Cover image: classic west Penwith dispersed farmstead group in Zennor parish. Based largely on cattle rearing, the hamlet has a shared central town-place on the drove-road, set within a prehistoric field system with access to coastal and upland rough grazing.

Photo © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2007; F78-080
CONTENTS AND INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDANCE

THIS DOCUMENT FORMS PART OF A SUITE OF GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

The Cornwall Farmsteads Guidance aims to inform and achieve the sustainable development of historic farmsteads, including their conservation and enhancement. It will also be of interest to those with an interest in the history and character of the county’s landscape, settlements and historic buildings.

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CONTENTS OF THE CORNWALL FARMSTEADS GUIDANCE

THE FARMSTEAD ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

This provides a step-by-step approach to considering the reuse of traditional farm buildings and the sustainable development of farmsteads, through identifying their historic character, significance and potential for change.

CORNWALL FARMSTEADS CHARACTER STATEMENT

This has an introductory summary followed by fully-illustrated guidance on the character and significance of the county’s traditional farmsteads and buildings. It is presented under the headings of:

1. Historic development – how Cornwall’s farming history fits into a national context.
2. Landscape and settlement – how farmsteads contribute to Cornwall’s landscape.
3. Farmstead types – different layouts and functions of farmsteads.
4. Building types – their functions and significance.
5. Materials and detail – the development and use of locally distinctive materials and building techniques.
6. Area summaries – the areas into which Cornwall subdivides.
7. Recording and research – how to approach recording and research.
8. Sources.

Farmstead and landscape statements for the eight National Character Areas that include Cornwall.

Authorship and Copyright: This guidance has been written by Jeremy Lake of Historic England, Nick Cahill, Ann Reynolds and Emma Trevarthen of Cornwall Council and Eric Berry, Historic Buildings Consultant.

October 2016
INTRODUCING TRADITIONAL FARMSTEADS IN CORNWALL

Farmsteads and their buildings reflect the development of agricultural regions and areas over centuries, and are an integral part of rural settlement and the landscape. A farmstead is the place where the farmhouse and the working buildings of a farm are located, although some farms also had field barns or outfarms sited away from the main steading. The historic character of farmsteads results from their historic development and function as whole sites, including any routeways and spaces within and around them, and how they are linked to the surrounding landscape and settlement. A simple distinction can be made between traditional buildings which make a significant contribution to local distinctiveness and those prefabricated and standardised industrial buildings which are often added to traditional farmsteads but do not themselves display any local variation in their architectural character or distribution.

A farmstead in the barton landscape of south-east Cornwall: continuous development of a large farmstead as an organic process – even the 19th century courtyard (centre) is of several phases. Despite contrasts in scale and form between traditional and mid-late 20th century industrialised farm buildings, those are still centred here on the historic farmstead, gradually infilling and extending its area. © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2013; F104-075

The scale, materials construction methods and form of late C20 ‘industrial’ farm buildings (above right) contrast markedly with the vernacular in Cornwall, even when, as here, fulfilling the same broad functions. © Eric Berry
The purpose of this guidance is to help secure sustainable development and the conservation of traditional farmsteads and their buildings in Cornwall through the planning system. Using this guidance at the earliest stage in establishing development proposals will:

- Help identify the historic character and significance of a farmstead and its buildings.
- Enable the user to consider the constraints and opportunities at the earliest stage when considering change, and to then inform good quality conversions and innovative design, including new buildings.
- Save time and costs before preparing a detailed application for development and other consents, such as listed building consent.
- Ensure that an application complies with national plan policy, and also local plan policies (including a Neighbourhood Plan if relevant) regarding landscape, the historic environment, neighbourhood issues, biodiversity, siting and design.
- Identify where professional advice and support, and perhaps more detailed survey, would be helpful.

An application will have a much greater chance of success if these issues are identified and considered with Cornwall Council at the pre-application stage. The Assessment Framework can then be reused as a checklist to prepare an application in further detail, as required.

PLANNING CONTEXT
Planning permission is needed for development, which is legally defined, including most new buildings, works that affect the external appearance of a property and for material changes of use. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places good design, the enhancement of local distinctiveness and conservation of the historic environment at the heart of sustainable development and good planning in rural areas (paragraphs 7-8, 55, 58-64, 126-141).

Cornwall Council’s Local Plan and adopted Cornwall Design Guide support the re-use of significant historic buildings, and include specific requirements and planning considerations, particularly in relation to residential additions and alterations, neighbourhood issues and taking account of biodiversity.

Permitted development is allowed for the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential and commercial use, provided that they do not create unacceptable impacts. Prior Approval for this is required from the local authority, covering the design, external appearance and siting of buildings, risks of contamination and flooding and any highways, transport and noise impacts. Listed buildings and sites with scheduled ancient monuments are excluded, as is all Article 2 (3) land (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites and certain areas specified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981). For further details see Class MB in: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/564/pdfs/uksi_20140564_en.pdf.
This guidance provides a step-by-step approach to considering the reuse of traditional farm buildings and the siting of new buildings, as set out in the table below.

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<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td><strong>STAGE 1: SITE SUMMARY</strong>&lt;br&gt;Identify the historic character of the site in its setting and issues such as access, services and designations.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><strong>STAGE 2: ASSESS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE</strong>&lt;br&gt;Assess its contribution to local distinctiveness and the significance of individual buildings.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td><strong>STAGE 3: CAPACITY FOR CHANGE</strong>&lt;br&gt;A checklist to help consider the capacity for change including site access, the impact on neighbours and opportunities to enhance habitats, landscape character and improve energy efficiency.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td><strong>STAGE 4: SITING AND DESIGN ISSUES</strong>&lt;br&gt;Using the understanding gained to inform the design and development process, including opportunities to conserve and enhance the historic character and significance of the whole site in its setting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two stages will enable an initial assessment of the whole site, considering:

- Landscape setting, including its form and scale, and where buildings are situated relative to historic and modern spaces on the site, routeways and the surrounding landscape.

- The extent of historic change to the whole site and its landscape context, including where traditional buildings and farmyards have been lost or redeveloped. This can inform opportunities to retain and enhance the significance of historic buildings and spaces in their landscape setting, reinstate lost features, habitats and buildings or develop parts of the site.

- Building styles, materials and details which are important to maintaining or enhancing the character of the farmstead, including the siting and design of any new buildings.

The resulting assessment will help to identify the need and potential for change, and the Assessment Framework can then be re-used as a checklist to prepare a planning application in further detail, depending on the significance and sensitivity of the type of change being considered. Each stage enables an initial understanding of the site which can be developed without specialist knowledge, and deepened as required later in the development process.
STAGE 1: SITE SUMMARY

This stage will enable initial assessment of the site and its buildings, showing its layout and distinguishing between any traditional and modern buildings.

SITE AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Identify:

- The boundaries of the farmstead.
- Ownership or tenancy.
- Use of the site and surrounding area.
- Access to the site, including sightlines from main entrances.
- Routeways within and around the site, including Public Rights of Way.
- Provision of key services such as water, sewage, electricity and telecommunications.
- Heritage assets and other designations on and around the site. One or more farm buildings, or dwelling on the site, might be listed for its special architectural or historic interest or be sited within a conservation area (see Annex 1 checklist).

HISTORIC CHARACTER

Walk around the site to identify how it and its wider setting have changed. Consider:

- Views to and from the site and how these are framed by the surrounding form and features of the landscape, such as boundaries, trees and woodland, settlements and buildings.
- Hedges, walls, fences and other boundaries within and around the site.
- The plan form and layout of the site, distinguishing between traditional and modern working buildings and how they face towards or away from routeways, historic and modern spaces and the surrounding landscape.
- Domestic buildings and their principal elevations, gardens and other domestic areas.
- Other significant features such as farm ponds.

All farmsteads are made up of buildings, spaces and routeways. The layout or plan of the farmstead is key to understanding its character. Distinguish between traditional and modern farm buildings, note how the houses and farm buildings face towards or away from the surrounding landscape, routeways and historic and modern spaces including farmyards and gardens.

This drawing shows how basic functions – the flow processes – shaped the layout of farmsteads, in this case in a typical smaller Cornish mixed farm. Cereal crops were stacked in an open area known as the Mowhay (1) before being taken into the first floor of the Chall Barn (2) for threshing and grain storage. The resulting straw is dropped down to the feedwalk (3), part being used for litter and part for fodder. Roots (4) are processed into fodder for livestock including fatstock in the ground-floor shippon (cow house) and horses in the detached stable. Manure and litter are removed from the animal houses to the midden (5). Milk is taken from the shippon to a dairy (6), usually within the farmhouse. The waste from the dairy is fed to the young stock and pigs (7). Manure is removed from the farmyard to the fields (8), horses move between the fields and the stable (9), and livestock leave the farm for sale at the market (10). Adapted from an illustration by Allan T Adams in Bodmin Moor Vol II © Historic England 2008
USING HISTORIC MAPS

Historic Ordnance Survey maps show the layouts of traditional farmsteads and how they have changed. The most useful to use as a baseline are the second edition maps of around 1900, compiled after the last major phase of building traditional farmsteads. The National Library for Scotland (see http://maps.nls.uk/) is the most useful on-line source for historic Ordnance Survey maps, which can be viewed side-by-side with modern aerial images from Bing (www.bing.com/maps). Ordnance Survey maps can also be viewed in local libraries; Cornwall Council’s Interactive Mapping site provides increasing resources in the form of both mapping and aerial photography, and Cornwall Council’s Archives and Cornish Studies Service (see http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/community-and-living/records-archives-and-cornish-studies/) has older maps such as estate surveys and the tithe maps compiled after 1836 (see Annex 2).

A farmstead in the barton landscape of south-east Cornwall, of medieval origin, but with a large early 18th century house and a mid-19th courtyard plan farmstead with horse-gin.

Map based on OS 2nd Edition 25” map c.1907. © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2012). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024
Drawing a site plan

A site plan, distinguishing between traditional and modern buildings, can reveal significant opportunities for enhancement and change. This understanding can be deepened by:

- Comparing site survey to historic maps (see Annex 2) to identify significant areas which have changed – in particular buildings and other features which have been lost or redeveloped.
- Considering whether the site is subdivided into distinct areas as a result of how these have functioned and changed.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE

Comparison of modern maps with historic maps of c.1900, compiled after the last major phase of building traditional farmsteads, can provide a useful benchmark for understanding the survival of the historic form of the traditional farmstead.

The drawing shows a simple courtyard farmstead (the same as in the aerial photograph on page 2, and the 1907 Ordnance survey extract shown on page 6), distinguishing between the various features:

- **Area 1** The early 18th century house, which faces west towards the B road and into its own ornamental plantations; garden area to north.
- **Area 2** The historic farmyard, with traditional buildings to its south, east and west built of local stone with slate and corrugated roofs; north side open to farmhouse (itself formerly with small attached yards to east with calf house/piggery etc.– demolished since 1946 aerial photograph).
- **Area 3** A second yard to west formed of implement sheds/waggon shed etc. and large C20 industrial concrete-framed and corrugated roofed cattle shed occupying what was probably the mowhay in the 19th century.
- **Area 4** A further modern yard to the east, now the main working area, comprising a variety of C20 buildings including small single storey storage sheds and a large corrugated steel unit; historically the gathering yard, drove way and access to the pond.

It can also be useful to mark main elevations with a red line, as shown on the plan.

Details of historic buildings can be numbered on a site plan and cross-referred to photographs and descriptions which note:

- Building materials and structural condition
- Doors and windows, including blocked openings
- Internal walls, floors and carpentry, including roof trusses.
- Internal features, such as historic machinery, stalls, partitions (including grain bins) and graffiti.
UNDERSTANDING FARMSTEAD CHARACTER IN CORNWALL

Farmsteads and their buildings are an integral part of Cornwall’s rich and varied landscape, which stands out in a national context because of its high densities of dispersed settlement, with historic farmsteads linked to an intricate, often very ancient network of fields, lanes and swathes of rough grazing land on neighbouring uplands and coasts. Transhumance (the seasonal transfer of livestock from one grazing ground to another, especially from lowlands to highlands) was a feature of traditional farming throughout much of Cornwall.

Medium to large-scale courtyard plans predominate in estate landscapes and across more fertile soil areas with more productive soil where corn production was prevalent or cattle-rearing became a significant commercial enterprise. Linear, dispersed and the smallest-scale loose courtyard plans are generally the older form (many 19th century courtyards developed out of dispersed layout farmsteads), and survive in areas of small-scale cattle-rearing and dairying farms, particularly upland or commons-edge landscapes with equally small-scale enclosed fields. A particular feature of these areas, often considered archetypically Cornish, is the ‘town-place’ – a shared central space usually on a drove-way, around which a hamlet of dispersed farmsteads cluster; many single farmsteads are the shrunken remnants of such hamlets. Also characteristic are smallholdings, although more localised, especially associated with the industrialised margins of the granite uplands; difficult to distinguish from the smallest scale farmsteads and landless cottages, smallholding farmsteads are more likely to be of one phase, with a small multipurpose range of buildings in the immediate vicinity of the farmhouse.

Typical Cornish farmstead layouts

Courtyard plans: two broad categories – loose courtyard plans (loosely arranged detached buildings (a), and regular courtyard plans (b) (mostly interlinked buildings formally arranged).

Dispersed plans (c): no focal yard area, working buildings dispersed within boundary of steading; often associated with central shared ‘town-place’ along droveways to moorland grazing.

Linear and other plans: working buildings attached in-line to the farmhouse (d), typical of smallest-scale farmsteads (including smallholdings) and as the early core of many larger farmsteads.

© Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2006; F74-035

© Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2007; F78-053
Cornwall has been subdivided into 10 Farmstead Character Areas based on analysis of farmsteads within their landscape context (using Natural England National Character Areas as a base), which are as follows:

**Killas – West and central Cornwall** The heartland of Cornish farming where larger farms, often linked with wealthy estates, predominate. Associated with productive, sheltered land in areas of ancient medieval enclosure, strip fields and farming hamlets, many of which devolved into individual farmsteads.

**Killas – North coastal plain** Higher predominance of small scale farms dating from the 17th century and often situated on less productive, exposed land subject to regular enclosure. Farms tend towards the independent farmer rather than estate owned tenanted farms, although these occur in pockets of more ancienly enclosed land. Includes areas of very distinctive miners’ smallholdings.

**Killas – South-East Cornwall** Similar in character to west and central Cornwall with productive, sheltered land in areas of ancient medieval enclosure, strip fields and farming hamlets, but with proportionally higher numbers of relatively large farms, particularly arable based. Many of the farms are linked to just 4 or 5 dominant estates; classic Cornish Barton landscape.

**Hensbarrow** Exposed granite upland landscape of dynamic change dominated by China Clay industry. Dispersed farmsteads and hamlets with a few larger church-towns, smallholdings and cottages on moor edges and intakes. Relatively low levels of investment, especially in areas under threat of expanding mineral extraction, mean that Hensbarrow ironically has some of the oldest surviving farmstead and field patterns in Cornwall, but increasingly only in remnant patches.

**Carmmenellis** Small, roughly circular granite upland; most complex evidence for historic expansion and contraction of land use on the granite uplands; one of the least researched and understood areas in Cornwall. Significant ancient metaliferous production, influencing medieval and C19 enclosure. Predominantly isolated farmsteads and hamlets, mixed with small nucleated mining/quarrying settlements, surrounded by key industrial towns and houses/parklands. Little inward investment since decay of mining industry; much amalgamation of farms and re-use of both agricultural and industrial buildings.

**The Culm North Cornwall** Atlantic coast and hinterland – open, sparsely populated, agriculturally poor, with heavy soils. Predominantly dispersed settlement and irregular field patterns of medieval origin with few small market centres; multi-yard layouts, buildings set around scattered yards and route-ways, and small-scale loose courtyard layouts. Some higher status arable farms and regular yards.

**Killas – East Cornwall** Many farms of medieval origin, marked by high pre-dominance of livestock farming, especially moorland edge farms which benefited from proximity to Bodmin Moor. Well-preserved medieval field patterns are often tree lined, giving the impression of greater woodland cover than is actually the case.

**Bodmin Moor** Exposed granite upland dominated by moorland beef and sheep farms; richer barton-landscape in lower slopes and valleys. Mixture of medieval field patterns and mid-late 19th century enclosure, including some smallholdings. Mainly isolated farms, with small hamlets and church towns off the moor. Linear, dis-perssed and loose courtyard plans, commonly with a combination barn to just one side of the yard; many examples of larger improved courtyard steadings.

**West Penwith** Cornwall’s only major coastal granite upland. Sparsely populated; mining and fishing as dominant as agriculture in history and settlement. Heavy emphasis on pastoral farming, with extensive rough ground grazing, limited mixed arable in the fertile southern area (St Buryan) and sheltered valleys. From 19th century horticulture developed in coastal areas and Mount’s Bay fringes. On the edges of the peninsula there are a number of small fishing or mining villages/towns, otherwise predominantly hamlets with dispersed layouts, especially associated with town-places – one of the most distinctive aspects of the area, as are many small-scale miner-farmer linear smallholdings around St Just.

**Lizard and Meneage** Gently undulating exposed heathland plateau cut by sheltered river valleys; complex geology. Historical distinction in landownership, land quality and use between the Lizard (south and west of the area) and the richer Meneage (north and east). Good mixed farming/grain lands set amongst extensive areas of rough grazing. Significant evidence of ancient farming and settlement in a hamlet-based settlement pattern, interspersed with occasional rural market, fishing and quarrying centres. Early farmsteads typically linear or dispersed (although noticeably less ‘townplace’ farmsteads than e.g. west Penwith). Widespread rebuilding to loose and regular courtyards with 19th century amalgamation of holdings and move to yard feeding of cattle. Significant survival of cob and thatch.
There is a wide range of building types across Cornwall. **Barns** are commonly the largest and earliest buildings in Cornwall’s farmsteads apart from the **farmhouses** themselves, but such was the extent of rebuilding in the 19th century that few earlier examples have survived. **Housing for cattle** has shaped the character of every farmstead in Cornwall, usually as single-storey ranges which include **cow houses**, **calf houses** and **loose boxes**, but perhaps the archetypal Cornish farm building, found in nearly every farmstead, is the two-storey combination barn known as a **chall barn**, which has an area for threshing and storing corn and grain above the ground floor housing for cattle and horses, and often one or more bays for carts. The upper floor is often reached by steps or ramps, or, less commonly, the barn takes the form of a bank barn. **Pigsties** are very common, whether substantially built or as one of the unique examples of small structures in and around the farmstead found in many parts of Cornwall, often built into hedges and banks – such as **crows**, **hulls**, **goose-holes**, **bee-boles** etc. **Stables** and **cart sheds** are largest in scale on large arable-based farms. **Dovecotes** of 18th or 19th century date are found on some manor or estate farmsteads – although pigeon holes built into barns are more common.

Over the 19th century Cornwall’s agricultural economy became more pastoral with a particular emphasis on dairy farming and stock rearing. This change in the agricultural economy can be read in the surviving historic farmsteads where many former **threshing barns** are converted to other agricultural uses, particularly for **cattle housing**. Large **milking parlours** and dairies become a feature of the larger farmsteads during the 20th century. **Outfarms** and **field barns** are not overly common and display strongly localised distribution patterns – usually for cattle rather than sheep, often utilising abandoned farmsteads and mine buildings and most common in the industrialised fringes of the granite uplands.

**Building materials**

There is a very broad distinction in building materials between the granite areas and the Killas/slate areas. Although by the 19th century Cornwall was fundamentally a stone country, cob remained important, and was once very widespread, if localised, and significant pockets survive, such as on the Lizard. This is also a good area for thatch, which was once ubiquitous away from the slate producing areas of north Cornwall, but by the 19th century Cornish slate was the almost universal roofing material; corrugated tin or iron has been in widespread use since the mid-19th century.

Vernacular buildings are characteristic of their locality – using whatever material is available locally, set into and sheltering in the landscape, lacking unnecessary detail or finesse, adapted and added to as needed. (St Kew parish). © Eric Berry


Top: An all-purpose Cornish Chall Barn (Combination barn) – in this case a former cottage, ramped access to upper threshing floor, cattle stalls below, lean-to pigsties attached. Virtually a complete farmstead in one structure. © Eric Berry

Above: Carnyorth – a mining related smallholding – although now converted, the simple arrangement is still clear – a minimum arrangement of house, chall barn, stable and pig-sties, set on the edge of a small common. © Nick Cahill
The significance of farm buildings and farmsteads, and their settings, can be retained and enhanced through sympathetic change and development. The National Planning Policy Framework stresses the importance of:
• Retaining and enhancing local character and distinctiveness
• Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

1. Identify distinctive features
Identify distinctive features that catch the eye, in particular:
• The survival of the whole site as a traditional farmstead, as identified in Stage 1. The greater the survival of the historic form of the group and the detail of individual buildings, the greater will be its significance as a traditional farmstead.
• Traditional farm buildings, and unusual buildings or features, including those on sites which have lost most or all of their historic form and other features.

It will also be useful at this stage to identify, if possible, any remarkable and distinctive characteristics that bring a higher level of interest and significance, both in a local or national context (see next page).

2. Understand significance of heritage assets
Designated heritage assets as identified in Stage 1, including listed buildings, heighten the heritage significance of farmsteads – as indeed do undesignated assets once identified. The more significant the heritage asset, the greater the weight that should be given to its conservation and the amount of detail provided in an application. This may include a more detailed level of recording and a Heritage Statement which is proportionate to the known or potential significance of the asset in its setting.

The criteria for listing farm buildings are highly selective, and some listings were only based on an external examination. This means that significant features might only be revealed by the sort of assessment process recommended here – many buildings which do not merit statutory listing may retain important evidence for farming and construction practices. Additionally, some farmsteads and farmstead sites may retain significant below-ground archaeological deposits, including those that have lost all of their historic buildings.
SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Some buildings or farmsteads, including examples which are not designated as heritage assets, have the potential for special significance in a local or national context. Of particular significance and increasingly rare in unaltered form in Cornwall are:

Landscape setting

- Small-scale farmsteads and smallholdings (the buildings of which rarely survive in legible form). In particular those sited around areas of ancient pasture and which are generally associated with areas of former mineral/stone extraction or other industrial activity.
- Farmsteads which have a clear visual relationship to the earthworks remaining from medieval and earlier cultivation and settlement.

Farmstead groups and buildings

- Evidence for longhouses.
- 18th century or earlier buildings.
- Unconverted 2 storey barns of most dates (conveniently similar in size and disposition as they are to cottages).
- Model farms associated with landed gentry and/or architects, dating from the later 18th century on; most will be associated with or on the edge of landscape parks.
- Evidence for mowhays and other functional spaces (gathering yards, orchards etc.).
- Evidence for use of stone hedging as an extension of farmstead functions into the immediate surrounding context – as both a means of controlling movement and spaces, and as the physical framework for distinctive peripheral features on the edge of the farmstead where it meets the farmland:
- Butterwells, crows, hulls, bee boles, goose houses, milk stands, sheep creeps, transhumance huts, field barns – all also found in the wider farmland.
- Evidence of re-use and/or conversion to or from farm buildings of cottages, mine buildings etc.

Materials, fixtures and fittings

- Evidence for mechanisation within the farmstead; wheel houses or engine houses; belt-drive wheels for powering steam engines.
- Interior stalls and other interior features (e.g. mangers, hay racks) of 19th century and earlier date.
- Evidence of dairies/wash-houses/brew-houses/apple stores/cider-houses etc. – not easy to identify from exterior features alone.
- Historic graffiti and other marks relating to agricultural use and folk beliefs.

Crowan parish – a medieval farm (a tre settlement – one of the primary settlement types in the Cornish landscape), not only takes its name from the adjacent Round (a defendable settlement site), but exploits it for a yard; the present farmhouse and courtyard developed over the 19th century – the earlier buildings were within and on the ramparts of the Round itself. © Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, 2009; F90-053

Typical west Cornwall 18th century vernacular farmhouse, now in use as farm buildings – St Levan parish. © Eric Berry

Left: Farm mill loft interior (belt drive and line shaft detail) in a late 19th century estate farmstead near Porthleven. © Eric Berry
EXAMPLE OF A FARMSTEAD ASSESSMENT

This example uses the Stage 1 and 2 guidance set out above. The text can be presented in bulleted form or as free text.

A plan can identify any distinct areas into which the farmstead can be subdivided, and be cross-refered to photographs and a list of the buildings on site. This will help keep the text short and focused. The report and plan can then be used and deepened as required later in the planning process.

It can also be useful to mark main elevations to show which way they face, to indicate key viewpoints and also any heritage assets and features noted on the Historic Environment Record.

Summary
A dispersed farmstead transformed from the mid-19th century into a loose courtyard with a new access to south of and separated from that to the house; at its core a group of buildings set around a yard, evolving into a much more regular layout with time, which was extended with new sheds along the droveway to the east in the late 20th century.

Site and management issues
1. Site boundary, ownership and use. The farmstead is in single ownership and the traditional buildings are now redundant for modern farming purposes.

2. Site access and services. With the pre-19th century historic access now only to the house, the main access is off a B road to the west – and continues through the yard to abandoned farmsteads to the east.

3. Designations. The house is listed at grade II.

Historic character

Setting
The Plantations generally screen the site from the road; there is a view to the show front of the Farmhouse along an ornamental driveway. The Plantation and hedgerows forming the east of the site boundary link to similar hedgerows in the surrounding landscape (altered anciently enclosed land).

The farmstead and its buildings
This is a courtyard plan adaptation of an earlier dispersed layout with attached buildings set around a yard that is open to and faces north; most of the yard has been infilled with a mid C20 shelter shed. The whole site clearly divides into the following areas (see plan):

Area 1 The early 18th century house, which faces west towards the B road and into its own ornamental plantations; garden area to north.

Area 2 The historic farmyard, with traditional buildings to its south, east and west built of local stone with slate and corrugated roofs; north side open to Farmhouse (itself formerly with small attached yards and calf house/piggery etc. – demolished since 1946 aerial photograph).
**Area 3** A second yard to west formed of implement sheds/waggon shed etc. and large C20 industrial concrete-framed and corrugated roofed cattle shed occupying what was probably the mowhay in the 19th century.

**Area 4** A further yard to the east, the main modern working area, now comprising a variety of C20 buildings including small single storey storage sheds and a large corrugated steel unit; historically the gathering yard, drove way and access to the pond.

**Significance**

The group contributes to local distinctiveness because:

- It is a medieval site in a remnant anciently enclosed landscape at an important local crossroads (marked by a scheduled medieval cross within the attached Plantations).
- The core historic farmyard (Area 2) retains the overall form of a traditional courtyard farmstead, and the earlier dispersed layout (set around an ancient droveway) is still discernible.
- The combination barn, horse-engine house (machinery has been removed) and shippons are shown on the second edition Ordnance Survey map of around 1900 and are typical in their overall form and use of local stone and slate for the area.
- The traditional farm buildings make a positive contribution to the setting of the grade II listed farmhouse.

**YOU CAN USE THE SAME APPROACH TO HELP UNDERSTAND A FAR MORE COMPLEX SITE OR MORE THAN ONE SITE**

Here, two farmsteads are set along an ancient east-west route in an anciently enclosed and archeologically rich landscape. The main site (to east), first recorded in 1300, was the seat of an important gentry family. The western farmstead was a post-medieval sub-division of this main holding and retains all of its 19th century (and earlier) buildings – but none are listed. The main farmstead in contrast is an exceptional group of pre-1800 farm buildings, very rare in Cornwall. – the house and garden walls are listed grade II*, virtually all the farm buildings grade II.

The assessment process and mapping techniques work equally well for both types of farmstead.

Map based on OS MasterMap (© 1:1000). © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Cornwall Council 100049047, 2015
Consider issues which may make change desirable, in particular:

• Traditional buildings which are redundant and/or without viable use, and thus actually or potentially at risk.
• Opportunities to retain and reveal the significance of historic buildings and spaces, reinstate lost features or buildings or develop parts of the site.
• Opportunities to create space for job-creating businesses, housing or other uses, and their potential to work together.

2 Options for conversion and new development
In addition to respecting the significance as identified in Stage 2, the character of different sites and buildings will present different constraints and opportunities for conversion and development, whether they are designated as heritage assets or not. Consider:

• The scale and layout of the whole site, and its landscape setting.
• The scale, provision of natural light and layout of individual buildings.
• The condition and nature (robust or fragile) of building materials and fabric, including the costs of repair and the sources, costs and supply of traditional building materials.
• Availability of services identified in Stage 1.

3 Options for using existing or new access
Safe access with clear sightlines onto highways is required by Highway Authorities, but this must avoid suburban landscaping such as wide bellmouth openings. Access may be a significant issue, and may be challenging or not possible at all to field barns and outfarms.

5. Enhancing habitats/ landscape character
Farmsteads are an integral part of the surrounding landscapes and wildlife habitats.

• Features within and around the site – such as buildings, shelter belts, plantations, ponds and boundary features (including hedgerows) – can provide significant opportunities for the enhancement of wildlife habitats and landscape character.
• Consider the need for ecological surveys, including bats, owls and other protected species that may be present.

6. Improving energy efficiency and sustainability
Explore opportunities to deliver environmentally efficient design:

• Minimise energy consumption through landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping.
• Generate energy from renewable or low carbon sources – ground-source or air-source heating, geo-thermal sources, mini-hydro energy generation, solar and wind power, biomass and anaerobic digestion systems.
• Minimise water consumption through sustainable drainage systems which recycle water (termed grey water). These include reed bed sewage disposal.
ISSUES FOR CHANGE

Structural changes in the farming industry have required farmers to construct new buildings that economise on labour and conform to animal welfare regulations. As a result of this, and the demand for living in the rural landscape, traditional farm buildings are largely redundant for modern agricultural purposes, and have been under the greatest threat of neglect on one hand, and development on the other, than any other rural building type. National research by Historic England examined the drivers for change and the effectiveness of national and local policy (for an overview of research and policy see https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/rural-heritage). It found that:

- Historic farm buildings were more prone to both neglect and development than any other historic building type. Residential use made up the great majority of conversions, despite planning policies that favour employment and business uses.
- There was an identified need for an evidence base, including within Historic Environment Records, and a consistent framework to inform decision-making by all those involved in the reuse and development of historic farmsteads.

In Cornwall research has shown that the proportions of converted listed farm buildings, or those showing obvious signs of structural disrepair, were both moderately above the national average (37.44% against 32%, and 9.1% against 7.5% respectively). However there is significant localised variation in these figures – for instance, in Hensbarrow the conversion figure is as high as 66.7%; here agriculture, much of it already on marginal land, is under significant pressure from the expanding urban growth area of St Austell, and above all, the continuing expansion of the Clay industry.

As elsewhere, one of the main drivers for change in Cornwall is intensification of agriculture in more productive areas, especially for dairying and beef or, in the west, flowers and vegetables. This has led to a loss of traditional pasture, ancient field systems and smallholdings, amalgamation of traditional small farms and the disposal of large numbers of farmsteads onto the property market, particularly the historically smaller examples. Where farmsteads remain, they are often losing character and distinctiveness through conversion of traditional buildings and impact of large scale new farm buildings dwarfing historic layouts. The reduction in various grant schemes, especially the ending of Environmentally Sensitive Area grants in West Penwith (2015), could have very serious consequences for maintenance of traditional character in this unique area.

In addition to agricultural change in Cornwall, are pressures for live-work and business units, holiday letting homes, ‘hobby’ farms and horse culture, particularly on small farms and smallholdings close to urban centres or in scenic areas. Large-scale demand for housing development (50-60,000 over next 20-30 years) is focused around major towns in Cornwall, many of which are former market towns surrounded by better grade agricultural lands, or facing competing demands for industrial land or tourist facilities.

Climate change will be a significant future factor, with potential loss of coastal sites, coastal and riverine flooding, and, in ironic contrast, prolonged drought episodes affecting moorland areas, and pressure for renewable energy sites – which has been and is likely to remain high.

Cornwall has long suffered from a shortage of traditional building skills, and traditional materials are increasingly hard and expensive to acquire leading to significant incremental loss of character and fabric in historic farmsteads: unsympathetic repair of cob, gradual replacement of thatched roofs, loss of old Cornish slate roofs and decline in use of new Cornish slate.

These physical pressures are exacerbated by the lack of county-wide research, and potential themes still remain that could significantly enhance understanding (see Section 7 of the Cornwall Farmsteads Character Statement).
STAGE 4: SITING AND DESIGN ISSUES

Getting the design right is essential on such sensitive sites. The understanding gained from Stages 1 and 2 will help to prepare a scheme that conserves and enhances the historic character and significance of the whole site. New development might include new buildings, the demolition of modern or insignificant buildings and the opening of spaces to better reveal the significance of heritage assets in their settings. The key objectives are to:

1. Maintain and strengthen the character and significance of farmsteads in the landscape.
2. Encourage change, adaptation and development that secure a long-term sustainable future for farm buildings but avoid the introduction of non-rural features into the farming landscape.

Central to design objectives are survival and significance; below is a checklist of key issues to consider for conversion, re-use and new development, working from landscape setting to internal detail.

Landscape setting
Enhance significant views to and from the site, through careful siting and use of local materials in any gardens, boundaries, access and parking so they respect local character.

- Retain and enhance the sense of space between buildings, and between working buildings and the farmhouse.
- Retain and enhance features such as historic boundaries or farm ponds (which may be used as part of sustainable drainage systems).

Work to existing buildings
- Retain existing historic openings, minimise alterations to prominent and significant external elevations by careful attention to internal planning and how and where to introduce or borrow light. The size, proportion, detail and materials of windows and doors have a major impact on overall appearance.
- Minimise external lighting which can lend a suburban character to farmsteads.
- Repair historic fabric with suitable materials and techniques.
- Use locally relevant paints and complement walling and roofing colours and textures.
- Where possible conserve open interiors with impressive proportions.
- Retain historic features where possible: doors, windows, exposed roof trusses, floor structure, machinery, floor surfaces, folk marks/graffiti. These things often give most information about historic function and innovation.

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) has produced detailed advice on conversion and maintenance – see Historic England’s *The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A Guide to Good Practice*.

Issues for new buildings and their siting
Consider how understanding the whole site and its historic plan form, as described in Stage 1, could:

- Site new buildings on the footprint of lost buildings or site them so that they respond and are sensitive to the historic plan form of the site and its wider setting in the landscape.
- Use the historic character of the site to inform scale, massing and form of new buildings. Ideally new elements should not compete with or overwhelm the traditional farm buildings.
- Make use of materials and building techniques of appropriate quality and type.
- Minimise fuel costs, maximise the sun’s energy and reduce carbon emissions at source through careful consideration of site layout, building design and materials.
- Consider whether the site requires enabling development, in order to secure the future of historic buildings of high significance and sensitivity to change.

Enabling development is defined as development unacceptable in planning terms apart from where it would bring public benefits sufficient to justify it being carried out, and which could not otherwise be achieved.
DESIGN GUIDANCE

Design guidance relating to rural buildings can also be found in the Cornwall Design Guide. Other sources, particularly those found on the Rural Heritage pages of the Historic England website, can also be very useful. The following worked examples illustrate the issues and opportunities that flow from an understanding of the basic farmstead type and how it has changed. These are not intended as planning briefs or definitive design solutions. In each case there are references to plan form, layout, and degrees of enclosure, scale and massing, form of buildings, orientation and detailed design, including form of openings.

An understanding of the present historic character of the site, and how it has changed, can inform options for the demolition of modern buildings (in red) and their replacement with new buildings (in green). The siting of this example (top right) is informed by its historic character as a courtyard plan.

A reinstated pond can provide a balance pond for storm water and run-off collected through the application of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) from large areas of hardstanding (such as courtyards used for parking). Water can be re-used within the buildings (grey-water recycling). They also provide important wildlife habitats and visual interest.
1 DESIGNATION CHECKLIST

The text below provides an introduction to heritage and other designations.

**Designated heritage assets** mostly comprise:

Details on listed buildings and other designated heritage assets can be found on *The National Heritage List for England*: see [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list). This includes a map search facility and links to the criteria for selection, including agricultural buildings. These comprise:

- Listed buildings, which are graded according to their significance: grade II (over 95%) and the most important at grade II* and I. Any works to alter, extend or demolish the building in a way that affects its character as a building of special interest require listed building consent from the local planning authority, whether planning permission is also needed or not. Listing status covers the entire building, internal and external. It may also extend to buildings pre-dating July 1948 within the curtilage of a listed building: in doubt discuss with the local planning authority, for it may be a criminal offence to fail to apply for listed building consent for works to a curtilage building when it is needed. There are currently 12,833 listed buildings in Cornwall, 1,588 scheduled monuments, 37 registered parks and gardens, 4 registered battlefields.

Listed and unlisted buildings within Conservation Areas. Demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas requires planning permission, and a similar process of justification as for a listed building. Information on Conservation Areas can be found on the Cornwall Council web site: [http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/conservation/conservation-areas/](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/conservation/conservation-areas/). There are 145 Conservation areas covering 4070 ha. Although most of Cornwall’s conservation areas are urban, some of the smaller rural designated areas can include both active and remnant farmsteads within their boundaries.

Designated assets in and around farmsteads more rarely comprise:

- Scheduled Monuments which are mostly archaeological remains rather than standing buildings. Consent for any works affecting them must be sought from Historic England.

- Registered Parks and Gardens, conservation of which is given ‘great weight’ in the planning process.

**Undesignated heritage assets** comprise:

- Sites of national archaeological significance which are treated in the planning system as if they were designated assets (see NPPF paragraph 139).

All sites on the HER (see [http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/her](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/her)).

Local Lists. The NPPF sets out the requirements for both developers and the local authority to assess the significance of all heritage assets and impact of development on them (see, for instance, paragraphs 128, 129 and 135) including those undesignated or ‘locally listed.’ These can be an ever-changing resource – in Cornwall all sites on the HER are considered to be locally listed (see [http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/her](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/her)); many of the emerging Neighbourhood Plans in Cornwall are identifying their own locally significant buildings, and such buildings are also identified within the various Conservation Area appraisals. Cornwall-wide studies such as Cornwall Industrial Settlements Initiative and Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey and other settlement appraisals which also often identify these buildings are available via the HER. Cornwall Council is currently developing guidelines for assessing such buildings (including the use of this Assessment Framework itself). The concept of local listing is supported by the emerging (2016) *Cornwall Local Plan and Cornwall Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document*. It is important to note that most farmstead buildings that may be considered to be local heritage assets have yet to be formally identified.

**Wildlife and habitats**

In addition to protected species and sites (e.g. National Nature reserves) some farmsteads may adjoin or be sited within:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which are areas of land notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as being of special nature conservation interest.

- Non-statutory designated sites recognised by the saved and emerging (2015) local plan policies in Cornwall

The European Union, under the Habitats Directive (1992), required the designation of high-quality conservation sites which contribute to conserving
particular habitats and species known as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). There are 20 SACs in Cornwall and Scilly; information is available from: http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-23.

Important hedgerows are protected from removal by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/hedgeregs

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Conserving and enhancing the qualities of such landscapes are a material consideration in considering planning applications within or adjacent to them. Section 85 of The CROW Act 2000 places on local authorities a requirement to produce an AONB Management Plan and a ‘duty of regard’ to conserve and enhance AONBs. There are two AONB’s within Cornwall:

Tamar valley AONB – which straddles the Cornwall-Devon border, includes 8,326ha in Cornwall. For Management Plan 2014-19 see; http://www.tamarvalley.org.uk/care/aonb-management-plan/.

The Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site

The Cornish Mining WHS covers 5.5% of the total area of Cornwall – many farmsteads, particularly the areas of smallholdings associated with industrialisation, form part of the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS site – and as such, may require detailed assessment, and that great weight (potentially equivalent to grade I or II* listing) should be given to the asset’s conservation –see NPPF 132 and ff). Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site Management Plan 2013-2018: http://www.cornish-mining.org.uk/news/world-heritage-management-plan-now-available

2 ARCHIVES AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD

As well as the historic maps summarised on page 6, the National Heritage List for England provides details on listed buildings and other designated heritage assets, and includes a map search facility that shows surrounding areas and other designations settings: see www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list

The Heritage Gateway www.heritagegateway.org.uk provides links to the Cornwall HER, and allows text and limited map searches of a wide range of data from Historic England’s National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE). The Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record (HER) is the comprehensive and definitive record of the historic environment of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and includes information on all aspects of the past from the earliest traces of human occupation up to the present day: heritages gateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/herdetail.aspx?crit=&ctid=98&id=4787.

The HER is a public archive, maintained and updated in accordance with national heritage information standards and guidance. The information it holds is derived from a variety of sources including fieldwork, surveys and excavations, aerial surveys, historic maps, published and unpublished books and pamphlets, specialist journals, antiquarian authors, museum records, and information sent in by members of the public. With over 56,000 records in the Historic Buildings, Sites and Monuments database it has been possible to verify the information ‘on the ground’ in only a small percentage of sites.

The HER plays a key role in providing the information base for recommendations made in response to planning applications and other proposals, for management and conservation, fieldwork and research and also informs local communities about their area.

Cornwall Council’s Archives and Cornish Studies Service is made up of Cornwall Record Office (in Truro) and the Cornish Studies Library (in Redruth). Together, they are home to hundreds of thousands of manuscripts, maps, photographs and books related to Cornwall’s history.

For detailed information about each location, including opening hours, please see Visit the Cornish Studies Library or Visit Cornwall Record Office.

Cornwall Council’s interactive on-line mapping site allows access to the HER records, Historic Landscape Character maps, conservation area maps and much other useful information: http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/community-and-living/mapping/.
Second edition Ordnance Survey maps of around 1900, which clearly show buildings and yard areas, are an excellent foundation for deepening understanding of individual farmsteads. Map at 1:1250 scale based on OS 2nd Edition 25” map c.1907. © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2012). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024.
3 SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Agri-environment funding
Agri-environment funding via the Environmental Stewardship scheme has funded the maintenance and conservation repair of traditional farm buildings. Contact Natural England for further advice and eligibility on the various schemes now available: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk.

Historic buildings grants
If the farm building is listed Grade I or II* the work may be eligible for a grant from Historic England. These and other sources of grant aid are described in detail in the Funds for Historic Buildings website.

Historic England guidance
Guidance on conversion, maintenance and recording can be downloaded from the Historic England website (HistoricEngland.org.uk), which also has further online guidance available on many related heritage issues. For fully-referenced regional statements with national and regional bibliographies, which also set out the national context for farmsteads and their associated landscapes, see:

Wildlife
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds provides further advice about birds and buildings and on attracting wildlife to gardens.

Natural England can provide further information about England’s natural environment and biodiversity. See http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/.