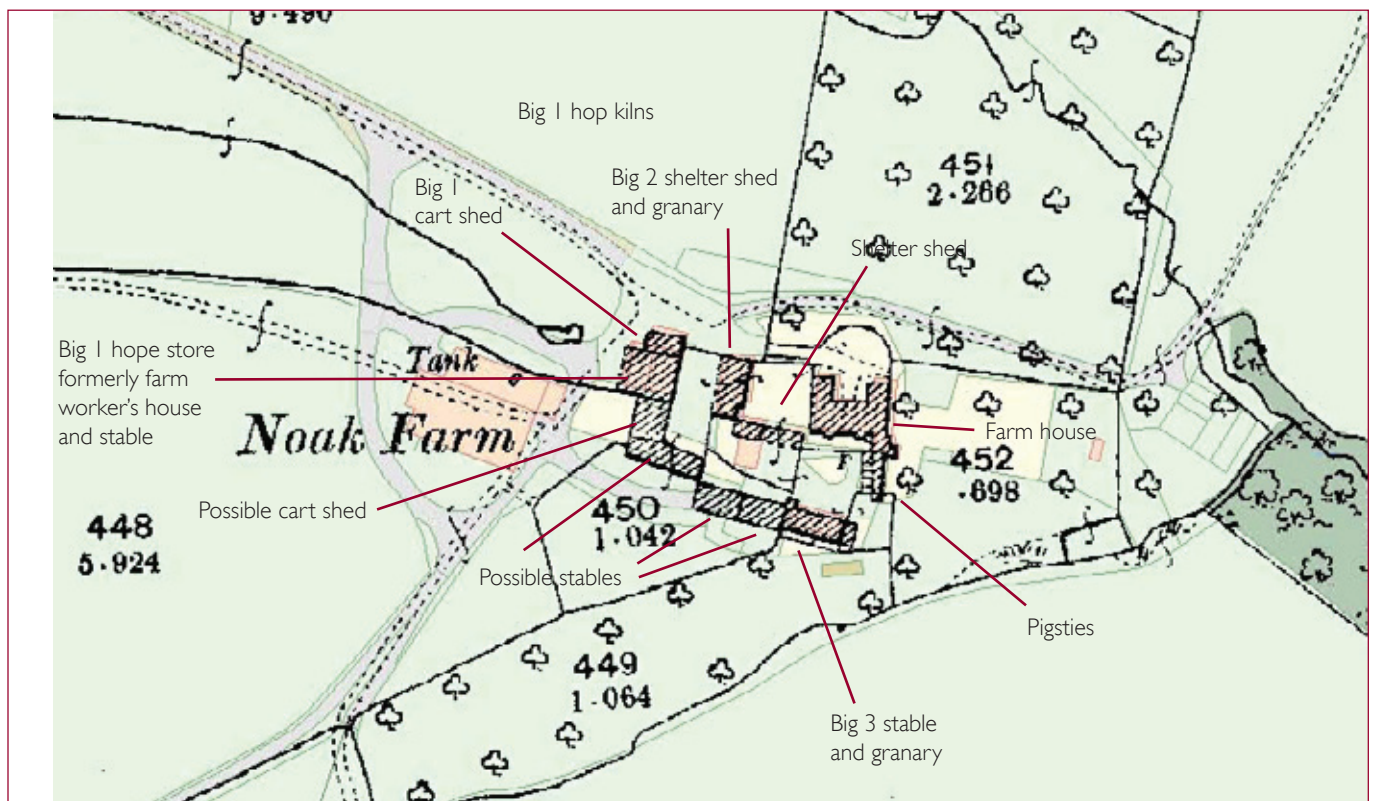
This example provides an indication of the depth of analysis required for a site, without any examples of detailed plans and drawings being provided.

LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

Clifton upon Teme, a parish of approximately 3000 acres in north west Worcestershire, is situated on high ground overlooking the River Teme. Noak Farm, an isolated farmstead approximately one kilometre west of the River Teme, is set within medium-scale regular fields and traditional orchard. The farm was historically served by tracks leading from the south west, west and north east.



Documentary sources indicate that The Noak was in existence before 1290 (Griffiths, 1929, 68). The parish of Clifton was divided between the manors of Clifton and Ham (Homme Castle), the latter including the land and settlement that is now Noak Farm (Griffiths, 1930, 51). In the later 13th century the Manor of Ham was a 'capital messuage 3 virgates (90 acres) and 33 acres of land in demesne, 3 acres of meadow, pasture, 72 shillings rent of free tenants and 1 virgate (30 acres) of land in villeinage' (Griffiths, 1930, 52). The number of free tenants is large but this class of tenant occupied the land forming Noak Farm. In the 1930s a field on Noak Farm was still called Molland, meaning land for which a rent was paid. In the 14th century Noak Farm comprised land called Old Hills and Upper Home Farm (VCH 1924, 247) and was part of an estate called Netherholme or Chapel Home (Griffiths 1930, 57). In the middle of the 14th century a member of the Ingram family possessed a freehold parcel of land in Ham Manor. Subsequently other parcels of land were added including, in the 16th century, a sixty-year lease of a half yard-land (the Old English name for a virgate and including meadow, pasturage and feedings) called the Upper Home and a half yard-land called Staples in the early 17th century. In 1614 the Noak house was built on the holding called Staples (Griffiths in TWAS 1932, 78). The Ingram family still owned the Noak in the 1930s as Rev. A J Winington-Ingram, vicar of Kimbolton in Herefordshire, resided there (Griffiths, 1931, 61)



DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC CHARACTER

Plan form of the farmstead

The 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map, dating to 1903, records a large scale regular courtyard farmstead with multiple yards. Regular multi-yard plans consist of a number of yards, primarily cattle yards, usually accompanied by cow houses or shelter sheds. There has been little change to its historic landscape context, but more than 50% of its historic form has been lost, leaving the 17th century timber-framed farmhouse (grade II listed) and three traditional buildings. There is also a grade II listed field barn approximately 450 metres south west of the farmstead. The three surviving working buildings are described individually on the following page.

A significant proportion of buildings recorded on the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map have now been lost. These include a four-bay pig sty, adjoining the southern side of the farmhouse, two shelter sheds and buildings adjoining the extant 19th century stable, hayloft and granary to the south of the house. The 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map records a trackway linking the field barn to the farmstead. This map also records a larger outfarm, now lost, approximately 320 metres to the south east of Noak Farm.

SELECT EXAMPLES OF BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

Building 1:

Multi-functional building incorporating a farm workers cottage, stable and hay loft, hop kilns, and a cart shed

Farm worker's cottage, stable and hayloft

A multi-functional building incorporating a 17th century stable and house. Rubble construction of green sandstone, shaped and roughly coursed in places, and roofed in terracotta plain tile.

The ground floor, south west end, is typical of a stable whereas the first floor, to the north east end, is plastered and painted and contains a timber-frame partition that has evidence of a window and door. It is possible that its function was a house and stable with the living accommodation split between part of the first and ground floors and the stable in the other part of the ground floor with a hay loft above. The use of the building as a house and stable suggests that it may have been a farm worker's cottage. The late 18th century saw a change of direction in farming at the Noak, when two hop kilns were constructed against the north wall of the building.

Hop kilns

Late 18th century hop kilns, constructed of handmade brick, coursed in English Garden Wall bond. The hop kilns changed the usage of the 17th century building from a stable to a hop barn. Segmental arched head openings to original doors and windows; slatted drying floors in kilns. The drying floors are early 20th century renewals at a higher level than the original floors, steps were added on the first floor of the hop barn to allow access. The first floor of the hop barn was used as a layout room prior to the hops being packed into hop pockets. Towards the end of the 20th century the hop kilns were decommissioned by the removal of the kiln furniture and their cowls. They were then used for storage. The main building was used for the storage of old farm machinery.

During the early 19th century a boundary wall was constructed leading from the western corner of the hop kilns. The majority of this wall has since been removed, therefore it's unclear where it was heading or what it was associated with.



Hop kilns (Building 1) from the north. Photo © Worcestershire County Council

Cart shed

The mid to late 19th century saw a brick cart shed, constructed against the south wall of the hop kilns and west wall of the hop barn. This was built utilising part of a boundary wall constructed in the early 19th century and a new wall opposite. The north wall (former boundary wall) is of handmade brick in English Garden Wall bond, the south wall is constructed in Flemish Stretcher Bond. The cart shed was open fronted with wooden posts and large crown post trusses with carpenters marks.

Building 2:

Shelter shed, store, loose box, granary and kennel

Shelter shed and store

In the early 18th century a coursed rubble green and brown sandstone and timber structure (with some weatherboard and handmade brick) was built. The timber has both old and new carpenter's marks. The original function of this building is unknown due to later alterations. A brick wall was built close to building 2; this may have been a boundary or one of the walls of an additional building. During the mid-18th century the building was extended to form a shelter shed that was open on the west face and contained a trough with a feeding passage behind it. This only survives as marks in the floor in the majority of the building but has survived as the foundation for a modern stable. During the early 19th century building 2 had a small lean-to structure built against its north elevation. It is unknown what the function of this extension was. It is too small to be a stable or loose box, so it may have been a store, possibly for feed.

Loose box

In the 20th century building 2 had a loose box constructed inside it incorporating the footings of part of the shelter shed feeding trough. The rest of the trough was removed at this time and the building was used as a store.

Granary and kennel

In the late 18th century a first floor granary, incorporating a kennel below, was constructed as part of building 2. This timber frame structure was accessed by brick steps from the garden of the Noak farmhouse. It is probable that the shelter shed continued to be used after the granary was constructed. Converted for residential use in about 2005.



West elevation (Building 2) showing timber posts of shelter shed. Photo © Worcestershire County Council

Building 3:

Stable, hayloft, granary and kennel

In the early 19th century a new building was constructed to the south of the farmhouse. This building was used as a stable on the ground floor; a hayloft and granary on the first floor. It was originally much larger than it is now, as shown on historic mapping. Access to the hayloft was with a ladder and hatch in the ceiling of the stable, access to the granary was by an external staircase that incorporated a kennel. During the 20th century the length of building 3 was reduced and the west gable was rebuilt using earlier bricks. These are similar in size to those of the quoins and window and door openings in the rest of the building. Converted for residential use in about 2005.



Stable, hayloft and granary (Building 3) from the north west. Photo © Worcestershire County Council

ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significance as a traditional farmstead

Noak Farm displays many of the features that would be considered characteristic of The Teme Valley and Malverns Farmstead Character Area.

- Concentrations of large and very large scale farmsteads, with multiple yards, along the Teme Valley.
- High concentrations of 17th century and earlier timber-framed houses and working buildings associated with long established isolated farmsteads.
- The presence of traditional orchard and hop kilns.
- The use of timber-framed construction and green sandstone.
- High levels of conversion.

The traditional farm buildings at Noak Farm continued to be in use, as storage, into the late 20th century. They were recorded, in 2006, in advance of their conversion to residential use. A large modern shed, identifiable, to the west of the farmstead, suggests that the farm still retains an agricultural function.

Special significance

The unlisted 17th century multi-functional building, late 18th century hop kilns and the listed 17th century field barn can be regarded as buildings of particular significance. The multi-functional building was subject to significant alteration during the late 18th century when a change of direction in farming, associated with the growth of the hop industry, transpired. Hop kilns are a significant characteristic of Worcestershire, and in particular the Teme Valley and Malverns Farmstead Character Area, and should be regarded as a heritage asset for their local interest and contribution to farmstead and historic landscape character.

The listed, timber-framed, 17th century threshing barn, associated with the outfarm to the south west of the farmstead, is of considerable significance. Changes to farming practice has led to the wholesale redundancy of outfarms and field barns throughout the county. Of the 977 sites currently recorded, 706 (72.26%) have been characterised as lost or demolished.

The remaining 18th and 19th century buildings have been subject to varying levels of change but their traditional form and materials mean that they contribute to the overall character and significance of the traditional farmstead.

Hop kilns were important to the local economy and were a common feature of the Teme Valley and Malverns landscape before the middle of the 20th century. The cultivation of hops for brewing was probably introduced into this country from Flanders at the end of the 15th or early in the 16th century. However, the first plantings were confined to the south-eastern counties. It is not known at what date hops were first cultivated in Worcestershire but it must have been prior to 1636 as there is a reference to a field called 'The Hopyard' in Littleton at this time (Moss 1970s). In Worcestershire the better area for hop growing was the Teme Valley. Indeed Worcestershire appeared to be leading the country in the development of the industry. Two Worcestershire growers introduced the present system of growing crops on a lattice of wirework in 1865. Another Worcestershire grower patented a new kiln type. A Worcester grower imported the first hop-picking machine from America in 1922 and although this did not work it was a producer in Martley, in 1934, who made the first British picking machine.

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