



# Historic farm buildings:

Constructing the evidence base

Peter Gaskell and Stephen Owen

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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The research project was undertaken by the Countryside and Community Research Unit at the University of Gloucestershire. The research team, led by Peter Gaskell, comprised Michael Clark, Nigel Curry, Jennifer Deadman, Philip Johnson, James Kirwan, Nick Lewis, Jane Mills, Stephen Owen, Carl Sandford, Becky Stickland, Emily White and Nick Wright. Bob Ford of the University of Birmingham provided specialist assistance on the sampling and statistical analysis components of the project.



# PREFACE BY ENGLISH HERITAGE AND THE COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY



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Traditional farm buildings are amongst the most ubiquitous of historic building types in the countryside. They are fundamental to its sense of place, its local distinctiveness and its historic interest. They also represent a major economic asset in terms of their capacity to accommodate new uses in buildings, which, by definition, are in keeping with local countryside character:

Arguably, the restructuring of the farming industry and other processes taking place in the countryside mean that traditional farm buildings are more susceptible to change – now and in the future – than any other comparable group of historic structures. This process of change provides both potential threats to the historic interest of these buildings and real opportunities to give them renewed life in the 21st century.

In 2002, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage sponsored a landmark conference, *Rural Regeneration: A Sustainable Future for Farm Buildings*, organised by the Historic Farm Buildings Group, which looked at

the current state of the building stock and its potential for the future. The main theme that emerged from the conference was that, despite the undoubted historic, scenic and economic importance of the historic farm building stock, there is a remarkable lack of basic information on its size, character, condition and trajectory of change. Without such basic information, informed and sensitive management of change and effective targeting of scarce resources will not be possible.

This monograph, describing work commissioned from the University of Gloucestershire by the two agencies, is a first step towards addressing this information deficit. Far more remains to be done.

English Heritage and Natural England, as successor to the landscape, access and recreation responsibilities of the Countryside Agency, will continue to work together and with a wide range of other partners, to ensure that the traditional farm buildings of England make as important a contribution to the future as they have done to the past.

# ABSTRACT



Source: Countryside Agency  
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Historic farm buildings are an integral part of the agricultural landscape of England and an important cultural and economic resource. Some continue to play a part in agricultural production and, increasingly, they have a role in farm diversification as places to live and work. However, they are also a threatened resource. Many have been poorly converted, to the detriment of their historic character and interest. Many more are no longer appropriate for their original purpose and, within the context of a changing rural economy, are becoming redundant and vulnerable to neglect and subsequent demolition. An understanding of the character and condition of the resource, as well as the forces that drive change in historic farm buildings, is vital if informed decisions are to be made about their future.

In 2001 English Heritage and the Countryside Agency commissioned the Countryside & Community Research Unit to undertake research into the nature, condition and

management of English historic farmsteads. The overall aims of the research were:

- to provide baseline data on the character and management of, and threats to, listed agricultural buildings in rural areas;
- to determine the factors that precipitate change in management of the historic farm building resource.

To fulfil these aims an exhaustive range of research methods was used, combining desk study with the analysis of empirical information from databases or collected via questionnaires, and telephone and personal interviews.

Working agricultural buildings, as distinct from farmhouses, comprise the largest category of listed buildings considered to be at risk. They tend to be in worse condition than other types of building. Over half

the agricultural list entries have been subject to planning applications since 1980 and at least one in five list entries with working farmstead buildings has had permission for a change of use, mainly into permanent dwellings. Conversion for employment and businesses is far less common.

Conversion to alternative uses can have a significant adverse impact on the character and landscape setting of a working farmstead building. Pressure for conversion comes mainly from increased demand for dwellings as rural populations rise and communications improve. This has coincided with a corresponding change in Government planning policy towards encouraging economic, sustainable development in rural areas, partly to counteract the decline of agriculture. These drivers are likely to persist into the future and further increase the pace at which conversion is taking place.

Local authorities vary greatly in their policy towards historic working farmstead buildings. Just over half offer grants for the upkeep of mainly listed buildings, but only very small sums are available. Fewer than half of all authorities monitor changes to these buildings. Fewer than half of the Local Plans examined explicitly recognise the contribution of farm buildings to the historic environment, and the majority make no reference to protecting historic character when considering re-use. Plans at all spatial levels indicate a strong preference for employment-related rather than residential use. This is usually justified as causing less damage to the character of buildings and providing greater economic benefits. The planning system generally resists new development in rural areas and this can redirect the pressure for development onto existing rural buildings, including farmsteads.

Few stakeholders feel that local planning policies satisfactorily integrate the two main objectives of national planning policy with regard to historic farm buildings: fostering economic re-use and conserving a valuable historic asset. This is attributed to a lack of guidance on the reconciliation of these objectives. National policy is also thought to be insufficiently sensitive to differences between places, economic circumstances and different buildings. While national policy has favoured re-use of working farmstead buildings for employment purposes, conversions are almost always to dwellings, for which the demand is greatest and profits may be highest. Many local authority conservation officers feel that residential conversions are often of poor quality and that national policy allows them to take place too easily. Applicants for permission for change of use, though, feel this results from poor design rather than the intrinsic nature of

residential conversion; they believe national policy is too restrictive.

In terms of best practice in the conversion of working farmstead buildings, strong but flexible planning policies enable adaptation to individual circumstances within a firm framework. Architects are deemed to be the key players, while a sympathetic owner is considered almost as important. Pre-application consultation is critical in determining the success of a scheme; it improves relationships between participants and results in low numbers of planning permission refusals. Other important factors include the use and availability of local materials and traditional methods, the availability of good-quality planning guidance and a good working relationship between the local planning authority and the applicant.

# RESUME



Source: Countryside & Community Research Unit  
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Les fermes traditionnelles sont une partie intégrante du paysage agricole anglais et une ressource culturelle et économique importante. Certaines d'entre elles sont encore utilisées dans la production agricole et, de plus en plus, elles ont un rôle dans la diversification des fonctions de la ferme, et sont des bâtiments à vivre et à travailler. Mais elles sont en même temps une ressource menacée. Beaucoup d'entre elles ont été mal transformées, au détriment de leur caractère et de leur intérêt historique. Et davantage d'entre elles ne sont plus appropriées pour leur rôle initial et, dans le contexte d'une économie rurale changeante, elles n'ont plus d'utilité et sont victimes de la négligence et finissent par être démolies. Il est essentiel de comprendre la nature et l'état de ces ressources et les forces qui sont la cause du changement des fermes traditionnelles, si nous voulons prendre des décisions pour leur avenir.

En 2001, English Heritage et l'agence Countryside ont mandaté le service de recherche Countryside &

Community de mener des recherches sur la nature, l'état et la gestion des petites fermes traditionnelles anglaises. Les objectifs généraux de la recherche étaient :

- fournir des données de base sur le caractère et la gestion des bâtiments agricoles répertoriés dans les secteurs ruraux et les menaces qui les guettent ;
- déterminer les facteurs qui accélèrent le changement dans la gestion des ressources des fermes traditionnelles.

Une gamme variée de méthodes de recherche a été utilisée pour réaliser ces objectifs ; les études scientifiques ont été combinées avec l'analyse des informations empiriques obtenues des bases de données ou rassemblées par l'intermédiaire des questionnaires et des entretiens téléphoniques et personnels.

Les bâtiments agricoles utilitaires, distincts des fermes, comptent le plus grand nombre de bâtiments répertoriés

considérés en danger. Ils sont en général en plus mauvais état que les autres types de bâtiments. Plus de la moitié des bâtiments agricoles répertoriés ont été sujets à des permis de construire depuis 1980 et au moins un sur cinq de ceux ayant des bâtiments utilitaires a eu une autorisation de changement d'utilisation, principalement pour devenir des habitations permanentes. La transformation dans le but de développer des activités économiques est nettement plus rare.

La transformation d'un bâtiment utilitaire d'une petite ferme pour d'autres utilisations, peut avoir un impact négatif significatif sur le caractère et pour l'environnement. L'augmentation du nombre de ce type de transformation découle principalement de la demande accrue de logements, étant donné que les populations rurales augmentent et que la communication s'est améliorée. Cela coïncide avec un changement de la politique de planification du gouvernement, qui vise à encourager le développement économique durable dans les secteurs ruraux, pour contrecarrer en partie le déclin de l'agriculture. Ces facteurs persisteront à l'avenir et ils continueront à augmenter la vitesse de ces transformations.

La politique des autorités locales vis-à-vis les bâtiments utilitaires des fermes traditionnelles varie considérablement. Un peu plus de la moitié d'entre elles offrent des primes, principalement pour l'entretien des bâtiments répertoriés, mais les sommes disponibles sont très réduites. Moins de la moitié de ces autorités supervisent les changements apportés à ces bâtiments. Moins de la moitié des plans locaux examinés reconnaissent explicitement la contribution des bâtiments de ferme à l'environnement historique, et la majorité d'entre eux ne font aucune référence à la protection du caractère historique dans le cas des transformations pour la reconversion de ces bâtiments. A tous les niveaux spatiaux, les plans indiquent une forte préférence pour l'usage lié au travail, plutôt que pour l'utilisation résidentielle. Cela se justifie en général par le fait que ce type de transformation affecte moins le caractère des bâtiments et fournit de plus grands avantages économiques. Le système de planification s'oppose généralement à la construction de nouveaux bâtiments dans les zones rurales, ce qui peut réorienter la pression sur le développement des bâtiments ruraux existants, y compris les fermes.

Peu des personnes concernées estiment que les politiques locales de planification intègrent d'une manière satisfaisante les deux objectifs principaux de la politique nationale de planification en ce qui concerne les bâtiments des fermes traditionnelles : stimuler la

réutilisation économique, et conserver leur valeur historique. Cela est causé par un manque de conseils sur la réconciliation de ces objectifs. La politique nationale est également jugée ne pas être assez sensible aux différences entre les régions, entre les conditions économiques et entre les différents bâtiments. Alors que la politique nationale a favorisé la réutilisation des bâtiments utilitaires de ferme pour l'emploi et le travail, les travaux visent presque toujours la transformation en habitations, pour lesquels la demande est plus grande et les bénéfices peuvent être plus élevés. Beaucoup de fonctionnaires des autorités locales responsables de la conservation estiment que les transformations en habitation sont souvent de qualité inférieure et que la politique nationale accepte trop facilement ce type de transformation. Cependant, les demandeurs de permis pour les changements d'utilisation, déclarent que la cause en est le manque de travail de conception plutôt que la nature intrinsèque de la conversion résidentielle ; ils estiment que la politique nationale est trop restrictive.

En termes de pratique, pour la conversion des bâtiments utilitaires de ferme, une planification exacte mais flexible permet l'adaptation aux conditions individuelles, dans un cadre ferme. Les architectes sont réputés être les acteurs principaux, alors qu'un propriétaire bien sympathique est considéré presque aussi important. La consultation de « pré-candidature » est essentielle pour la réussite d'un projet ; elle améliore les rapports entre les participants et diminue le nombre des refus de permis de construire. D'autres facteurs importants sont l'utilisation et la disponibilité des matériaux locaux et des méthodes traditionnelles, la disponibilité des conseils de bonne qualité sur la construction et les bonnes relations de travail entre l'autorité locale et le demandeur de permis.

# ZUSAMMENFASSUNG



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Historische Bauernhöfe sind ein fester Bestandteil des englischen Landschaftsbildes und eine wichtige kulturelle und ökonomische Ressource. Einige von ihnen spielen auch weiterhin eine Rolle in der landwirtschaftlichen Produktion und immer häufiger in der Erweiterung des Bauernhofes als Platz zum Leben und Arbeiten. Sie sind jedoch eine bedrohte Ressource. Viele wurden schlecht umgewandelt, sehr zum Schaden für ihren historischen Charakter und Bedeutung. Viele sind nicht länger für ihren ursprünglichen Verwendungszweck geeignet, werden in einer sich verändernden ländlichen Wirtschaft überflüssig und sind in Gefahr, vernachlässigt und schließlich abgerissen zu werden. Für intelligente Entscheidungen im Hinblick auf die Zukunft ist es notwendig, ein Verständnis für Eigenart und Verfassung dieser Ressource zu gewinnen und auch für die Kräfte, die Veränderungen für historische Bauernhöfe vorantreiben.

Die „Countryside & Community Research Unit“\* wurde 2001 von der „English Heritage and the Countryside

Agency“\*\* damit beauftragt, die Natur, Verfassung und Verwaltung von historischen englischen Bauernhöfen zu erforschen. Die übergreifenden Ziele der Forschung waren:

- Basis-Daten über Eigenart und Verwaltung von, sowie Bedrohungen für; aufgelistete landwirtschaftliche Gebäude in ländlichen Gegenden zu gewinnen,
- Faktoren zu bestimmen, die Veränderungen in der Verwaltung der historischen Bauernhofressourcen herbeiführen.

Um diese Ziele zu erreichen, wurde eine breite Palette von Forschungsmethoden eingesetzt, die Schreibtischstudien mit der Analyse empirischer Informationen aus Datenbanken oder Fragebögen, sowie Telefon- und persönlichen Interviews, verband.

Landwirtschaftliche Arbeitsgebäude, im Unterschied zu Bauernhöfen, bilden die größte Kategorie der

aufgelisteten Gebäude die als bedroht eingestuft werden. Sie sind für gewöhnlich in schlechterer Verfassung als andere Gebäudearten. Mehr als die Hälfte der landwirtschaftlichen Listeneinträge wurden seit 1980 Anwendungsplänen unterworfen und mindestens einer von fünf Listeneinträgen mit funktionierenden Bauernhofgebäuden hat die Erlaubnis für eine Umwandlung der Benutzung, hauptsächlich in Wohngebäude erhalten. Die Umwandlung in andere Arbeits- und Geschäftsgebäude ist weit weniger verbreitet.

Die Umwandlung für alternative Nutzung kann einen beträchtlichen nachteiligen Einfluss auf die Verfassung und Landschaftsumfeld von funktionierenden Bauernhöfe haben. Der Druck zur Umwandlung entsteht hauptsächlich aus dem erhöhten Bedarf an Wohngebäuden, die ländliche Bevölkerung wächst und der Kommunikationsbereich verbessert wird.

Dies ging einher mit einem entsprechenden Wechsel seitens der Regierungsstrategie in Bezug auf die Förderung ökonomischer, zukunftsfähiger Entwicklung in ländlichen Gegenden, teils um dem Rückgang

der Landwirtschaft entgegenzuwirken. Diese Kräfte werden sicherlich auch in Zukunft wirken und das Tempo verstärken, mit dem Umwandlungen vorangetrieben werden.

Die örtlichen Behörden unterscheiden sich gewaltig voneinander bezüglich ihrer Strategie bei historischen, funktionierenden Bauernhöfen. Etwas über die Hälfte bewilligt Zuschüsse für die Aufrechterhaltung von, hauptsächlich eingetragenen, Gebäuden. Es stehen jedoch nur wenige Mittel zur Verfügung. Weniger als die Hälfte aller Behörden kontrollieren Veränderungen bei diesen Gebäuden. Weniger als die Hälfte der untersuchten lokalen Pläne erkennen ausdrücklich den Beitrag von Bauernhöfen zur historischen Umgebung an, und die Mehrzahl der Pläne zeigt keine Absichten, den historischen Charakter bei der Erwägung einer neuen Verwendung zu erhalten. Die Pläne auf allen räumlichen Ebenen zeigen eine starke Bevorzugung der Nutzung als Arbeitsplatzraum statt als Wohnraum. Dies wird für gewöhnlich damit begründet, dass es der Beschaffenheit der Gebäude weniger schadet und größeren wirtschaftlichen Nutzen bietet. Die Planung stellt sich im allgemeinen gegen neue Entwicklung in ländlichen Gegenden und dies kann den Druck zur Entwicklung auf bestehende ländliche Gebäude, inklusive der Bauernhöfe, übertragen.

Wenige Interessengruppen haben das Gefühl, dass die örtliche Planung die beiden Hauptanliegen der nationalen Planungspolitik in Bezug auf historische Bauernhöfe: Förderung von ökonomischer Neu-Nutzung und die Erhaltung von wertvollen historischen Gütern, erfolgreich integrieren. Dies wird dem Mangel an Führung bei der Abstimmung dieser Ziele zugeschrieben. Auch wird die nationale Politik als zu wenig sensibel gegenüber den Unterschieden in Örtlichkeiten, wirtschaftlichen Unterschieden und verschiedenen Gebäuden erachtet. Während die nationale Strategie die Neu-Nutzung für Arbeitsplätze bevorzugt, werden die meisten dennoch fast immer zu Wohngebäuden umgewandelt, die vermehrt gebraucht werden und einträglicher sein können. Viele lokale Erhaltungsbeamte haben das Gefühl, dass Wohnumwandlungen häufig schlecht ausgeführt werden und von nationalen Stellen zu einfach bewilligt werden. Die Antragsteller für Umwandlungsbewilligung glauben jedoch, dass dies eher auf schlechte Entwürfe zurückzuführen als auf die eigentliche Besonderheit bei der Umwandlung zu Wohngebäuden; sie halten die nationale Strategie für zu einschränkend.

In Bezug auf das beste Verfahren bei der Umwandlung von funktionierenden Bauernhofgebäuden, gestatten starke aber dennoch flexible Pläne eine Anpassung an individuelle Bedingungen innerhalb eines festen Rahmens. Architekten werden als hauptsächliche Leistungsträger betrachtet, obwohl ein wohlwollender Besitzer als ebenso wichtig erachtet wird. Die Beratung vor der Antragstellung ist enorm wichtig, um den Erfolg eines Entwurfes einzuschätzen; die Beziehung der Beteiligten wird verbessert und daraus resultieren weniger Ablehnungen. Andere wichtige Faktoren sind Einsatz und Verfügbarkeit von lokalen Materialien und traditionellen Methoden, sowie die Verfügbarkeit qualitativer Planungsberatung und gute Arbeitsbeziehungen zwischen den lokalen Behörden und dem Antragsteller.

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# INTRODUCTION: THE RESEARCH PROJECT



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## KEY POINTS

- Historic farm buildings in England comprise a valued historic resource that has an important role in the future of the countryside, but this resource is under threat from the effects of economic, social and policy change.
- More information and understanding of the historic farm building resource is needed so that Government, agencies and individuals can respond effectively to these processes of change.
- The research on which this monograph is based aimed:
  - to provide baseline data on the character and management and threats to listed agricultural buildings in rural and urban fringe areas;
  - to determine the factors that precipitate change in the historic building resource.
- The definition of 'historic farm buildings' was clarified to provide a sound basis for the research.
- The research adopted a comprehensive range of research methods, combining desk study, the collection and analysis of empirical data, and qualitative questionnaires and interviews with representatives of all relevant stakeholders, including a majority of England's rural local planning authorities.

## BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

### The value of the resource

Historic farm buildings are by far the most numerous type of historic structure in the countryside. They are a fundamental and ubiquitous feature in the rural environment and help to define its character and historic interest and provide an important contribution to a sense of place for rural communities and visitors alike. As part of the fabric of our finest landscapes, these buildings provide a substantive asset for the tourist industry, which is now a mainstay of many rural economies, albeit one that is difficult to define and quantify. They also provide a valuable resource for the future diversification of the farming industry and for wider rural development initiatives. In addition, the physical evidence of farm buildings helps us understand how earlier generations responded to local conditions and materials, as well as the market place, in a way that written history cannot, reflecting patterns of landownership and the social and economic development of regions. In their myriad forms and methods of construction, they survive as repositories of the crafts and skills associated with local building materials and techniques. They also illustrate graphically the way that farming practices and technologies developed over time to meet changing circumstances, including the effects of war and peace, surpluses and shortages, new markets and changing patterns of consumption.

### The drivers of change

Since the 1940s the pace of change affecting historic farm buildings has accelerated at an alarming rate. Structural and technological change in agriculture, the problem of long-term decline in farm incomes, the demand to convert historic farm buildings into residences and work places and the effect of national and European policies are all very important factors.

A key feature of Government response to the structural decline of the agricultural industry is to encourage and facilitate the diversification of agricultural incomes to reduce the dependence of farming families on conventional crop and livestock enterprises (Defra 2002a). In particular, the conversion and re-use of historic farm buildings has been identified as a significant opportunity for farmers to diversify their incomes. It has been suggested – by the Cabinet Office Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) among others – that there should be a relaxation in planning regulations pertaining to the conversion of farm buildings (PIU 1999).

The Rural White Paper *Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England* (DETR 2000) advances further arguments that the historic farm building resource is likely to be subject to increased development pressures. To a large degree, it promotes the conversion to economically viable new uses of historic farm buildings through a range of direct and indirect measures. Government is aware that surplus farm buildings can provide accommodation for diversified businesses and is determined that the planning system should be sufficiently flexible to enable this to occur. This is reflected in the publication in August 2004 of Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (ODPM 2004).

Government has also provided farmers with advice to make them aware of diversification opportunities and greater help is now being given with planning applications for diversification activities. Financial incentives to encourage the re-use of surplus farm buildings are also being increased. Farmers are already beginning to respond positively to Government's encouragement to re-use farm buildings and a recent Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) report by Lobley *et al* (2002), which investigated the restructuring of farm businesses, found that one in five farmers had converted buildings for rent or sale in the recent past and this trend would grow as more farmers looked to sell or convert their buildings in the near future. The 2004 Farm Practices Survey (Defra 2004a) found that one in ten farmers with pre-1940 farm buildings have buildings awaiting conversion to other uses.

### The need for an evidence base

The challenges of managing historic farm buildings present an acute dilemma. On the one hand, farmers and land managers cannot be expected to shoulder the burden of maintaining buildings that have little or no agricultural use. On the other, the large-scale dereliction of buildings or, equally, the wholesale or ill-conceived conversion of surplus buildings could irrevocably damage irreplaceable historic assets, the quality of the wider landscape and the appeal of the countryside for its residents and visitors.

If decisions on the management and protection of historic farm buildings are to be well founded, it is also essential that the resource is accurately described and changes monitored. The importance of knowledge-based decision-making has been recognised within Government and its agencies. English Heritage (2000) states:

*“Before we do anything we need knowledge. Without understanding what exists today, its value and its condition, we cannot take sound decisions about its future.” (p.5) ... “We cannot care for the historic environment, or direct resources effectively, unless we know what it is, its condition and how it is changing. We need continuous, thoughtful and well-targeted research to enable us to identify significance and potential.” (p.36)*

Government echoed this view in its recent policy statement on heritage, *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future*:

*“For all organisations concerned with the historic environment, a solid evidence base for policy-making is an essential. For grant-givers such as English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, good quality research is vital to inform the direction of resources. For the Government and local authorities as legislators and regulators, evidence is crucial to the process both of framing policy and of evaluating its impact.” (DCMS and DTLR 2001, p.14)*

Such understanding is an essential prerequisite for the development of appropriate policies for the historic environment and the management of a sustainable countryside. Government has recognised the need to develop a variety of numerical environmental, economic and social indicators (known as Quality of Life indicators) to monitor change in the countryside and enable the effectiveness of policy to be gauged.

Since the 1970s, Government and its agencies have made considerable efforts to record and monitor countryside change. Important progress was made in the 1990s on methodologies for identifying and characterising the significance of the landscape in a way that supports active management strategies. This work is feeding into the Countryside Agency-led development of a National Countryside Character Database and indicators of Countryside Quality. The Rural White Paper (DETR 2000) committed Government to produce an indicator for change in countryside quality. To achieve this aim the Countryside Agency established the Countryside Quality Counts (CQC) project. This project is supported by Defra, English Heritage and English Nature, and dependent upon wider partnerships with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Forestry Commission, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) and the Environment Agency. The first report has now been produced covering the period 1990–98. This provides both a ‘headline’ indicator of national countryside quality and a set of indicators relating to the character areas of England.<sup>1</sup> The process was repeated for the period 1998–2003 and will report in 2006.

## **The lack of data**

We know far more about the nature and processes of change affecting land cover and field pattern than we do about agriculture’s built environment and its contribution to countryside character and local distinctiveness (see English Heritage 2001; Gaskell 2002).

The deficiency in research devoted to describing and monitoring change in historic farm buildings is clearly evident in the principal national sustainability indicators, known as Quality of Life Counts (QLC), which were published by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in 1999 (DETR 1999a). The only measure of change relating to the historic built environment is contained within Indicator K5 and quantifies the number of listed grade I and II\* buildings at risk recorded on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk (BAR) register. The statutory lists provide the only national-scale data for the rural built environment. However, the use to which these data have so far been put has been limited. The English Heritage BAR register covers only 8 per cent of list entries and little is known of the threat to the remaining 92 per cent of grade II entries. It is widely accepted that the register is not representative of the listed building resource as a whole (English Heritage 2001). In turn, this means that the indicator can provide only limited data to inform the decisions of policy makers.

There is therefore a pressing need to develop more robust indicators for the historic rural environment and there is considerable potential to integrate various sources of data on the condition and management of and threat to listed agricultural buildings to create such indicators. To achieve this it is essential to ensure that the data are representative of the listed agricultural building resource as a whole.

To facilitate the creation of these indicators there is a need to draw together the disparate data that exists on listed historic farm buildings and supplement them where required. The need for better information on historic buildings to inform decision-making was recognised over two decades ago by the *Working Party on Alternative Uses of Historic Buildings* (British Tourist Authority 1980). However, the current situation is that even the most basic information is lacking. There has been no research to describe the character of the resource, let alone monitor change and identify the pressures and processes that lead to change. A broad estimate is that there are more than 1.2 million pre-1914 historic farm buildings, including farm dwellings, while the statutory lists contain 72,518 agricultural building entries.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, surprisingly little is known about the impact and effectiveness of the planning system on the management of the historic farm building resource. Research in this field has been confined largely to the influence of planning policies on farm diversification (Elson *et al* 1995; Shorten *et al* 2001; Nichol 2004). There is a need for research to examine the nature of both statutory planning policy and non-statutory guidance towards farm buildings at all levels of policy-making. In particular, there is a need to determine, at the local level, the extent to which these policies and guidance are based upon a rounded appreciation of the historic farm building resource, the extent to which they encourage, or discourage, conversion and re-use, and the extent to which they take account of the variety of farm building types. Research is urgently needed to evaluate the effectiveness of planning policy and identify examples of good practice within the planning system with regard to historic farm buildings.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In 2001 English Heritage and the Countryside Agency commissioned the Countryside & Community Research Unit to undertake a research project investigating the nature, condition and management of the historic farmsteads of England. The final report of that project, which forms the basis of this monograph, characterises the listed agricultural building resource and how it is changing, analyses the issues surrounding the threats to historic farm buildings, and identifies best practice with regard to their management and re-use (Gaskell *et al* 2003).

This research project begins to meet the need for research into historic farm buildings outlined above. The overall aims of the project were:

- to provide baseline data on the character, management and threats to listed agricultural buildings in rural and urban fringe areas;
- to determine the factors that precipitate change in the historic farm building resource.

These broad aims were refined and distilled into a number of more specific objectives. The objectives relating to the *first* aim were:

- to provide baseline data on the character of listed agricultural buildings;

- to provide baseline data on the management of and threat to listed agricultural buildings;
- to identify best practice in the collection, storage, analysis and presentation of data on the character and management of and threat to listed agricultural buildings;
- to develop sustainability indicators derived from data collected on listed agricultural buildings capable of expression at both a national and regional level;
- to provide data to inform the targeting of resources for the management of historic farm buildings, including agri-environment and rural development funding streams.

The objectives relating to the *second* aim were:

- to identify the macro driving force pressures that precipitate change in the management of historic farm buildings;
- to describe the approach taken by local planning authorities to the management of historic farm buildings;
- to identify best practice amongst local planning authorities.

## DEFINING THE HISTORIC FARMSTEAD

Historic farm buildings and farmsteads have been defined in a number of different ways by various authorities (see Harvey 1985; Wiliam 1986; Lake 1989; Wade Martins 1991; Barnwell & Giles 1997; Brunskill 1999). There is, however, general agreement that the start of the 20th century represented a significant watershed, marking the final demise of largely traditional building styles using local materials and their replacement by modern construction techniques using concrete and steel. Nevertheless, as Harvey (1985, p. 1) notes:

*“This does not mean that all farm buildings built before 1900 are major historical monuments. It does mean that all such buildings have some degree of historic interest ... Neither does it mean that all farm buildings built after 1900 are devoid of interest. The year 1900 is merely a convenient historical and documentary breakpoint.”*

What constitutes a farm building is even more difficult to define. Some authorities make a distinction between

domestic and non-domestic or working farmstead buildings and exclude farmhouses and farm cottages, while others stress the importance of the farmhouse as the centre of the farming operation and point out that the farmhouse and working buildings are often situated under the same roof, which makes it difficult to differentiate between them. Farmstead plans, the way the buildings are arranged around the homestead and relate to the house, can be found in a diversity of forms. It was, for example, far more common for the houses on smaller farms in northern and western England to be attached or intimately related to the working farmstead buildings. One or two ranges of attached buildings can, therefore, include many different functions. Even small farms in the South East, by contrast, are characterised by one or more separate buildings, often loosely arranged around the sides of a yard. Post-1750 remodellings and larger farms, typically over 150 acres, are more likely to combine a whole diversity of functions in continuous ranges or formal courtyard groupings. William (1986) and Brunskill (1999) stress the importance of the farmstead in the historic landscape, with the three elements of the farmstead – farmhouse, farmyard and working buildings – being closely dependent on each other.

There is a clear distinction between domestic and working buildings in terms of the policy framework for historic farm buildings. In statutory planning policy and non-statutory guidance the term 'historic farm building' is used almost exclusively to mean the working buildings of the farmstead.

Another problem of definition is what constitutes the function of a building. As Brunskill (1999, p.13) notes:

*"... farm buildings in the past accommodated several processes and also housed several activities or functions ... Sometimes each function justified a separate building, sometimes several functions were accommodated under one roof."*

The ambiguity between function and form is reflected in many of the written descriptions that form part of the statutory lists. This often makes it very difficult to determine how many individual buildings are being described unless the description is accompanied by plans or photographs.

For practical reasons it was decided to include both domestic and working farmstead buildings in the present study, largely because the data set maintained by English Heritage of all statutory list entries for agricultural

buildings does not distinguish between farmhouses and farm cottages and the working buildings of the farmstead. It is clear, however, that the domestic and working farmstead buildings are subject to very different processes of change. For example, the pressures and demands placed on threshing barns are very different from those placed on farmhouses. Therefore, whenever possible, a distinction is made between domestic and working buildings when presenting the research findings.

The data set includes a wide range of agricultural listed buildings that serve domestic dwellings (such as stables), commercial buildings, storage and processing buildings as well as agricultural buildings associated with a farmstead. Therefore, whenever possible, a further distinction is made between farmstead and non-farmstead buildings.

## RESEARCH METHODS ADOPTED

An exhaustive range of complementary research methods was used to secure a comprehensive understanding of the issues relating to historic farm buildings. This combined a desk study approach with the analysis of empirical data contained within existing databases or collected via postal questionnaires, and telephone and personal interviews.

### Quantitative data

Data from existing databases were combined with data from original survey work in order to provide baseline data on the number, character and management of, and pressures on, listed agricultural buildings. The main source of existing data was the English Heritage Listed Buildings System (LBS). The LBS was analysed to determine the character of the listed agricultural building resource in terms of date, construction materials and type. The LBS does not, however, record information on the condition of or the threat to the resource. Two other national databases provided useful but limited data on the condition of and threats to listed agricultural buildings. These were the English Heritage BAR register of grade I and II\* buildings and the Conservation Database of the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), which contains records of Listed Building Consent (LBC) applications for total or partial demolition. These two existing national databases provide insufficient data to determine the full extent of the changes taking place to the resource. In order to obtain more representative data, therefore, three additional surveys were conducted.

The first survey identified those local authorities that maintain comprehensive and up-to-date BAR registers.

These registers were analysed to obtain information on passive change, characterised by a decline in the condition of buildings due to a lack of maintenance by the owner. All rural local authority participants in the 1991 English Heritage BAR study were contacted in an attempt to provide baseline data to compare with the situation in 2001, from which trend data could be produced on the threat to listed agricultural buildings. However, none of the local authorities contacted could provide time series data and this element of the research could not be carried out.

The second survey was based on a postal questionnaire of 224 local planning authorities selected for study (see selection of local planning authorities). The survey analysed the planning history of a statistically representative sample of LBS list entries for agricultural buildings. This survey identified the proportion of list entries that had been subject to LBC and planning applications and the outcomes of these applications. This information provides a valuable indicator of active change that is caused by deliberate actions to alter the structure and/or use of a building.

The third survey compared photographs of listed agricultural buildings taken in the 1980s, as part of the Accelerated National Resurvey conducted by English Heritage, with a corresponding set of photographs taken between 1999 and 2003 to provide indicators of both passive and active change.

### Planning data

To investigate the impact and effectiveness of the planning system on the management of the historic farm building resource, the research was broadened to encompass both listed and unlisted buildings. In addition to an extensive literature review referenced at the end of the monograph, approximately 175 planning policy documents at national, regional, county and district levels were analysed. Over 160 local planning authorities answered questionnaires on their policies towards historic farm buildings. Some 50 planning applications for the re-use of historic farm buildings were scrutinised, and interviews were conducted with over 100 different stakeholders participating in the planning process, including conservation officers, planning officers, applicants, agents, landowners, and statutory and non-statutory consultees in the planning process. Taken together, the findings of the research provide a comprehensive account of the content and implementation of planning and related policies for historic farm buildings in England. The approach is described in more detail below.

The more detailed evaluation of planning policies affecting historic farm buildings and their implementation comprised four activities:

- document analysis of national, regional and county level policies;
- qualitative case studies in 16 selected planning authorities to explore how they balance government policy advice to protect the architectural and historic integrity of farm buildings with advice to look favourably on the re-use of such buildings. Face-to-face interviews and focus groups were then undertaken in six of the local authorities to assess where policies are being implemented successfully and where they are failing;
- case-study work in 16 authorities to identify examples where the adaptive re-use of farm buildings has been successfully achieved without damaging their historic character;
- case studies in authorities that have taken an innovative approach to the conservation and regeneration of their historic farm building resource through the use of whole farm plans and planning gain.

### Selection of local planning authorities

Three types of local planning authority were identified based on their accessibility. The classification used was that adopted by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) to investigate the implementation of national planning policy guidance in relation to the diversification of farm businesses (DTLR 2001a). In total 224 authorities in England were selected:<sup>3</sup>

- 74 remote rural authorities;
- 99 accessible rural authorities;
- 51 urban fringe authorities.

The distribution of selected authorities by Government Region was:

- 43 authorities in the South East;
- 39 in the East of England;
- 37 in the South West;
- 27 in the East Midlands;
- 22 in the North West;
- 22 in the West Midlands;
- 21 in Yorkshire and the Humber;
- 13 in the North East.

## 2

# HISTORIC FARM BUILDINGS AND THE DRIVERS OF CHANGE



Source: Countryside Agency  
© Clare Pawley

### KEY POINTS

- Over the past half century a large number of historic farm buildings have become redundant and consequently have been demolished, neglected or altered to the detriment of their historic character.
- Agricultural decline over the same fifty years means that agriculture is no longer the primary economic driver in rural areas. The changing agricultural practices that have been adopted in response to severe economic pressures often preclude the use and maintenance of historic farm buildings.
- Recent changes in agricultural policy at national and European levels require the integration of agriculture into broader rural policies. The parallel reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the implementation of the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) are likely to lead to greater rationalisation of farms, further redundancy of historic farm buildings and greater opportunities for their re-use.
- There have been significant changes in the past few years in national planning policy towards a more permissive approach to economic development in rural areas. The effects of this shift in policy are likely to encourage the productive re-use and conversion of farm buildings.
- National planning policies continue to champion the protection of the historic environment in rural areas, including farm buildings.

## INTRODUCTION

This section of the monograph identifies the main pressures that precipitate change in the management of historic farm buildings. An extensive literature review was undertaken to identify the drivers of change shaping rural economies, and the particular influence of recent developments in agricultural and planning policy. The literature was supplemented by interviews with representatives of Government, the professions and voluntary organisations who were asked to reflect upon and develop further the understanding of the factors that precipitate change in the historic farm-building resource.<sup>4</sup>

Over the past fifty years agriculture has been characterised by the widespread adoption of technological innovations and new management techniques, which has meant that many historic farm

buildings have become functionally redundant. As a result, historic farm buildings are a threatened resource. Sell (1985) identifies two types of threat that are of concern. The first, which he terms 'absolute loss', describes the loss of a farm building through destruction, demolition or neglect. The second, which he terms 'relative loss', is the loss of character due to unsuitable repairs or change of use, which damages the historic character of the building.

At the level of the individual farm business, the decision maker has a number of options for managing historic farm buildings that may impact differentially upon the building's character and landscape setting (Table 1).

The use of a building for its original purpose is generally seen as the best way to conserve its historic character and fabric (DoE 1994). However, technological change has made many if not all historic farm buildings

**Table 1** Management options for historic farm buildings

Function	Management	Comment
1 Original use	Agricultural	The building is used for its original purpose and continues to play a part in the farming system.
2 Adaptive re-use	Agricultural	The building continues to be used for agriculture but has been adapted to perform a new function.
	Economic	The building is no longer used for agriculture and has been converted to an economic use.
	Residential	The building is no longer used for agriculture and has been converted to a residential dwelling.
3 No use	Maintained	The building is no longer used but is maintained.
	Not maintained	The building is no longer used and is not maintained.
4 Demolition	No development of footprint	The building is no longer used and has been demolished.
	Development of footprint	The building has been demolished and replaced by new development.

functionally redundant for their original purpose. For example, the threshing barns that dominate many farmsteads have been redundant in these terms for over a century. Animal housing, particularly for cattle, has continued to serve its original function longer, but structural and technological change combined with improved welfare standards means that decreasing numbers are still used for their original purpose (National Trust 1999). As a result, the building may be adapted for one of a range of alternative uses. Adaptation to a new farm-related use is generally regarded as being likely to conserve the agricultural character of a building, although the nature of modern agriculture means that most historic farm buildings are not easily adapted to accommodate highly mechanised production processes. When they are, structural alterations may be required which can have a considerable impact on their character (DoE 1994). Alternatively, many historic farm buildings are used for low-key uses (such as storage) simply because they are at hand and are maintained for reasons that are not primarily economic.

It is possible to identify two different situations relating to the management of individual historic farm buildings. The first is where the building remains part of or 'coupled' to a farm business. The second is where the building is 'decoupled' from a farm business through sale by the owner. Where the building remains coupled to the farm, conversion to economic or residential uses may form part of a strategy to diversify the farm business. Again the impact of the conversion on the character of the building and its landscape setting can be significant. Alternatively, the building may not be used at all. If the building is not maintained it will gradually become derelict and eventually collapse or be demolished.

It is not known how many historic farm buildings are extant, what proportion of those farm buildings remain part of agricultural businesses or what proportion now exist in isolation as a result of decoupling. The 2004 Farm Practices Survey (Defra 2004a) estimates that over two thirds of holdings in England (68%) include one or more working farmstead buildings erected before 1940. This would suggest that almost one third of holdings have been either sold off or demolished their traditional working buildings or, alternatively, are relatively new businesses with wholly modern buildings. A more detailed understanding of the factors that drive the restructuring of both the agricultural industry and the decoupling process will be essential in determining the likely changes that will affect the historic farm building resource in future. The following analysis of the factors driving change is structured under three headings: changing rural

economies, recent developments in agricultural policy, and recent developments in rural planning policy.

## CHANGING RURAL ECONOMIES

For much of the 20th century, agriculture was the main economic, social and environmental force for change in rural areas. Rural development policy and conservation policy were based on the maintenance of an economically healthy and productive agricultural industry. However, since the end of the Second World War the transformation of agricultural production, characterised by the replacement of farmers and workers with capital-intensive technologies, has meant that agriculture is no longer the primary economic and social driver in rural areas (PIU 1999). Even in the 150 'most rural' districts in England, primary agricultural production contributes less than 5 per cent of the workforce (Ward & Lowe 2001) and nationally only 1.8 per cent of the total workforce was employed in agriculture in 2003 (Defra 2004b). In economic terms agriculture's contribution to Gross Domestic Product is now less than 1 per cent (Countryside Agency 2000a). Agriculture, however, still occupies 80 per cent of the UK land surface and the industry remains very important in determining the future of historic farm buildings and their wider landscape setting.

While the social and economic importance of agriculture has declined, other factors such as rural industries and socio-demographic change are now just as significant in shaping rural areas (Haines-Young & McNally 2001). Manufacturing, retailing and tourism now contribute half (52%) of all employment in rural businesses compared to 6 per cent for agriculture (Defra 2004b). There has also been significant net migration into rural areas averaging 60,000 people per year between 1991 and 2001 (Defra 2004b).

Ward and Lowe (2001) and Lobley *et al* (2002) identify a range of drivers operating at different spatial scales, from global to local, that are changing the nature of rural areas. These include globalisation through the concentration of vertically integrated markets for farm inputs and products, international trade agreements, environmental pressures, new technologies and changes in economic and social processes. There has also been a major change in the way that rural areas are used and valued by society (Roberts 2002). This is manifest in an increasing demand for agriculture to produce 'public goods' as well as agricultural commodities. The Countryside Agency (2000a) reports that two-thirds of the public said that if farmers had

to choose between producing more food and caring for the countryside they should choose the latter. It is clear that some of these drivers are more relevant than others in precipitating change to the historic farm building resource. Of particular importance are those that change the economics of agricultural production and the relationship between agriculture and other rural economic sectors and interests.

### **Agro-economic drivers of change**

In 2000, the Economics and Statistics Group of the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food identified four important agro-economic drivers that help to shape the agricultural industry (MAFF 2000a) and in recent years these have come together at the farm level to create concerted pressure on farm incomes:

- consumer demands;
- technological change;
- international trade agreements;
- European and national policies.

### **Consumer demands**

In the UK, like other developed economies with a well-fed and relatively stable population, the demand for food rises only slowly. While in absolute terms consumers spend more on food as their incomes rise, they tend to spend a smaller proportion of their budget on food and drink. In the last fifty years the proportion of the family budget spent on food has fallen from 30 per cent to 10 per cent (Defra 2002a). This decline in the demand for food relative to income levels has meant that the price of farm products has not risen as fast as the price of other commodities.

As part of these economic processes, the rate of increase in the cost of farm inputs, such as land, labour, fertilisers and machinery, has tended to outstrip the rise in product prices, and this has been exacerbated as farmers have become more dependent on the supply industries for inputs such as agrochemicals and machinery. During the Second World War and the immediate post-war period overall farm incomes rose in real terms, but since 1949 there has been a general decline, although this has been subject to a number of fluctuations. In addition, frequent food scares and the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and foot and mouth disease (FMD) crises have made consumers increasingly concerned about food safety and production methods. The quality, safety and traceability of food, together with animal welfare issues,

are informing the purchasing decisions of a significant and growing segment of the population. Farmers have to adapt to both changing markets and new legislation introduced to address food quality and safety concerns. Environmental issues have also risen higher on the public agenda where changes in tastes and preferences have meant that the quality of the rural environment and countryside leisure activities have become significantly more important to consumers (Defra 2002a).

### **Technological change**

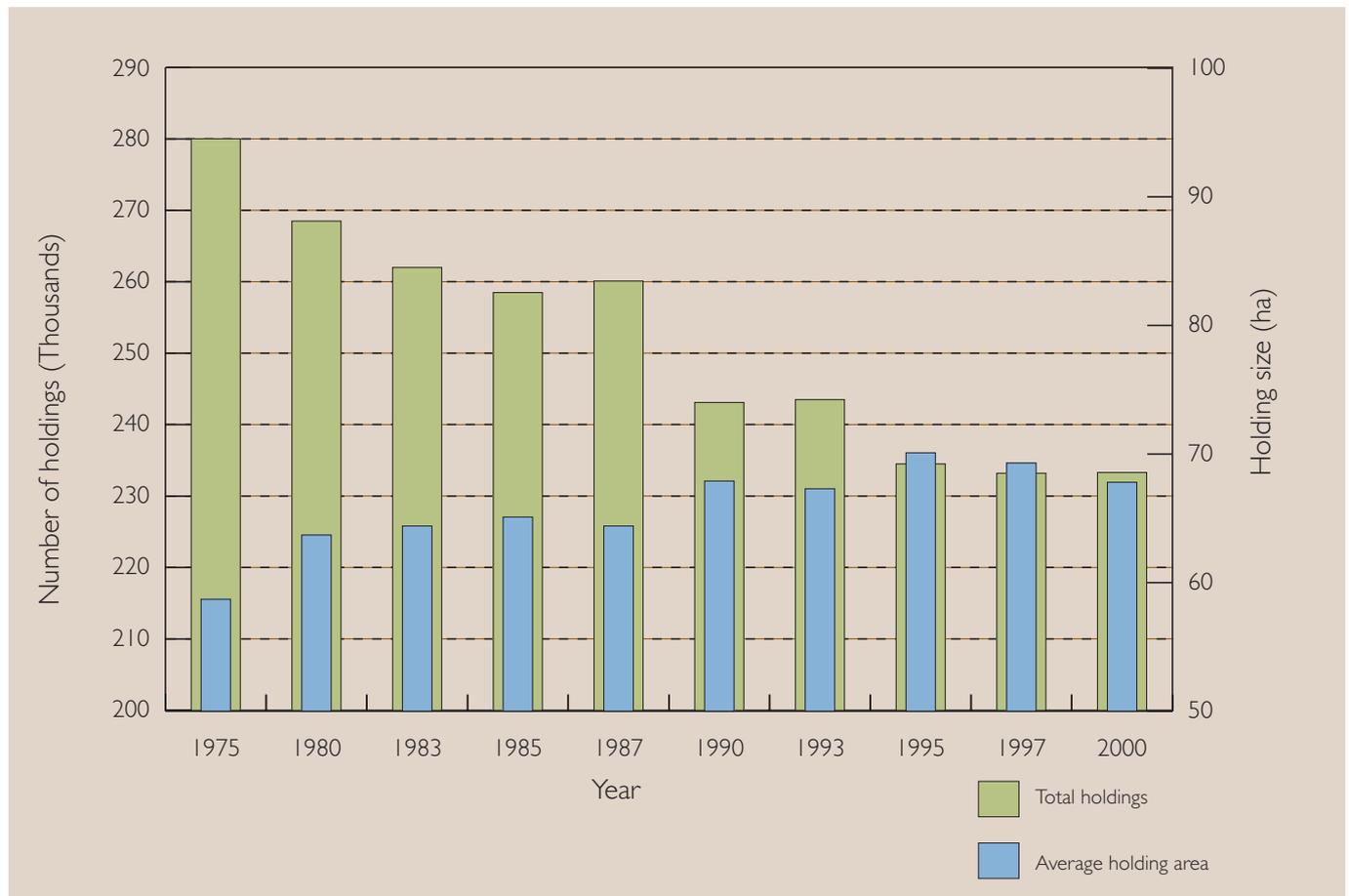
The agricultural industry has adopted new technologies, which have resulted in significant changes to farming practices. Specialisation and the simplification of farming systems have been made possible through the adoption of chemical and mechanical technologies (Briggs & Courtney 1985), which have also enabled land to be used more intensively. Chemical technologies have undermined the biological principles of mixed farming. Herbicides are now used to control weed growth, making root crops unnecessary, while pesticides and fungicides keep pests and diseases under control, thereby eliminating the need for cleaning rotations.

In addition, new crop breeds have helped to raise yields even further. Where farmers have specialised in intensive livestock production, they have also used a wide range of technological advances. Antibiotics and other drugs now control the spread of disease, while meat production is increased through the use of growth-promoting hormones. Livestock is intensively reared in purpose-built temperature- and humidity-controlled buildings. Welfare issues are also a driver for change and may result in buildings becoming redundant. Mixed farming also has been undermined by the high cost of mechanising every crop. This has encouraged specialisation in a smaller number of crops that can be handled more efficiently by the same machinery. The end result has been the regional specialisation of production into separate arable and livestock areas. One of the consequences of this is that many of the historic farm buildings erected to serve a mixed farming economy are now functionally redundant and are not suited to the scale of modern production processes and the machinery that accompanies it.

### **International Trade Agreements**

The UK has been a member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) since 1948, but it was not until 1986 and the 'Uruguay Round' that GATT members began to address the trade distortions caused by subsidies and tariffs in agriculture. One of the outcomes of the Uruguay Round was the creation in 1995 of the

**Figure 1** Change in the number and average size of holdings in the UK, 1975–2000



Source: Eurostat

World Trade Organisation (WTO), which was set up to deal with the rules of trade between nations. The WTO is now taking forward the Agreement on Agriculture, which aims to reduce trade distortions in agriculture. The WTO classifies agricultural support payments into three groups:

- 'red box' supports linked to production that distort trade and must be phased out (no longer in operation);
- 'amber box' supports, which significantly distort trade and must be reduced;
- 'green box' supports, which have little or no effect on trade (such as UK agri-environment and enterprise schemes).

In 1992, at the same time as the Uruguay Round was taking place, the European Union and the USA concluded the Blair House agreement. This agreement added another category of support:

- 'blue box' supports that are based on area and

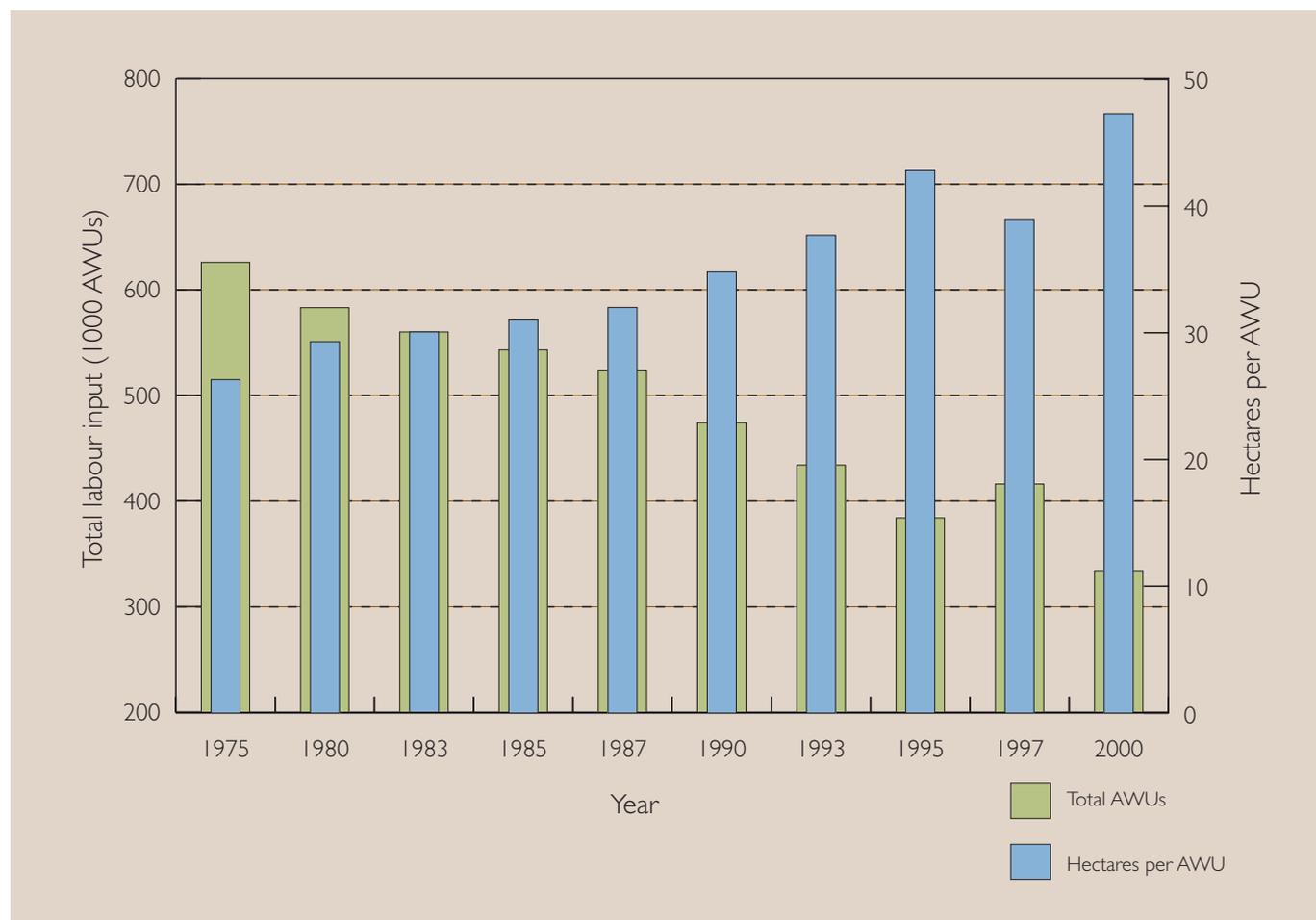
'headage', which limit production but are not linked to price or the volume of output.

Even though the latest round of WTO talks on agriculture held in Cancun in Mexico stalled in September 2003, further trade liberalisation is likely to remain high on the agenda. It is likely that 'green box' payments, where most Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) support will reside from 2005, will remain unchallenged in the short term but may be threatened by the more radical members of the WTO in the future (Jones 2004).

### European and national policy

The CAP has been, and will continue to be, a major driving force for change. Seymour (2001) notes, however, that since the beginning of the 1980s there has been a gradual weakening of the pursuit of sectoral policies at the EU and national levels and the development of an alternative integrated approach aimed at addressing the problems of geographic areas rather than economic sectors. A central feature of this policy

**Figure 2** Change in the agricultural labour force and average number of hectares per Annual Work Unit in the UK, 1975–2000



Source: Eurostat

approach is the concept of sustainable development. The role of agricultural and planning policy (both of which are explicitly influenced by the goal of sustainable development) as drivers of change, and their influence on historic farm buildings, is covered in more detail later in this section.

### National level responses to the agro-economic drivers of change

For the agricultural sector as a whole it is clear that the industry has responded to these drivers by adopting capital-intensive technologies, shedding labour, reducing the number of independent businesses and increasing farm size. Between 1975 and 2000 the total number of holdings in the UK declined by 18 per cent from 280,000 to 233,000. At the same time the average size of holdings increased by 16 per cent from 58.7 to 67.8 hectares (Figure 1).

Similarly the total labour force, measured in Annual Work

Units (AWU), declined by 47 per cent from 625,000 to 334,000. Over the same period the average agricultural area managed per AWU increased by 80 per cent from 26.3 to 47.3 hectares (Figure 2).

### The agricultural income crisis

On top of these long-term processes that combine to create downward pressure on farm incomes, three additional drivers have triggered the recent income crisis:

- the strength of Sterling relative to other currencies and especially the Euro;
- a fall in world market prices for a range of commodities;
- the BSE and FMD crises and their effects.

By 2000 Net Farm Incomes in the UK were as low in real terms as at any time in the last 30 years (Figure 3). Average income has fallen by 60 per cent since 1995

**Figure 3** Agricultural industry income trends in the UK (real terms at 2003 prices), 1973–2003



Source: Defra (2004c)

after doubling between 1990 and 1995. Total Income from Farming<sup>5</sup> was at 35 per cent of the levels seen in the mid 1970s and about 70 per cent of the levels seen in the late 1980s (MAFF 2000a and 2000b). The recession has been felt across all the major farming systems, although some have fared less well than others. In particular, hill and lowland livestock farms have been most severely affected. Since 2000, farm incomes have recovered to a level more in line with the late 1980s but Defra predicts that there will be little further change to incomes over the next five years and that there may even be another decline (Defra, 2004c).

Of the three factors that precipitated the income crisis of the late 1990s, the most damaging was the rise in value of Sterling against the Euro, although this has since eased somewhat. It is very difficult for producers to maintain prices and retain markets when Sterling undergoes a sustained period of appreciation. Its high value makes it increasingly difficult to export, while foreign produce becomes cheaper and more attractive to the processors

and retailers who supply domestic markets. Furthermore, the support and compensation payments for commodities that were protected under the CAP were paid in Euros. This meant that as Sterling appreciated in value against the Euro the level of support payments to UK farmers was effectively reduced.

To compound the negative impact of exchange-rate movements there was a significant downturn in the world economy. This had a knock-on effect on world commodity markets where demand and prices slumped since 1995, which added to the difficulties of UK agriculture. The effects of the BSE and FMD crises continue to be felt by farmers in terms of restricted export markets and higher production costs. These factors came together in various combinations to push farm incomes into a downward spiral across all sectors, the effects of which are still being felt across the industry.

A number of drivers are not directly related to the agricultural industry but nonetheless have a significant

**Table 2** Farm-level responses to economic and social pressures

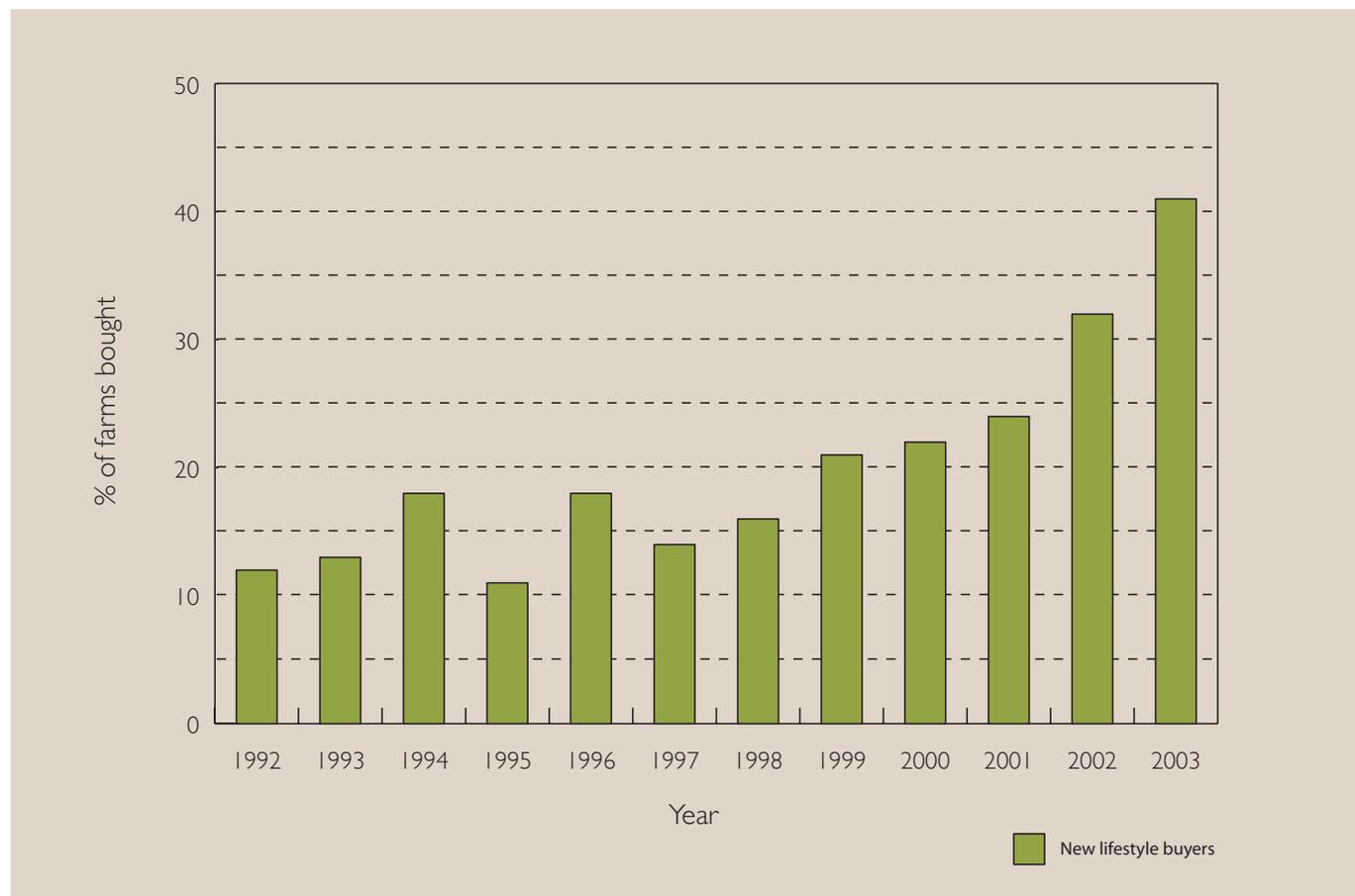
A.	Adjustments In The Use of On-Farm Resources	<b>A1. Conventional Agricultural Production</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the area of the farm business.</li> <li>• Specialise production.</li> <li>• Intensify production.</li> <li>• Restructure labour use.</li> </ul>
		<b>A2. Agricultural Diversification</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unconventional agricultural enterprises.</li> <li>• Adding value to conventional and unconventional products through on-farm processing and packaging.</li> <li>• Alternative marketing of agricultural products.</li> <li>• Supply of agricultural labour and/or machinery contracting services to other farms/businesses.</li> <li>• Access, conservation and environmental goods.</li> </ul>
		<b>A3. Tourism and Recreation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm-based accommodation.</li> <li>• Farm-based recreation.</li> </ul>
		<b>A4. Use of Ancillary Buildings and Land</b>
B.	Adjustments In The Use of Off-Farm Resources	<b>B1. Off-Farm Employment</b> <b>B2. Off-Farm Business Opportunities</b>
C.	Asset Realisation	<b>C1. Sale of Land, Buildings, Shares, Other Assets</b>
D.	Make No Change	<b>D1. Accept a Lower Standard of Living</b>
E.	Leave Farming	<b>E1. Retirement</b>  <b>E2. Engage in Another Sector of the Economy</b>

influence on it. Of particular importance is the combination of forces that have driven the counterurbanisation that has taken place in some rural areas. Between 1981 and 2001, England's rural population grew by 1.5 million people (12%) while the urban population increased by only 813,000 (2%) (Countryside Agency 2003). Affluent people have moved to the countryside attracted by the high-quality environment and way of life. This has been facilitated by changes in personal mobility that have enabled greater distances to be travelled to work, and a

range of technological innovations that have enabled increasing numbers to work from home. The desire for country living shows no signs of abating as shown by the 1999 British Social Attitudes Survey, which found that while 18 per cent of those surveyed said they lived in the countryside, nearly 50 per cent said they would like to do so (Countryside Agency 2000a).

The desire for country living has also resulted in a dramatic increase in the purchase of agricultural land by

**Figure 4** Proportion of farms purchased by 'lifestyle' buyers, 1992–2003



Source: FPD Savills (2004)

non-farmers (Figure 4). According to a report by FPD Savills (2004) new 'lifestyle' buyers represented 41 per cent of farm purchases compared to 12 per cent in 1992.

Over the past half century, as agriculture has witnessed a decline in its social and economic importance other industries have grown up in rural areas. There is now little difference in the employment profiles of different sectors between rural and urban areas (Countryside Agency 2000a). Both have experienced strong growth in service sector activities. There is some evidence that high-quality rural environments have attracted entrepreneurs into the countryside (Roberts 2002) and this has brought with it increased demand for both rural workspaces and residences, with obvious implications for the re-use of historic farm buildings. A major growth in leisure and tourism employment and spending has also taken place in rural areas (Countryside Agency 2000a).

### Farm level responses to the drivers of change

As well as responding to external economic pressures on their income, farm businesses also have to respond to internal family pressures. Farmers have developed a variety of 'coping strategies', which involve making compromises between, on the one hand, ensuring family continuity and retaining independence and, on the other, generating capital to fund the expansion necessary to ensure the economic survival of the business (Marsden *et al* 1989).

When faced with a reduction in farm incomes, farmers may have several courses of action open to them (Winter & Gaskell 1995). These courses of action, known as adjustment strategies, are of four main kinds and are outlined in Table 2. The adoption of such adjustment strategies is not mutually exclusive and farm businesses may include more than one at any time, and as a farm business develops it may change from one strategy to another as circumstances change. The type of strategy or strategies adopted by farmers will help to determine the management decisions about the farm's historic buildings.

## Variations in the restructuring of farm businesses

Not all farmers respond in the same way to pressures on their income. Their behaviour depends on the combination of social, economic and physical resources at their disposal and the macro-economic, political and technological drivers that are in operation at the time (Munton *et al* 1987). External drivers are diverse and operate at different spatial scales from global to local and provide the framework within which farm businesses operate (Lobley *et al* 2002). Adjustments are made both as a response to changes in this framework and in compliance with the aims of the farm family. Farmers' freedom of action is therefore constrained by both external forces, operating beyond their control, and a range of internal ones located within the family business, including:

- farm assets, including the number and location of historic farm buildings;
- business size;
- farm tenure;
- family composition, availability and desire to work in the farm business;
- level of borrowing and ability to service loans.

As changes take place to these driving forces different types of adjustment may become more or less attractive to individual farmers and, indeed, to whole sectors of the farming industry. What is clear, however, is that over the past decade the agricultural sector has received a number of 'shocks to the system' in the form of major CAP reforms, food scares and a dramatic fall in incomes that have prompted many farmers to review the whole of their businesses from top to bottom.

Research by Lobley *et al* (2002) into the current and future restructuring of England's agricultural businesses found that farm buildings played an important part in the restructuring process. In the previous five years 60 per cent of all farmers surveyed had liquidated assets, especially buildings, either to pay off debts or to invest in diversification activities and 17 per cent had converted buildings for sale or rent (Figure 5). They also found that business restructuring involving farm buildings would play an important role in the subsequent five years, with 30 per cent of farmers planning to convert their buildings for sale or rent and 57 per cent planning to sell off assets. This clearly shows that a significant proportion of farmers have actively sought to re-use farm buildings for residential and economic purposes in the recent past and almost twice as many will seek to do the same in

the future. Although Lobley *et al*'s research does not differentiate between economic and residential re-use, a study of farm diversification activities in England conducted by the Centre for Rural Research (2003) found that 88 per cent of buildings sold off by farmers were destined for residential re-use and only 7 per cent for economic re-use. While the volume of farm buildings to be channelled into adaptive re-use seems set to grow dramatically, there is evidence that the number of farm buildings included within agri-environment schemes may also increase. Lobley *et al* found that while 22 per cent of farmers had entered an agri-environment scheme in the previous five years, 35 per cent were planning to join a scheme in the future.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AGRICULTURAL POLICY

### A new context for agricultural policy

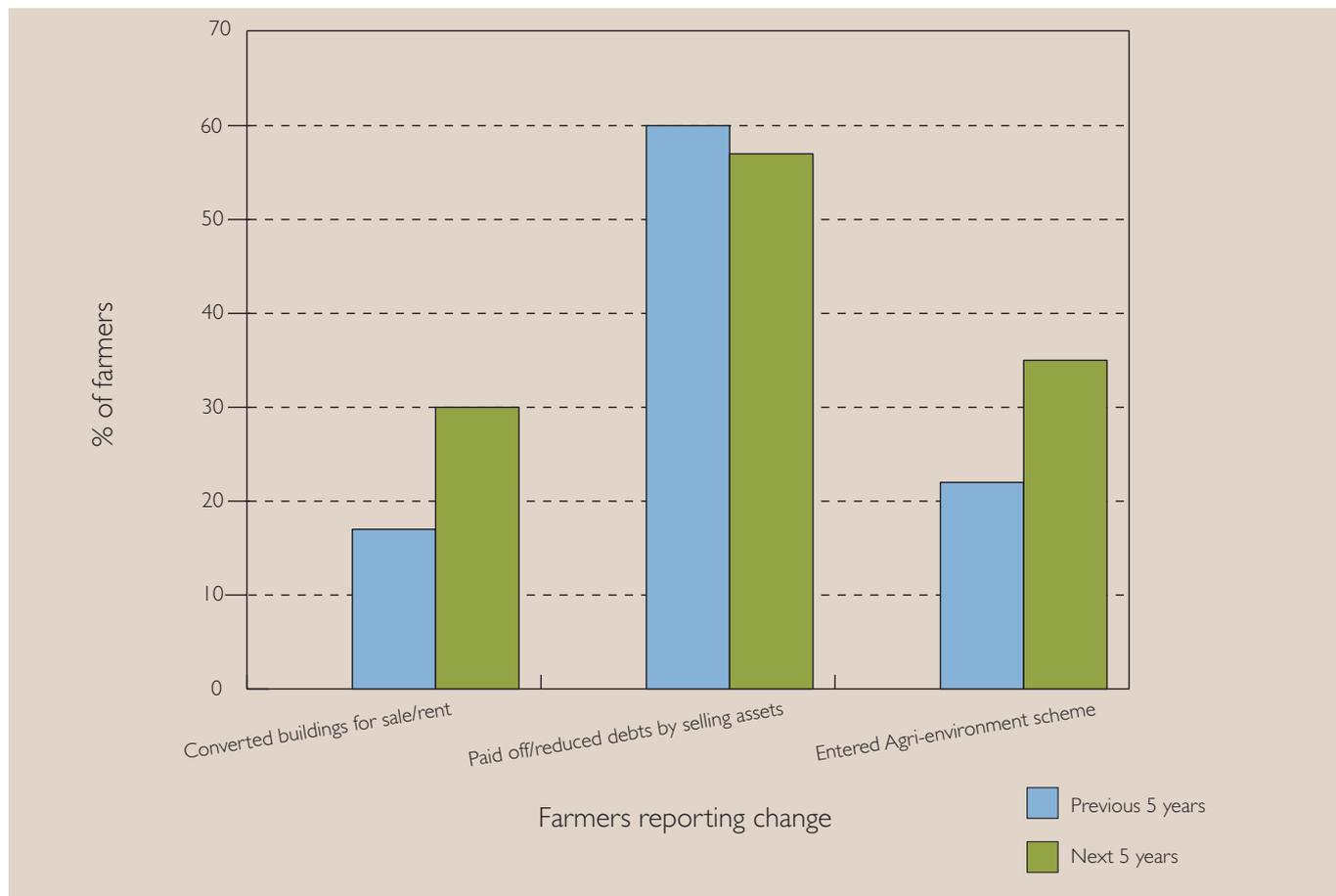
Government is committed to modernising the policy framework for rural areas and is promoting the integration of agricultural policy with broader rural policy at both national and European levels. It has defined its vision for the countryside in its Rural White Paper (DETR 2000) as:

- a living countryside, with thriving rural communities and access to high-quality public services;
- a working countryside, with a prosperous and diverse economy, giving high and stable levels of employment;
- a protected countryside, in which the environment is sustained and enhanced, and which all can enjoy;
- a vibrant countryside which can shape its own future and whose voice is heard by Government at all levels.

Building on this vision, the Rural Strategy 2004 (Defra 2004b) sets out Government's approach to rural policy and delivery over the short term (three to five years). The strategy identifies three priorities that will inform rural policy:

- **Economic and Social Regeneration** – supporting enterprise across rural England, but targeting greater resources at areas of greatest need.
- **Social Justice for All** – tackling rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and providing fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people.

**Figure 5** Changes to agricultural businesses in the recent past and near future



Source: Lobley et al (2002)

- **Enhancing the Value of our Countryside** – protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.

The primary economic role of agriculture will continue to be the production of food (Box 1). The FMD crisis of 2001 and the findings of the Policy Commission on Food and Farming (Defra 2002b) have led Government to consider the long-term sustainability of farming. The Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food (Defra 2002a) re-emphasises the vision of a protected countryside where the environment is sustained and enhanced. However, it is recognised that, in the process of restructuring to achieve this vision, there is a danger that there may be serious negative impacts on some rural areas. For example, Lord Haskins, who headed the Government's Rural Recovery Task Force, predicted that half of all farm businesses might disappear by 2020 (*The Guardian* 2001). As a result, a range of policy initiatives and support networks have been developed to ameliorate the worst effects of agricultural restructuring at different scales.

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform**

The CAP has been, and over the next decade will continue to be, a major influence on the agricultural industry. The latest round of agricultural policy reforms was agreed in June 2003 and is the most radical since the CAP's inception, as it breaks the link between support and production (Defra 2004c). During the 1970s and '80s there was a growing recognition that CAP commodity support regimes encouraged overproduction, engendered market distortion and contributed to significant environmental damage. By 'decoupling' support from production the aim is to ensure that farmers' production decisions are based on market signals rather than being directed by the subsidies. This latest round of reforms, combined with the Agenda 2000 reforms agreed in 1999, are central to Government's medium- and long-term strategy for agriculture.

The first and only partial step in breaking the link between farm support and production was begun as part of the 1992 CAP reform and extended under Agenda 2000. This approach was to reduce the level of guaranteed price support for agricultural commodities,

## Box I Government vision for farming

Farming's main task will still be to produce the food we eat.

Farming will be more forward-looking, competitive and flexible, more capable of responding quickly to market changes and new consumer demands.

An increasing recognition of the role that farmers and land managers play in maintaining an attractive and diverse countryside and in sustaining the wider rural economy.

Many more farmers will turn a positive approach to the environment to their own economic advantage, with payments for environmental 'goods' that the nation wants: flourishing wildlife, living landscapes, a protected heritage and opportunities for leisure.

The growing market opportunities for sustainable products will enable the production and environmental functions to be combined via the marketplace for an increasing proportion of the industry.

There will still be room for large and small farms, full-time and part-time businesses. But farms – including entrepreneurial family farms – will be more diverse in terms of structure, business organisation and the mix of agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

Farmers will take up opportunities to learn, develop and exploit new skills and techniques.

Government and industry will continue to work closely together to meet these challenges, to get away from the cycle of short-term crises and become again what farming should be: a world-class industry in a world-class setting.

Source: DETR (2000)

and in return to compensate farmers for these price cuts by introducing a system of direct payments, still related to farmers' production patterns (i.e. payments made per head of livestock kept or per hectare of crops grown each year). The Agenda 2000 reforms deepened the price cuts introduced in 1992 and increased the associated compensation payments, but the partial link to production was maintained through the direct payment approach. The latest reforms mean that, throughout the UK, farm subsidies are now fully decoupled from production. The Single Payment Scheme (SPS) replaces all the former direct payments with a unified system of payments made per hectare of farmland, unrelated to farmers' current production decisions (Defra 2004d).

### **The Rural Development Regulation (RDR) and the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP)**

In addition to the reform of the commodity support regimes there has also been significant reform of the measures to promote the restructuring of the agricultural sector. Agenda 2000 expanded upon the reform package measures introduced in 1992 and placed them within a new integrated framework in the form of a

single regulation: the Rural Development Regulation (RDR), frequently referred to as the second pillar of the CAP (Defra 2001). Under the June 2003 reforms the resources allocated to the RDR under future spending programmes will be increased through compulsory 'modulation' (fund-switching), which transfers a small proportion of CAP money from the commodity regimes into the rural development budget from 2005 (ADAS & SQL 2003).

Under the RDR, Member States of the European Union are required to produce Rural Development Plans (RDP), which serve as Programming Documents for spending programmes under the RDR for the period 2000–06. In the UK, it was decided to devolve RDP design and delivery to the four regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Defra is responsible for the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP), which has been planned in a national framework document with regional chapters based on Government Office Regions.

Government sees the ERDP as an important vehicle for implementing its vision for agriculture. The ERDP is intended to facilitate the process of restructuring and performance improvement in the agricultural industry,

to advance environmentally beneficial farming practices, and to support diversification 'beyond the farm gate'. In particular, Government sees it as an important tool in its attempt to encourage farmers to move away from low-cost, high-volume commodity production and into higher value and more diverse markets, including quality and value-added foods, rural tourism and leisure, supporting the 'reconnection' of farming with the wider rural economy and the provision of public goods through land management.

The national priorities of the ERDP are (from data supplied by MAFF 2000c):

- to facilitate the development of dynamic, competitive and sustainable economies in the English countryside, tackling poverty in rural areas;
- to maintain and stimulate communities, and secure access to services that is equitable in all circumstances, for those who live or work in the countryside;
- to conserve and enhance rural landscapes and the diversity and abundance of wildlife (including the habitats on which it depends), to safeguard their integrity and value for future generations and to provide a source of economic opportunity;
- to increase opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside.

The RDR makes available a suite of measures that support sustainable projects for adding value to agricultural production, improving skills and efficiency, diversifying farm businesses and improving environmental

land management. It also provides a process for planning the use of these measures in a way intended to balance national and local needs and priorities (MAFF 2000a).

Within the ERDP there is a mixture of new measures (rural enterprise scheme, energy crop scheme and vocational training), existing measures (agri-environment schemes, farm woodland grant scheme, farm woodland premium scheme), a refocused measure (hill farm allowance scheme), and a reintroduced measure (processing and marketing grant scheme) (Table 3).

The forecast budget available for the implementation of the plan is in the region of £1.6 billion over seven years. The RDR initially represents only a 3.5 per cent share of the CAP budget in the UK. Since the launch of the ERDP, Government has reviewed the agri-environment schemes and created a new scheme called Environmental Stewardship launched in March 2005, which replaces the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) and Countryside Stewardship (CSS) schemes and introduces a new 'entry level' element designed to attract the majority of England's farmers into the scheme. Entry Level Stewardship implements one of the key recommendations of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food that a 'broad and shallow' scheme should be introduced across England to provide greater access to agri-environmental support for nearly all farmers (Defra 2004e).

### The Rural Enterprise Scheme

The Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES) provides assistance for projects that help to develop more sustainable,

**Table 3** Planned RDR expenditure in England, 2000–06

ERDP Measure	Total intended expenditure over the plan period (£ million)	% of budget
Agri-environment schemes	1050	63
Hill Farm Allowance Scheme (from 2001)	162	10
Training	22	1
Woodland schemes	216	13
Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme	44	3
Rural Enterprise Scheme	152	9
Energy Crops	29	2

Source: MAFF (2000c)

diversified and enterprising rural economies and communities. Its coverage is wide-ranging but the primary aim is to help farmers adapt to changing markets and develop new business opportunities. The scheme aims primarily to aid farmers, although applicants such as other rural businesses (partnerships and companies) and rural community groups are eligible for grants. The final beneficiaries of the RES grant aid must be non-public sector organisations. The scheme is available throughout England except for Objective 1 areas where other funding schemes apply. Aid has been targeted at projects that benefit designated Objective 2 rural areas.<sup>6</sup> It covers a broad spectrum of potential activities ranging from those intended for commercial return to those that provide only social and environmental benefits. There is no minimum or maximum project size, although if a project involves diversification into alternative agricultural activities the maximum investment per holding is £500,000. A total of £152 million of EU and Government money has been allocated to the RES for the period of April 2001 to the end of 2006.

### Environmental Stewardship Scheme

Environmental Stewardship (ES) rationalises and replaces the existing agri-environmental schemes. ES comprises three elements:

- Entry Level Stewardship (ELS);
- Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS);
- Higher Level Stewardship (HLS).

HLS is most important in terms of the conservation of historic farm buildings. HLS has built upon the best elements of the CSS and ESA schemes to deliver significant environmental benefits in targeted high-priority situations and areas (Defra 2004e). The renovation of historic farm buildings continues to be an objective within HLS as it was with the ESA and CSS schemes and capital grant rates are likely to be in the region of 80 per cent of eligible costs. It is also likely that the restoration of historic farm buildings under the new HLS will be more selective and targeted than under previous agri-environmental schemes. Research carried out for Defra to assess the effectiveness of CSS and ESA historic farm building restoration projects concluded that existing assessment procedures were insufficient to enable the value of the building and the gains from restoration to be fully understood, and that restoration projects should be more selective and targeted in future (ADAS 2003).

### Future changes to rural development policy

From 2007, rural development programmes under the CAP will be funded from a new single Rural Fund, which is entirely separate from future Structural Funds. How the new programmes are proposed to work is explained in the draft Regulation on 'support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development' (EAFRD) published by the European Commission in July 2004 (see European Commission 2004). The new proposal retains most of the existing rural development measures, rearranging them according to three broad 'priority axes' for spending.

- **Improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors:** to be achieved through investment, training and advice, adding value, support for young farmers and early retirement schemes, help to adopt new standards and for food quality schemes.
- **Land management:** with provision for agri-environment aid, environmental investment aid and support for management in 'areas affected by natural handicaps' – a much tightened-up version of the current Less Favoured Area funding – or areas affected by *Natura 2000* designation.
- **Supporting the rural economy and the quality of life in the rural areas:** through diversification out of farming, micro-business support, tourism promotion and measures to improve rural quality of life, including village renovation and development and the provision of basic services.

In addition there is a fourth 'axis', which provides the scope for Member States to support local partnership-based approaches to rural development delivery, along the lines of the current LEADER model.

The Regulation proposes that a minimum of 25 per cent of community support for each rural development programme should be spent on land management, and a minimum of 15 per cent be committed to each of the other two axes, with a minimum of 7 per cent for the fourth 'LEADER' axis. It is also proposed that the incentive element for agri-environment payments should be replaced by appropriate payments towards 'transaction costs', where necessary. Tendering for the award of agri-environment contracts 'where appropriate' is proposed and 'other land managers' can be made eligible for agri-environment schemes 'where duly justified to achieve environmental objectives' (IEEP 2004).

## Implications for historic farm buildings

The process of moving European agriculture closer to world market conditions is likely to continue at least over the medium term and this will maintain the pressure on farm incomes. Government says that the reform of the CAP does not go far enough in this respect and that the UK promotes a vision of agriculture that can produce commodities at, or very close to, world market prices without too much support from the EU and in a sustainable manner (MAFF 2000d).

Under such circumstances it is likely that farmers will continue to rationalise and adjust their businesses in response to the continuing squeeze on their incomes. Rising numbers of historic farm buildings will therefore become surplus to requirements and farmers may find it increasingly difficult to fund the maintenance costs of underused buildings. Government is also keen to see the redistribution of CAP funds from Pillar I (price support) to Pillar II (rural development) and this may also bring more opportunities for the re-use and conservation of historic farm buildings. Within the current ERDP there are opportunities for farmers to secure funding for the re-use of historic farm buildings through the RES and their conservation through the new HLS scheme from 2005. It is proposed that responsibility for any successor scheme to RES will transfer to the Regional Development Agencies in England from 2007, along with future spending on training, and on processing and marketing aids. At the same time, agri-environment scheme delivery will be administered by the new integrated agency, Natural England.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN RURAL PLANNING POLICY

Over the past eight years or so there has been a significant change in the planning policy stance towards development in rural areas. For the preceding 50 years Government guidance persistently advocated restraint on most kinds of development. The policy stance had its origins in the Scott Report (1942) and was maintained almost unquestioned for half a century through local authority development plans and the related determination of planning applications.

A change towards a more permissive, albeit still discriminating, approach to development in rural areas is evident in advisory publications from the Countryside Commission and Countryside Agency, broad Government policy in the 2000 Rural White Paper, and specific Government policies in Planning Policy

Guidance (Countryside Commission 1998; Countryside Agency 2000b; DoE 1994; DoE 1997a; DoE 1997b; DETR 1999b; DETR 2000; DETR 2001a and, currently, ODPM 2004). Arguably, the new policy stance can be summed up as a shift in attitude towards development in the countryside, from pursuing mainly environmental imperatives to fulfilling a set of integrated economic, social and environmental objectives. A major element of the new policy framework is the increased emphasis on rural economic development in the face of declining farm profitability, and a specific element is the re-use of farm buildings for employment purposes.

Four extant publications, which supersede or subsume earlier relevant publications, are of key significance to the shift in policy and are reviewed briefly below.

- PPG7: *The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (DoE 1997a).
- The Rural White Paper: *Our Countryside: the future* (DETR 2000).
- *Planning Tomorrow's Countryside* (Countryside Agency 2000b).
- PPG15: *Planning and the Historic Environment* (DoE 1994) – Government is to review this Guidance Note and merge it with PPG16 'Archaeology and Planning' in the context of the review of designations by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

## Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 (PPG7)

### General context: relevant policy pointers

The shift in national policy towards an approach that, at least in its rhetoric, claims parity between economic and environmental objectives was heralded in the 1997 revision of Planning Policy Guidance Note 7, *The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (DoE 1997a). PPG7 was the first main national inroad since the Second World War into an entrenched anti-development stance in the countryside. Previously, planning policies had adopted restraint strategies based on protecting the environmental and aesthetic qualities of the countryside. The Guidance Note stresses that the guiding principle for planning the countryside is that development should both benefit economic activity and maintain the quality of the environment. Government recognises the need to meet the economic and social needs of people who live and work in rural areas while maintaining or enhancing the character of the countryside, including its historic

and archaeological interest. This is to be achieved by encouraging the efficiency and competitiveness of rural businesses, and stimulating further economic diversity to provide varied employment opportunities in areas still heavily reliant on agriculture. In 2001, following the publication of the Rural White Paper in 2000, Government amended PPG7, instructing local planning authorities to be more supportive of farm diversification schemes for business purposes, particularly those re-using good-quality existing buildings (DETR 2001b).

The Guidance Note was mainly a response to an earlier Rural White Paper, *Rural England: A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside* (DOE and MAFF 1995). It seeks to promote sustainable development, including Government's objectives to meet the economic and social needs of all those living and working in rural areas. The interpretation of sustainable development encompasses the maintenance or enhancement of the character of the countryside, including its historic and archaeological interest.

PPG7 emphasises that the re-use and adaptation of existing rural buildings has an important role in meeting the needs of rural areas for commercial and industrial development as well as for tourism, sport and recreation. It states that, "*there should be no reason for preventing the conversion of rural buildings for business re-use*" (5-141, 3.14), provided that, amongst other considerations, buildings in the open countryside should be capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction. The note stresses that the guiding principle for planning the countryside is that development should both benefit economic activity and maintain the environment. It advises local planning authorities (LPAs) to weigh the need to:

- encourage rural enterprise;
- protect landscape, wildlife and historic features;
- strengthen rural communities by encouraging new employment, facilitating an adequate supply of affordable and market housing and underpinning services and community facilities.

The same year, this change in approach to planning for development in rural areas was reflected in Planning Policy Guidance Note 1, *General Policy and Principles* (DoE 1997b), which sets the broad policy context in which all development planning takes place. On the one hand PPG1 states that rural areas can accommodate many forms of development without detriment if the location and design of development are handled with sensitivity. On the other hand it warns that those aspects

of our past that have been identified as being of historic importance are to be valued and protected for their own sake as a central part of our cultural heritage. Specifically, PPG1 says that, "*In rural areas, many small scale activities can be accommodated without detriment to the environment and farm buildings may be suitable for adaptation to business use....*" (DoE 1997b, 5015/4) This stance was restated two years later in Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 *Development Plans* (DETR 1999b), which provides a strategic overview of the role and importance of development plans within the planning system.

The 1997 version of PPG7, then, established a clear shift in Government policy away from an assumption that restraint policies would be implemented across rural areas and towards recognition that a balance needed to be struck between economic and social development and environmental protection in policy formulation.

### **Matters specific to historic farm buildings**

PPG7 encourages the re-use of existing buildings for business purposes and offers conditional support for conversion to residential use. It warns, however, that such conversions are often detrimental to the fabric and character of historic buildings and that, on occasion, it may not be possible to find a suitable re-use for a listed or other historic building. Controls should be applied strictly in the open countryside. Therefore, while acknowledging the need to safeguard the character of farm buildings, Government policy takes a positive stance on encouraging their re-use. This has implications for historic farm buildings in that re-use of a building often requires alterations to its physical fabric, its character and its immediate surroundings.

## **The Rural White Paper**

### **General context: relevant policy pointers**

The shift in policy stance was reinforced in the 2000 Rural White Paper (DETR 2000). The vision of the White Paper is to encourage a 'living, working, protected and vibrant' countryside. The overall aim is to sustain and enhance the distinctive environment, economy and social fabric of the English countryside for the benefit of all, encouraging development whilst ensuring appropriate protection of the built and natural environment. It implies that a more positive stance should be taken towards development that fulfils Government's stated vision whilst remaining vigilant in protecting local distinctiveness.

The White Paper envisages thriving economies in all rural

areas, which should provide good-quality employment opportunities and exploit the versatility, entrepreneurial tradition and, increasingly, local green business potential. It stresses that change in rural areas will continue and that population change, economic growth, new technology, new patterns of travel, leisure and consumer taste will have a significant impact.

### **Matters specific to historic farm buildings**

The theme established in PPG7 was continued in the White Paper, strengthened by the adoption of instrumental language:

*"We are in favour of ensuring that good quality existing buildings are re-used to provide jobs in the countryside and we are going to make this clear in planning guidance. Not all farm buildings are suitable for re-use – some, for instance, are unsightly and were never designed to be permanent – and we will have safeguards to ensure that a proper balance is struck between helping the rural economy and protecting the environment..."*

(DETR 2000, p.105)

The White Paper states that surplus farm buildings can provide suitable accommodation for diversified businesses and stresses that Government is determined that the planning system should be flexible enough to enable this to occur.

Together, therefore, PPG7 and the 2000 Rural White Paper establish that a more positive approach should be taken to the development of rural areas. Potentially they will encourage and possibly stimulate demand for economic development that will exert pressure to re-use redundant farm buildings to fulfil social and economic objectives. Inevitably this will stimulate proposals for alterations to their physical fabric in order to accommodate changes of use.

## **'Planning Tomorrow's Countryside'**

### **General context: relevant policy pointers**

Building on earlier work by its predecessor organisation (Countryside Commission 1998) the Countryside Agency's vision for the countryside takes a fresh look at how to guide change in rural areas (Countryside Agency 2000b). In accordance with the Government stance articulated in PPG7, and subsequently the Rural White Paper, the Agency proposes that any new vision for the changing countryside has to encompass social, economic, environmental and recreational objectives. The Agency

advises that change should be skilfully guided, taking account of significance rather than resisting all change and helping to retain reminders of the past and provide homes and jobs for the future.

Agency proposals relevant to this research recommend that planning policies *inter alia* should:

- stress the need for high quality in all developments;
- expect housing developments in villages as well as towns to contribute to affordable and social housing provision;
- help agricultural businesses to diversify, or add more value where this achieves a net gain for the countryside;
- help shape the countryside in and around towns so that it accommodates necessary development and regenerates its environmental qualities;
- identify the countryside character and local distinctiveness of an area as a tool to help guide development;
- respect the character of all landscapes and make positive proposals for conserving/enhancing/regenerating character;
- protect, enhance and promote high-quality landscape (including its wildlife, cultural and historic elements) and thriving communities as valuable economic, social and environmental assets through sensitive planning and design;
- encourage communities to take an active part in deciding how and where development should take place.

### **Matters specific to historic farm buildings**

The Countryside Agency adopts an approach to the re-use of farm buildings that accords with that set out in PPG7 and the Rural White Paper and places it explicitly in the wider context of sustainable development:

*"So, for example, planners should consider whether a new business in a converted farm building meets sustainable development criteria as a whole, such as the design of the buildings, its contribution to the local economy, its support of local services, and the prudent use of non renewable resources, rather than focusing purely on location and access criteria..."* (Countryside Agency 2000b, p.10)

## Planning Policy Guidance Note 15

### General context: relevant policy pointers

In order to balance the need for development with care for the historic environment, Policy Guidance Note 15, *Planning and the Historic Environment* (DoE 1994), sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of the historic environment. The note emphasises that local distinctiveness is an important aspect of the character of towns, villages and the countryside:

*"It is fundamental to the Government's policies for environmental stewardship that there should be effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment..."*  
(DoE 1994, 5-386)

### Matters specific to historic farm buildings

The note states that historic buildings provide an irreplaceable record that contributes to our understanding of both the present and the past. It suggests that where new uses are proposed, the effects of changes on a listed building should be balanced against the viability of the proposed use. It emphasises that while many listed buildings can sustain some degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate continuing or new uses, they vary greatly in the extent to which they can accommodate change without loss of special interest. Some may be sensitive even to slight alterations, and minor works of indifferent quality that may seem individually of little importance can cumulatively be very destructive. The note emphasises that it is rarely impossible to achieve a proper balance between the special interest of a listed building and proposals for alterations or extensions.

PPG15 stresses that an important objective of the planning process is to reconcile the need to protect natural and historic environments with the need for economic growth, and indicates that conservation and sustainable growth are complementary objectives. Most listed buildings can be put to good economic use and, indeed, economic prosperity can be the key to securing the continued use and maintenance of historic buildings. The Secretary of State is not generally in favour of tightening development controls over changes of use, but Article 4 directions may be deployed for converting farm buildings for new uses in order to regulate curtilage developments that may not be suitable to an agricultural setting.

## REFORM OF THE PLANNING SYSTEM

In 2001 Government embarked on a wholesale review of the planning system, claiming that over the past fifty years it had become inflexible, legalistic and bureaucratic. A Green Paper was produced suggesting that a good planning system based on a positive, agreed vision was required to deliver sustainable development (DTLR 2001b). Relevant to the present study, the Green Paper stated that such a successful planning system should *inter alia* (a) promote economic prosperity and (b) value the countryside and our heritage. The Policy Statement *Sustainable Communities: Delivering through Planning* (ODPM 2002) emphasises that the planning system should be used as a positive tool and should be simpler and clearer so that, along with the community, businesses know what to expect from the system. There is also an emphasis in the Statement on the encouragement of high-quality development. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 identifies the achievement of sustainable development as the principal purpose of planning.

As part of the reform, the Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) are being replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). A number of these have been published including PPS1, *Delivering Sustainable Development* (ODPM 2005), which explains how sustainable development should be delivered through the planning system. Four overriding aims of planning for sustainable development are cited, and emphasis is laid on the need to pursue these aims in an integrated manner. Two of these aims are particularly germane to the discussion of historic farm buildings:

- high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
- protection of the environment.

While there is no explicit reference to historic farm buildings, and references to rural areas are extremely general and not separate from references to urban areas, the PPS states that Government is committed to, "...protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities." In developing the notion that the overriding aims need to be integrated, the Statement suggests that the appropriate conservation and improvement of the built environment brings social and economic benefits for local communities.

As a context for the study of historic farm buildings it is likely that the move towards a more 'flexible' reformed planning system will generally encourage further, if

selective, development in rural areas and that the explicit recognition of the development needs of businesses will strengthen policies that support the conversion of farm buildings to employment-generating uses.

## Planning Policy Statement 7

### General context: relevant policy pointers

PPG7 was one of the first PPGs to be reviewed in the wake of the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. Planning Policy Statement 7, *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (PPS7) replaced PPG7 in August 2004 (ODPM 2004). The Statement is intended to steer a middle course between doing without specific planning policies and guidance for rural areas and undertaking a fundamental re-write of planning policies for rural areas including radical relaxation of planning policies. Instead it chooses to update the existing PPG7 policy framework and recast that guidance into a shorter PPS.

A number of the Government objectives that carry forward its vision for the countryside are relevant to the present discussion.

- i) To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas through the promotion of:
  - thriving, inclusive and sustainable rural communities;
  - sustainable economic growth and diversification;
  - good-quality, sustainable development that respects local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside;
  - a high level of protection for our most valued landscapes and environmental resources.
- ii) To promote sustainable improvements in the economic performance of all English regions ... promoting competitive, diverse and thriving rural enterprise that provides a range of jobs and underpins strong economies.

PPS7 further emphasises Government's positive stance towards encouraging a wide range of economic activity in rural areas, particularly where traditional, rural-based industries are in decline, and suggests that planning authorities should make provision for both new buildings and the re-use of existing buildings for industrial and business development. Planning authorities should be particularly supportive of the re-use of existing buildings within or adjacent to country towns and villages for business or community uses.

### Matters specific to historic farm buildings

While most of the policies in PPS7 reproduce, or are closely based on, existing policies in PPG7, new 'positive' policies are proposed for buildings in the countryside. The statement advises that productive re-use of existing rural buildings will usually be preferable to leaving buildings underused, vacant or derelict. The adaptation or conversion of rural buildings for business re-use should be supported, subject to the following criteria:

- ensuring that buildings are suitable for re-use;
- ensuring that any new use is acceptable in that location;
- guarding against large-scale uses that would undermine the achievement of sustainable communities in rural towns and villages;
- setting out policies in development plans for the re-use of complexes of buildings with large aggregate floor areas;
- preserving the fabric and character of buildings of historic or architectural interest;
- considering whether imposing reasonable conditions on a planning permission overcomes any legitimate planning objections.

The conversion to dwellings will not normally be appropriate where buildings are remote from settlements and services, but residential conversions should be supported where, for example, this would meet specific local need and obviate the requirement for a new building in the countryside, or meet an identified housing need in less remote locations that offer good accessibility to nearby services.

### European planning policies

Unlike agricultural policy, land-use policy is not heavily influenced by European legislation. Seymour (2001) notes that during the period 1988–98 land-use policy was left to member states. However, there are intimations that the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), adopted by Ministers for Spatial Planning at the Potsdam Council in May 1999, has begun to influence Regional Planning Guidance in England. For example, the draft Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands acknowledges and embraces the principles within the ESDP and particularly the three spatial planning objectives:

- development of a balanced and polycentric pattern

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of development and a new urban–rural relationship;

- securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge;
- sustainable development, prudent management and protection of natural and cultural heritage.

The influence of these emerging European policies, through Regional Planning Guidance (or Regional Spatial Strategies) on the specific planning issues relating to historic farm buildings is not yet known.

## THE CHARACTER OF LISTED AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS



Source: Images of England  
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## KEY POINTS

- Analysing the listed resource is difficult due to the following factors.
  - List entries may contain more than one building and it is not always apparent how many buildings there are.
  - Within the agricultural building category it is not possible to distinguish with confidence between domestic (e.g. farmhouses) and working (e.g. threshing barns) farmstead buildings.
  - It is not always easy to relate agricultural functions to individual buildings.
  - Curtilage buildings do not have to be specifically mentioned in the list entry to be covered by the legislation.

The analysis is therefore based on list entries rather than building numbers.

- Proposed reform of the heritage protection system is likely to bring significant changes to the principles for listing. The long-term aim of the Heritage Protection Review is the formulation of a new system for heritage protection in England that is more coherent, flexible and engaged with valuing the general character of the whole resource as well as designated highlights.
  - The 224 local planning authorities selected for study contain a total of 69,280 agricultural building list entries. A significant number of entries (12%) do not contain farmstead buildings.
  - Despite the steps taken to encompass a broader range of farmstead buildings as part of the Accelerated National Resurvey, farmhouses and barns have been the focus for listing as the principal building. Together these functions account for eight out of ten farmstead references in the statutory lists. Farmhouses dominate the list entries, with over half the entries containing a farmstead dwelling.
  - Only 33 per cent of entries contain just working farmstead buildings, with barns being by far the most numerous working farming function.
- It is estimated that there are 38,116 list entries containing a farmhouse or farm dwelling (55%); 16,679 containing a barn function (24%); 7,325 containing an unidentified agricultural function (11%); and 4,387 containing farmstead stables (6%).
  - The listed agricultural building resource is not evenly distributed across the eight English regions. The density of agricultural list entries per km<sup>2</sup> is highest in the South East and South West (0.82 and 0.77 per km<sup>2</sup> respectively) compared to the North East (0.21 per km<sup>2</sup>).
  - The vast majority of list entries – some 94 per cent – are grade II.
  - Despite the steps taken to encompass a broader range of farmstead buildings as part of the Accelerated National Resurvey, farmhouses and barns have been the focus for listing as the principal building. Together these functions account for eight out of ten farmstead references in the statutory lists.

## INTRODUCTION

A 'listed building' is one that is considered by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to be of special architectural or historic interest. The statutory lists can be taken to represent England's most important architectural and historic buildings, based on current understanding. Powers to compile lists of buildings of architectural and historic interest were given under the Town and Country Planning Act 1944. This later became a duty under the 1947 Act. The compilation of the lists has now been pursued, with varying intensity, for over half a century. The most recent legislation relating to listed buildings is contained within Section 1 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

*"In this Act 'listed building' means a building which is for the time being included in a list compiled or approved by the Secretary of State under this section; and for the purposes of this Act:*

*(a) any object or structure fixed to the building;*

*(b) any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948,*

*shall be treated as part of the building."*

The term 'listed building' is a slight misnomer on two counts. First, the statutory lists also include a wide range of structures other than buildings, such as milestones, village pumps, gate piers and tombstones. Second, an individual list entry may contain more than one building or structure, for example, a farmhouse with attached farm buildings.

### Listing principles

All properties considered for listing are judged according to a set of national standards that have evolved over time since listing was first introduced in 1947. Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15), *Planning and the Historic Environment*, sets out the current principles for identifying which buildings should be selected for protection. There are four main criteria that the Secretary of State applies in deciding which buildings to include in the statutory lists.

- Architectural interest – the lists are meant to include all buildings that are of importance to the nation for the interest of their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship, and also important examples of particular building types and techniques

and significant plan forms.

- Historic interest – this includes buildings that illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history.
- Close historical associations with nationally important people or events.
- Group value – especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages).

Not all these criteria are relevant to every case, but a particular building may qualify for listing under more than one of them.

PPG15 also states that age and rarity are relevant considerations so that the older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to fulfil the listing criteria. Consequently, all buildings built before 1700 that survive in anything like their original condition are listed; and most buildings of about 1700 to 1840 are listed, though some selection is necessary. After about 1840, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, greater selection is necessary to identify the best examples of particular building types, and only buildings of definite quality and character are listed. For the same reasons, only selected buildings from the period after 1914 are normally listed. Buildings that are less than 30 years old are normally listed only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat. Buildings less than ten years old are not listed.

Listed buildings are graded to show their relative importance.

- Grade I buildings are those of exceptional interest.
- Grade II\* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest.
- Grade II are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.

PPG15 also encourages local planning authorities to compile their own lists of locally important buildings and to formulate Local Plan policies for their protection. However, these policies must clearly state that such buildings do not enjoy the full protection of statutory listing.

Proposed reform of the heritage protection system is

likely to bring significant changes to the principles for listing. In July 2003 Government published *Protecting our Historic Environment: Making the System Work Better*, a consultation document containing suggestions for reforming the heritage protection system. The responses from a wide range of stakeholders were considered and Government response was summarised in *Review of Heritage Protection: The Way Forward* (DCMS 2004). The long-term aim of the Heritage Protection Review, once legislation can be enacted, is the formulation of a new system for heritage protection in England that is more coherent, flexible and engaged with valuing the general character of the whole resource as well as designated highlights. A single unified 'Register of Historic Sites and Buildings', bringing together current forms of legislation, will nest within a policy framework set by the Secretary of State, and the publication of non-statutory criteria for each category of asset. Clarity will in addition be aided by the revision of the present system of grading, including the absorption of grades I and II\* into a single grade I, the use of clear mapping to replace the present curtilage system, and an integrated consent regime that will incorporate statutory management agreements for some sites. English Heritage is developing a series of pilot projects, in order to better understand how a clear analysis of character and significance can be of benefit to and provide a clear understanding of management implications for the end user.

## INTERPRETING THE STATUTORY LISTS

From its inception a major aim of the listing programme has been to help inform the decisions of local planning authorities through the identification of those architecturally and historically important buildings that fulfil the listing criteria; limited resources have not generally allowed for detailed analysis. Consequently, an entry on the statutory lists comprises two parts (Figure 6). The first statutory part contains the 'header' information about the listed building, including details of the building's name, address, listing grade and if it relates to other listed buildings (noted on the header as GV or Group Value). The second non-statutory part, known as the 'list description', comprises a narrative description of the listed building in sufficient detail to enable its identification in the field. These display a wide variation in their range and detail. Consequently, the information presented in the list entries is thus more concerned with the identification of a property or group of properties as listed than it is with identifying and describing the character or significance of individual buildings. However, in an attempt to provide more information for owners and local planning authorities, many of the more up-to-

date lists now include a statement of significance that explains why the building has been listed. Information is not recorded on structural condition at the time of listing.

## Listing programme

The original listing programme, known as the First Survey, was initiated in 1947 and was eventually finished in 1970, by which time it was already deemed to be unsatisfactory because the coverage was incomplete, with towns and cities receiving more attention than rural areas. Too much emphasis had also been placed on 'polite' at the expense of 'vernacular' architecture (Robertson 1993). This means that few farm buildings found their way onto the lists because of their rural location and vernacular character.

In an attempt to improve the lists plans were made in the 1960s to conduct a second survey, which became known as the National Resurvey. Results began to appear from the National Resurvey even before the First Survey was completed. However, it was not until the implementation of the Accelerated National Resurvey between 1982 and 1988 that a serious attempt was made to instil consistency and rigour into the listing procedure and provide resources for a rapid and systematic survey of rural parishes for the first time.

## Buildings and functions

For various reasons, an individual list entry can refer to either a single building or more than one building. The difficulty of ascribing functions to individual buildings, and the strong degree of regional variation in farmstead plan, has already been referred to in section 1 of this monograph (see page 17, 18). Fieldworkers on the Accelerated National Resurvey were instructed to apply national criteria with rigour; the result on many farmstead sites being that only the farmhouse or barn were judged to be of sufficient age and quality to fulfil listing criteria. They were also exhorted only to address buildings individually if they were detached. As Figure 6 shows, the relationship between the list entry and the listed building can thus be clear and unambiguous. In the north and west of the country, however, where buildings are often attached to farmhouses or are built in continuous ranges, the fieldworkers were instructed to list attached blocks under one address heading. The consequence for later analysts of the lists is the great difficulty in ascribing farmstead functions to individual list entries, as Figure 7 (see page 45) makes clear. Planned and model farmsteads, tight courtyard complexes of evolved buildings and building ranges may, therefore, be listed as a single entry but contain a diversity of functions probably

**Figure 6** Example of a list entry showing header information and list description



© Mr Derek Le Mare

NY 92 SE	MICKLETON	GREENGATES LANE
10/126		(North side)
		Field Barn, 130 metres west of The Ashes
		II

Field barn incorporating byre with loft. Mid C19. Coursed sandstone rubble; stone-flagged roof. 2 storeys, 3 bays with alternating flush quoins. Pair of boarded doors in central elliptical archway with flush tooled-and-margined jambs, impost blocks and voussoirs. Single breather to left. Dutch door and boarded first-floor opening, in flush surrounds, to right. Low-pitched roof with coped gables.

Source: English Heritage<sup>7</sup>

unknown to the fieldworker and certainly unknowable to any later readers of the lists. The resulting confusion is compounded in some parts of the country by inconsistency in practice, particularly in parts of the South East where existing lists are more than 30 years old.

The information in the list entries can, however, be used to identify the number of farmstead sites that have one or more listed buildings. They can also, subject to caveats, be used to identify the range of functions mentioned in the list description.

### Curtilage buildings

In addition to the problems of identifying buildings in the list entries, buildings do not have to be specifically mentioned in the address field to be covered by the legislation. Any building or structure within the curtilage of a listed building erected prior to 1948 is potentially listed through association and subject to listed building control.<sup>8</sup> This is often the case with working farmstead

buildings that are listed because they are situated within the curtilage of a listed farmhouse and where there was insufficient knowledge or confidence at the time of survey that they could individually fulfil listing criteria. This means there are two types of listed building:

- principal listed – building or structure identified by the list entry header and text;
- curtilage listed – building or structure located in the curtilage of a principal building or structure.

The issue of curtilage has been addressed by the review of heritage protection conducted by English Heritage and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). It is now proposed that English Heritage will provide maps to show the extent of new listings.

## USING THE ENGLISH HERITAGE LISTED BUILDING SYSTEM

The English Heritage Listed Building System (LBS) is a computer database that contains information on over 370,000 listed building entries. As such it is the main source of information with which to describe the principal buildings of the listed farmstead building resource. The LBS system has taken information contained within the statutory lists with the intention of translating it into a more useable format that allows quantitative analysis. However, the LBS still reflects all the

limitations of the statutory lists, including the problem of identifying individual buildings.

## NATIONAL OVERVIEW OF THE LISTED BUILDING RESOURCE

The listed building resource, including farmstead buildings, is not evenly distributed among Government regions. Figure 8 shows that the South West, South East and East of England contain well above the regional average of 47,000 entries and together account for 59 per cent of

**Figure 7** List entry comprising a farmyard complex



© Mr Ernie W. King C.P.A.G.B.

SX 88 NE	DUNCHIDEOCK	BIDDYPARK LANE
3/21		4 ranges of farm buildings to the east of the church
GV		II

4 ranges of farm buildings, 1 range converted to workshops. Probably late C19 some C20 modification. Stone rubble with brick dressings; slate roof, partly bitumen-painted. The buildings form a large farmyard immediately to the east of the churchyard: the north and east ranges are linhays, the west range probably a shippon in use as a pig house, the south range has been converted to use as workshops. North Range: 4-bay linhay with loft over at the right end; section of open-fronted storage space in the centre; 2-storey block at left end with openings with segmental brick arches and brick jambs. Large doorway to left, smaller doorway and 2-light window to the right, 2 loft loading doors. East Range: 10-bay linhay with loft over; some concrete block infill. No openings in rear wall. South Range: 2 storeys, partly converted to workshops. The range is slightly angled with 8 ground floor openings with segmental brick arches and brick jambs. 7 similar first floor openings. 4 ground floor doorways, 4 2-light windows with glazing bars. 2 loft entrances to left, 5 2-light first floor windows with glazing bars. West Range: Single storey. The range is slightly curved and has some modern openings. 8 openings on front: 2 modern, 6 with segmental brick arches and brick jambs. An important group in relation to the setting of the church.

Source: English Heritage

the total. In contrast, the North East contains 12,184 entries, which accounts for only 3 per cent of the total.

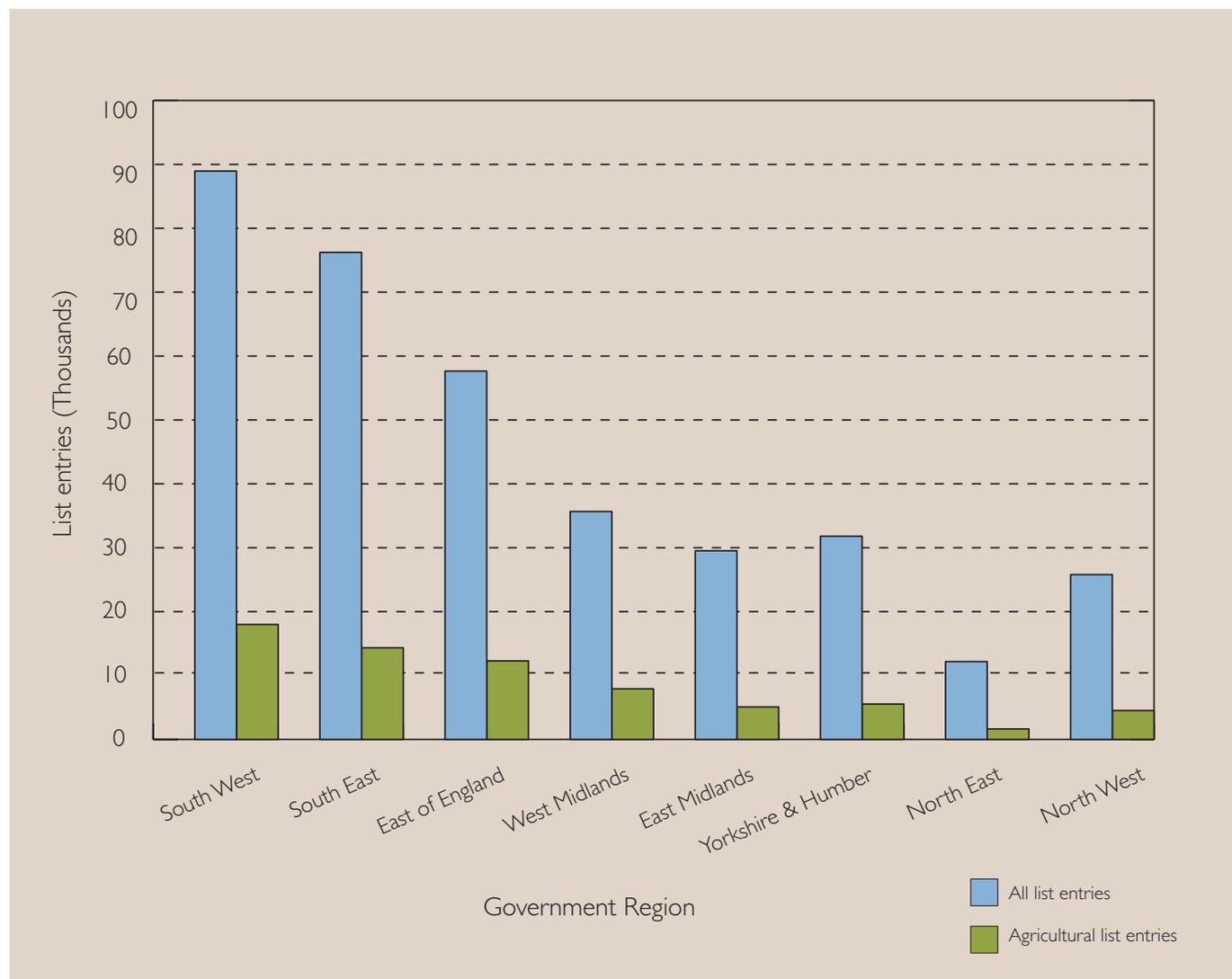
English Heritage's LBS adopts a hierarchical thesaurus of terms (the Thesaurus of Monument Types) as a basis for statistical analysis. Twelve major building categories are recognised and Table 4 clearly shows that the domestic category dominates the statutory lists with 38 per cent of entries having this as their main building type and nearly two-thirds having at least one domestic function. The next best-represented broad category is Agriculture and Subsistence, which includes a whole series of narrow classifications such as barns and farmhouses. Twelve per cent of all list entries are allocated to the main Agriculture and Subsistence category, and 19 per cent contain an agricultural or subsistence function.

## ANALYSING THE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING LIST ENTRIES

The LBS Agriculture and Subsistence building category is too wide ranging and contains many list entries that are not related to farmsteads. It was therefore decided that the analysis should be confined to the list entries belonging to the more narrowly defined Agricultural Building category. English Heritage provided a condensed version of the LBS on a Microsoft Access database, which contained all the agricultural building entries for England entered onto the system up to the end of 2000. The 224 local planning authorities selected for more detailed study contained a total of 69,280 agricultural building list entries.

As with the full list, there is considerable variation between the regions with regard to the distribution of agricultural list entries and the average number and

**Figure 8** Distribution of listed building entries by region



Source: English Heritage (2002a)

**Table 4** Number of listed building entries by building category

Building category	Main type (%)	Contained within list entry (%)
Domestic	37.9	62.8
Agriculture and Subsistence	12.2	19.2
Commercial	7.8	10.4
Transport	7.0	9.4
Religious, Ritual and Funerary	6.5	10.4
Gardens, Parks and Urban Spaces	5.6	7.5
Commemorative	4.2	6.5
Industrial	2.3	3.2
Recreational	2.2	2.6
Education	1.6	1.9
Water Supply And Drainage	1.4	1.8
Other	8.4	9.4

Source: English Heritage (2002a) and Images of England<sup>9</sup>

density of list entries per authority (Table 5). Together, the South West (26%), South East (21%) and East of England (18%) contain almost two-thirds of all agricultural list entries compared with the North of England, whereas the North East (2%) and the North West (7%) taken together contain less than a tenth of the total. One in five authorities (19%) contain fewer than 100 list entries while 5 per cent have over 800. Table 5 (see page 48) also shows that the density of agricultural list entries per km<sup>2</sup> is highest in the South East and South West (0.82 and 0.77 per km<sup>2</sup> respectively) compared to the North East (0.21 per km<sup>2</sup>). These regional differences are the result of centuries of development and local variation.

Work in East Anglia has indicated that the analysis of the distribution of listed agricultural buildings by type and date bears a close relationship to landscape and settlement character: for example, the concentration of pre-1700 barns in wood-pasture areas with patterns of dispersed settlement and evolved farmstead groups, as opposed to areas of post-1750 enclosure on the lighter soils where buildings are both later and less likely to fulfil listing criteria (Lake & Wade Martins 1997). Much of the South West and South East regions are also characterised by early patterns of enclosure and settlement, and thus by the grouping of farmstead buildings with houses of frequently pre-1700 origin. Much of the North East, by

contrast, is characterised by the extensive enclosure of landscapes and resiting of farmsteads in the post-1750 period; its listed farmsteads are also more likely to be characterised by linked courtyard ranges, which can be addressed as single entries on the LBS, rather than multiple building groups as in the South West and especially the South East (Lake 2002). English Heritage has recently completed the geo-referencing of the list entries on the LBS. In future it will be possible to undertake a full analysis of the distribution of listed steadings and buildings, and their relationship to both the unlisted resource and landscape character. At the time of writing, pilot work is seeking to find the most effective means of defining farmstead character, both on a regional basis and in relationship to the national Countryside Character Areas and Historic Landscape Characterisation.<sup>10</sup>

The vast majority of agricultural list entries (94%) are grade II, which means they are of special interest, warranting every effort to conserve them. Fewer than one per cent of the entries are grade I and of exceptional interest. A small proportion of the list entries have been removed from the lists but remain on the LBS (0.7%).

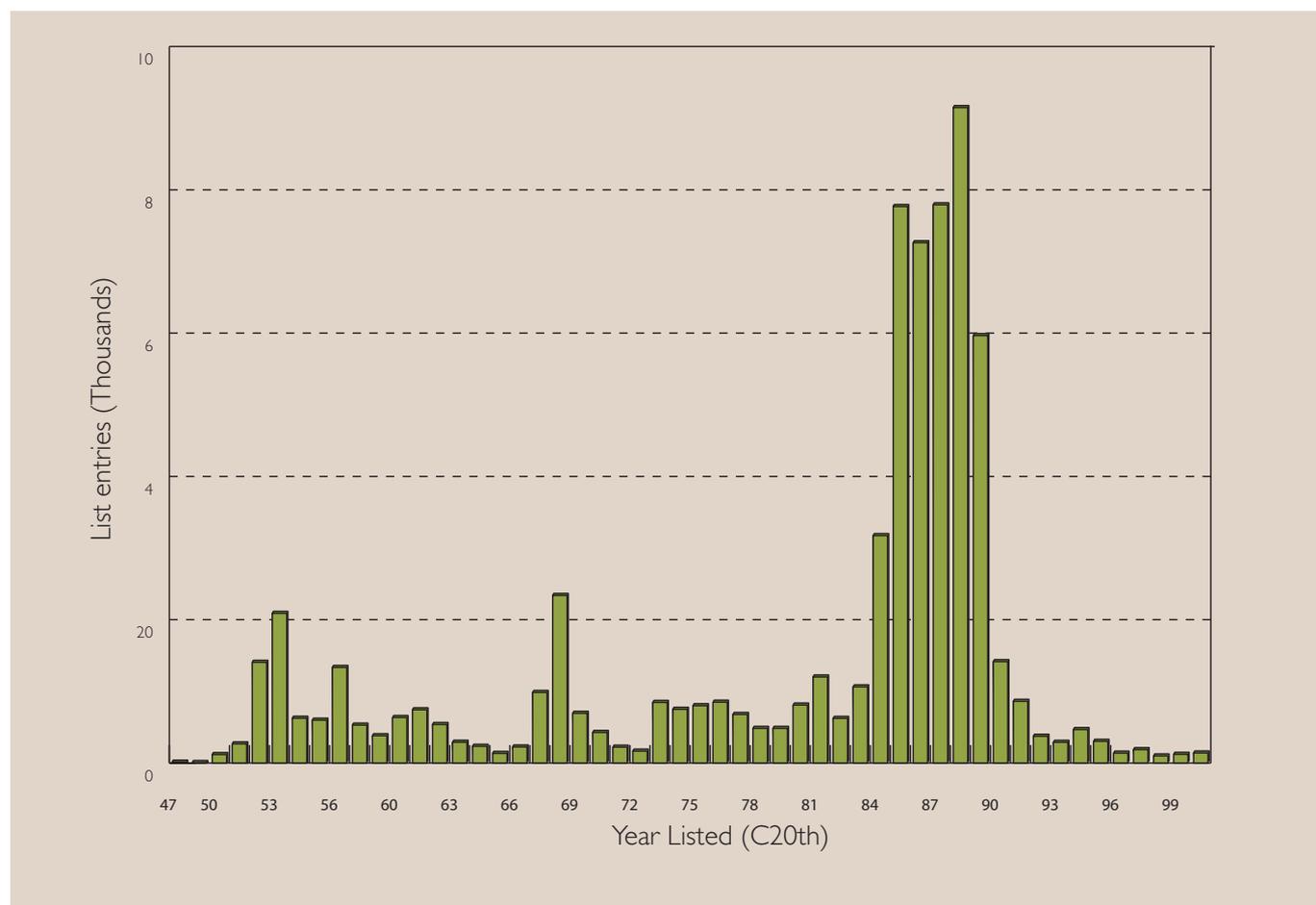
The buildings in the agricultural list entries are considered to be important as part of a group in just over half of all

**Table 5** Regional distribution of agricultural building list entries (Data for 224 LPAs)

Government Region	List entries	% list entries	Number of list entries per km <sup>2</sup>
South West	17983	26.0	0.77
South East	14333	20.7	0.82
East of England	12292	17.7	0.66
West Midlands	7911	11.4	0.67
East Midlands	5080	7.3	0.34
Yorkshire & Humber	5530	8.0	0.36
North East	1639	2.4	0.21
North West	4512	6.5	0.38
England	69280	100	0.58

Source: English Heritage LBS

**Figure 9** Year of listing for agricultural building entries



Source: English Heritage LBS

cases (55%). There is some variation across the regions, with entries in the North East having far greater group value (70%) than those in the North West (44%).

Figure 9 shows the dramatic effect that the Accelerated National Resurvey programme has had on the listing of agricultural buildings. In the seven years between 1982 and the end of 1988, 41,171 agricultural building list entries were completed, which account for over 60 per cent of the total listed at the end of 2000. One of the achievements of the Accelerated National Resurvey is that the representation of historic farm buildings in the lists was greatly improved. As Brunskill (1993) notes:

*“The resurvey also provided the opportunity to extend the range of structures and building types recommended for listing. ... The buildings of the farmstead began to receive recognition: the importance of barns and granaries, stables and pigsties was recognised by listing them in their own right rather than being at best included within the curtilage of a listed farmhouse or at worst specifically excluded from consideration.”*

Seventy per cent of the agricultural list entries describe a single building or structure, with 30 per cent of entries describing multiple buildings or structures; in one in ten cases the list description was so ambiguous it was not possible to determine how many items there are in total.

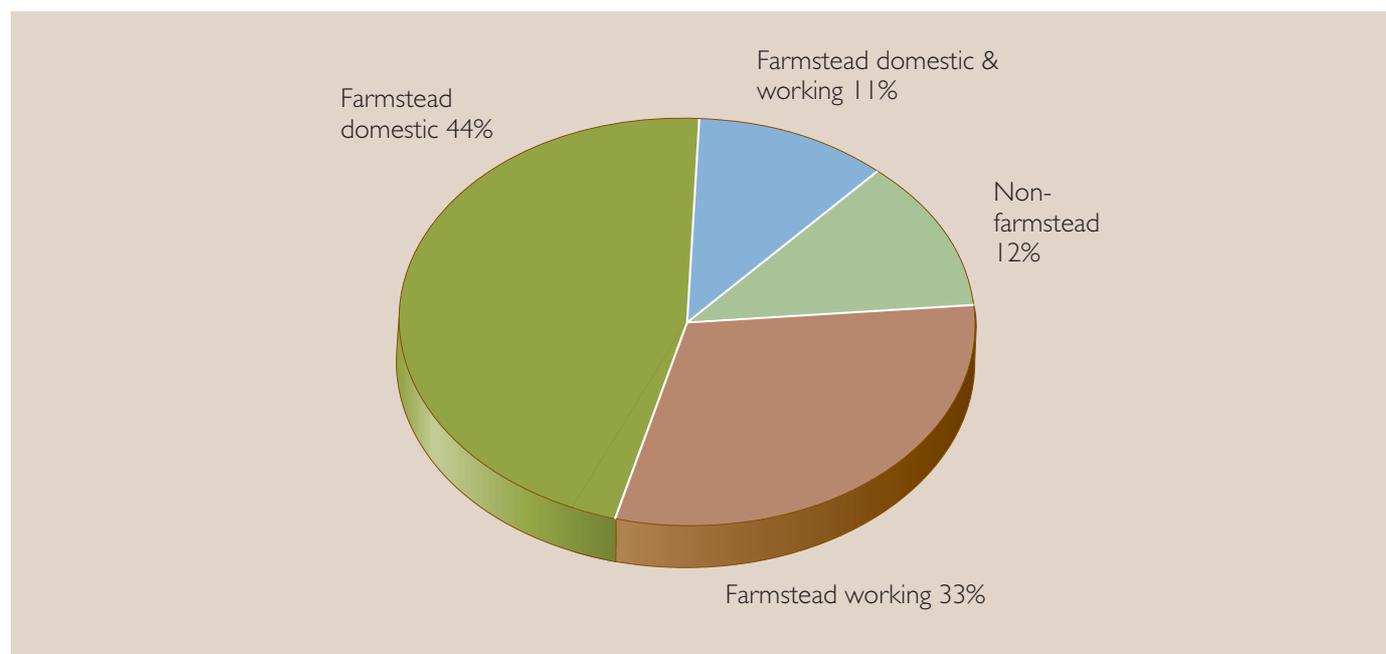
## SAMPLING THE LISTED BUILDING SYSTEM TO DETERMINE FUNCTION

The functionality of the LBS database does not currently lend itself to statistical analysis and therefore a nationally representative sample of 1,700 entries was selected in order to undertake a more detailed assessment. Of these, 1,674 list entries (99%) provided usable information and the data were entered onto a computer database. The completed database was then subject to statistical analysis to produce national estimates for the different functions.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most important findings of the analysis is that the LBS Agricultural Building category includes a significant number of entries (12%) that do not contain farmstead buildings. The majority of these list entries refer to stables that serve domestic dwellings and commercial buildings, domestic dwellings and commercial buildings with associated stables and barns, and industrial-sized storage and processing buildings.

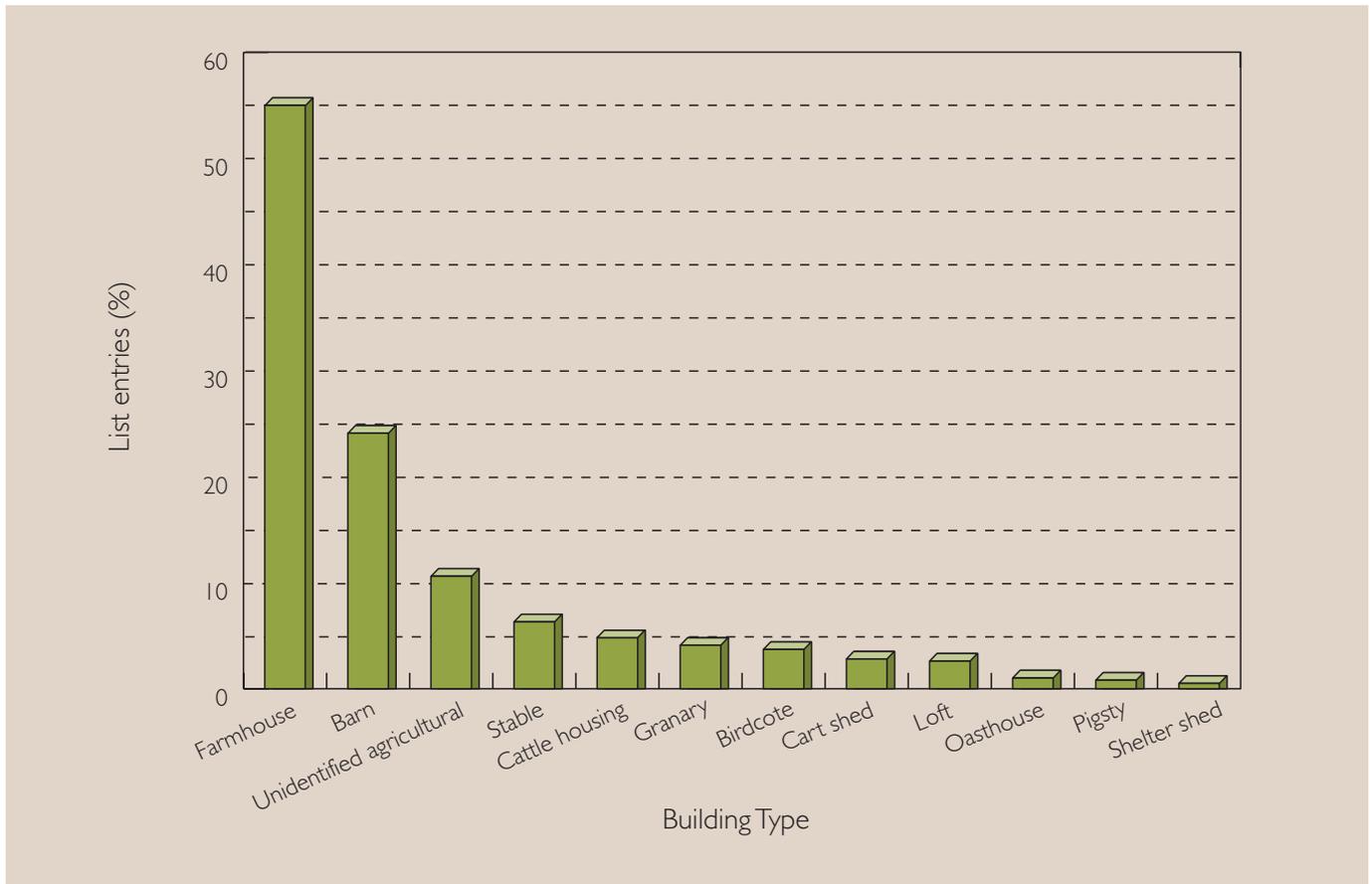
It is also clear from the analysis that farmhouses dominate the list entries (Figure 10). Forty-four per cent comprise solely farmstead dwellings, and at least one dwelling is present in over half the entries (55%). It is less common for working farmstead buildings to be listed in their own right. Only 33 per cent of the list entries contain just working farmstead buildings and many of these are threshing barns.

**Figure 10** Functions contained within agricultural list entries



Source: Sample of LBS agricultural list entries

**Figure 11** Proportion of list entries with different farmstead functions



Source: Sample of LBS agricultural list entries

Taken together this evidence suggests that nationally, within the Agricultural Building category, the number of list entries that contain farmstead buildings is likely to be nearer 61,000 than 69,000. The remainder of this discussion focuses on the characteristics of the list entries that contain farmstead functions.

### Farmstead characteristics

The 1,473 list entries that describe farmstead buildings (from the initial sample of 1,674) refer to 1,973 discrete functions. Three-quarters of the entries (77%) contain a single function and the relationship between the building and its function is straightforward and provides few problems of interpretation. This leaves one-quarter of the entries that contain more than one function. As noted above it was difficult to identify the number of buildings covered by the list entries and for this reason no attempt was made to quantify the number of buildings present. The following analysis therefore refers to the functions housed within a listed building or buildings rather than the buildings themselves (Figure 11). Over half the list entries contain a farmstead dwelling (55%). This means

the listing fieldworker noted that the structure was clearly a farm dwelling or had served that function in the past. However, in some cases the fieldworker will not have recognised the farming connection and some farm dwellings will have been classed as ordinary domestic dwellings. At a national level and from the available data it is estimated that there are 38,116 list entries that contain a farmhouse or farm dwelling.

Barns are described in 24 per cent of the list entries and are by far the most numerous working farmstead function mentioned. Nationally it is estimated that 16,679 list entries contain a barn function. One in ten entries (11%) contain an unidentified agricultural function. These occurred where the listing fieldworkers were unsure as to the function of the buildings they were describing. Farmstead stables are referred to in 6 per cent of entries, which equates to 4,387 entries at the national level. The other farmstead functions are rarely mentioned in the list descriptions and none are recorded in more than 5 per cent of cases.

It would appear from the evidence presented here that, despite the steps taken to encompass a broader range

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of farmstead buildings as part of the Accelerated National Resurvey, farmhouses and barns have been the focus for listing as the principal building. Together these functions account for eight out of ten farmstead references in the statutory lists.

Criteria for the evaluation of farm buildings were developed during the Accelerated National Resurvey, but the criteria for listing directed fieldworkers towards early and substantially complete pre-1840 farmhouses, barns and ranges. Distinctive structures such as granaries and dovecotes were also included, but there are very few examples of cattle housing and associated farmyard structures in view of the fact that the overwhelming majority are of mid- to late 19th century date.

Thematic work in Norfolk showed that there had been a tendency for the lists to concentrate on barns to the detriment of other building types (540 out of 590 listed agricultural buildings in 1997 were barns), while complete farmsteads demonstrating the evolution of the farm, and those 18th- and 19th-century buildings that represented important changes in farming practice and technology brought about by the agricultural revolution had, in many cases, been ignored (Lake & Hawkins 1998).

# LISTED AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS AND THE PRESSURES FOR CHANGE



Source: Countryside & Community Research Unit  
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## KEY POINTS

### Passive change: neglect and decay

- The English Heritage 'Buildings At Risk' database shows that 6 per cent of all grade I and II\* agricultural building entries are at risk from neglect and decay. Of these, 47 per cent are not capable of beneficial use even if repaired, because of their extreme sensitivity. One in five is in immediate danger of further rapid deterioration.
- Local authority 'Buildings At Risk' registers show that agricultural buildings are the single most important category of building at risk and have a higher priority for action than any other building type.
- Passive change resulting in structural decay is perceived as a nationally significant process. Forty-four per cent of conservation officers consider the loss or dereliction of historic farm buildings due to redundancy a significant problem within their local authority areas.
- The Defra Farm Practices Survey identifies significant and widespread levels of disrepair amongst the working buildings of the farmstead. At least one in ten farmers have traditional working farmstead buildings in a state of disrepair. The survey also found that disrepair is not restricted to buildings that are no longer in use.

### Active change: conversion and demolition

- The majority of sites with listed agricultural buildings experience significant development pressures. Fifty-seven per cent of list entries have been subject to a planning application since 1980 and two-thirds of these have been subject to multiple applications. Eight out of ten applications were approved. At least one in five of all list entries have had permission granted for change of use during the study period.
- The photographic survey, designed to establish a long-term monitoring framework for listed farm buildings, shows that 26 per cent of the listed working buildings of the farmstead have been converted to a new use.
- Change of use is characterised by the conversion of working farmstead buildings into permanent dwellings (70–80 per cent of all conversions). The adaptive re-use of working buildings for employment and businesses is far less common (10–20 per cent of all conversions), despite Government planning guidance promoting this type of conversion.
- Seventy-three per cent of conservation officers report a significant demand for the conversion of listed working farmstead buildings into dwellings while only 21 per cent of officers report significant demand for conversion of buildings for economic re-use.
- The working buildings of a farmstead rather than the farmhouse are the focus of developments requiring Listed Building Consent; almost half such applications are for curtilage buildings.

## INTRODUCTION

This section builds on the analysis of agricultural building list entries and investigates the pressures for change on listed agricultural buildings, some of which pose serious threats to the condition and character of the resource. Evidence from four different sources is presented and discussed.

- **Buildings at Risk (BAR) Registers** compiled by English Heritage and local authorities. These surveys provide evidence on the contemporary management of the resource. The English Heritage BAR database for grade I and II\* entries provides data for 2001 on list entries and principal items. Local authority BAR registers provide data for 1998 to 2001 on list entries and principal and curtilage items, although it is not always clear what the unit of record is.
- **Listed Building Consent (LBC)** applications for total or partial demolition of listed buildings compiled by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA). The CBA Conservation Database provides data for 1998–2000 on principal and curtilage items.
- **Planning applications** and LBC applications compiled by planning authorities. This survey covers the period 1980–2001 and provides data at the list entry level on principal and curtilage items.
- **Time series photography** compiled by English Heritage. This survey provides data on single principal buildings for two dates roughly 15 years apart (around 1982–88 and 1999–2003).

The strengths and weaknesses of each data source as a means of investigating the pressures acting on the listed agricultural building resource are shown in Table 6.

Each data source provides evidence on the management of the resource in its own right and although the units of record and time periods vary, the sources can be compared to determine whether the evidence is generally supportive or contradictory. This will support the conclusions drawn on how the resource is managed.

## BUILDINGS AT RISK SURVEYS

### English Heritage BAR database

The English Heritage BAR database contains data from an annual census of the condition and management of all grade I and II\* buildings known to be at risk

through neglect and decay, or vulnerable to becoming so. It provides baseline data on the threat to the most important part of the listed agricultural building resource. The principal limitation of the database is that, reflecting the statutory duties of English Heritage, it focuses on the top two grades and thereby excludes the 94 per cent of entries listed at grade II within the 224 local planning authorities (LPAs).

The database was created in 1998 and aims to facilitate the systematic recording and monitoring of buildings at risk. It also includes grade II buildings in London, some grade II local authority and government buildings at risk outside London and structural Scheduled Monuments known to be at risk. The database comprises two units of record (English Heritage 1999):

- **Entry Level** – corresponds to the entry on the Statutory List or County List of Scheduled Monuments;
- **Item Level** – each individual building at risk covered by the Statutory and County Lists.

### Risk to grade I and II\* agricultural building entries

In 2001 there were 202 agricultural building entries on the English Heritage BAR database. This means that 7 per cent of the total number of grade I and II\* list entries with an agricultural function contain buildings or structures that are at risk from neglect and decay.<sup>12</sup> One in five agricultural list entries in the North East are at risk, while Yorkshire and the Humber (14%) and the East Midlands (13%) are also significantly above the national average. List entries situated within urban fringe authorities are at much higher risk (11%) than those situated in more rural locations (5%) and a higher proportion of grade I entries (10%) are at risk than grade II\* (5%).

Over half of the agricultural buildings at risk are farmstead buildings (57%) and over two thirds of these are working buildings (72%). Four out of ten agricultural buildings at risk are not farmstead buildings (43%) and this supports the findings of the LBS analysis, which concluded that a significant proportion of agricultural list entries do not contain farmstead buildings.

There is a considerable degree of variation in the type of buildings at risk across the regions. Working farmstead buildings make up a particularly high proportion of the buildings at risk in the South East (64%) and the East of England (58%) compared with only 23 per cent in the East Midlands. The West Midlands has a higher proportion

**Table 6** Strengths and weaknesses of the data sources

Source	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>BAR data</b>		
English Heritage BAR database	National coverage. Compatible with LBS. Consistent collection of data. Well-developed database. Identifies list entries and buildings at risk. Has been selected as a Quality of Life indicator. Baseline data for monitoring passive change.	Covers grade I and II* buildings only. Some inconsistencies in classifying building types between the Entry and Item levels of the database. Too recent for time-series analysis.
Local authority BAR registers	Cover all grades of listed building. Identify list entries and buildings at risk.	Variable national coverage. Dependent on participation of local authorities. Not compatible with LBS. Variable survey dates. Two different methodologies used. Hard copy registers.
<b>Planning data</b>		
CBA Conservation Database	National coverage. Systematic collection of data. Well-developed database. Baseline data for monitoring active change.	Not compatible with LBS. Inconsistency in notification by LPAs. Too recent for time-series analysis.
LPA planning history survey	National coverage. Compatible with LBS. Systematic collection of data. Well-developed database. Baseline data for monitoring active change.	Dependent on participation of LPAs.
<b>Photographic data</b>		
Photographic survey	Systematic collection of data. Compatible with LBS. Well-developed database. Baseline data for long-term monitoring of active and passive change amongst listed farm buildings. Snapshot of change between 1980s and 2003.	Variable national coverage for the 1980s.

of domestic farmstead buildings at risk, while over two-thirds of the agricultural buildings at risk in the East Midlands are not farmstead buildings at all.

As might be expected from a BAR database, very few buildings are in good condition and over three quarters of all buildings are in poor or very bad condition. This pattern does not vary significantly between the different types of building (Table 7).

The analysis presented in Table 8 indicates that about half the buildings are considered by English Heritage to be capable of beneficial use<sup>13</sup> if repaired. This means that the building's future is seen to lie in being used either for its original purpose or an alternative use that would not compromise its architectural or historic interest and

would generate sufficient market value to secure the maintenance of the building over the long term.

The remainder of the buildings (46%) are not considered capable of beneficial use and cannot rely on the market to provide for their maintenance. These buildings would have to rely, in varying degrees, on various forms of stewardship for their long-term maintenance. The future of one-third of buildings could be secured if a suitable low-key use could be found, although it is recognised that such uses are not able to generate sufficient returns to cover all maintenance costs. Buildings are allocated to this category if conversion to a beneficial use would be likely to irrevocably damage their special interest. A small proportion of the buildings (6%) are located in the curtilage of a property capable of beneficial use but are

**Table 7** Structural condition by building type

Type of Item	Condition (%)				Total
	Good	Fair	Poor	Very bad	
Farmstead working	3.2	16.1	50.5	30.1	100
Farmstead domestic	0.0	18.9	51.4	29.7	100
All farmstead	2.3	16.9	50.8	30.8	100
Non-farmstead	4.0	22.2	44.4	29.3	100
All agricultural	3.1	19.2	48.0	29.7	100

Source: English Heritage BAR database

**Table 8** Potential use by building type

Type of Item	Potential use (%)				Total
	Capable of beneficial use	# Incidental to property	Isolated Structure	Low-key use	
Farmstead working	32.1	8.3	4.8	54.8	100
Farmstead domestic	97.1	0.0	0.0	2.9	100
All farmstead	51.3	5.9	3.4	39.5	100
Non-farmstead	58.8	5.9	10.3	25.0	100
All agricultural	54.0	5.9	5.9	34.2	100

Source: English Heritage BAR database

# Building not capable of beneficial use in its own right, but located in the curtilage of a property that is capable of beneficial use.

not themselves capable of beneficial use.

The means of securing the future for working farmstead buildings is very different from that for farm dwellings. Low-key use<sup>14</sup> is seen by English Heritage as the only way to ensure the conservation of the historic and architectural interest for over half of all working farmstead buildings listed at grades I and II\*, reflecting their particular sensitivity. Almost all the domestic dwellings could continue in, or be returned to, beneficial use.

One in five buildings (19%) is at immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric while a solution to their long-term future is found. Since the inception of the BAR register in 1998 the future of one-third of all buildings has been secured. It would appear that, to date, there has been greater success in finding a future for the working buildings of the farmstead (26%) than the farmhouses (22%).

### Local authority Buildings at Risk registers

The English Heritage BAR database provides baseline data on the threat to the grade I and II\* buildings in the agricultural list entries. In line with local authorities' responsibilities to protect and monitor their own historic environment, English Heritage encourages local

authorities to produce Registers of all grades of listed building at risk, including the 92 per cent of buildings that are listed grade II.

The origins of local authority BAR registers dates back to the mid 1980s when English Heritage developed a methodology for evaluating the degree of risk to listed buildings. In 1986 English Heritage initiated a project to develop a recording and data management system for listed buildings at risk from neglect and decay. At the heart of this was the systematic collection of quantitative information to inform decisions about the management of the resource and to enable local planning authorities to identify the buildings that required priority action. Over the next three years the BAR methodology was piloted through a small number of local authorities and a refined version was launched in 1989. In 1990–1 English Heritage organised a sample survey of 43,000 listed buildings covering 59 authorities (see English Heritage 1992). In 1998 English Heritage introduced a new category to facilitate prioritisation of action (Table 9). The Priority Category takes into consideration two factors: the rate of deterioration of the building and progress towards solution of the problem.

The 1992 English Heritage BAR survey process consisted of two stages. The first involved the completion of a standardised survey form for each listed building. In

**Table 9** English Heritage BAR risk and priority categories

	1989 risk category		1998 priority category
1	Extreme risk	A	Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed.
2	Grave risk	B	Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented.
3	At risk	C	Slow decay; no solution agreed.
4	Vulnerable building	D	Slow decay; solution agreed but not yet implemented.
5	Building not at risk from neglect	E	Under repair or in fair to good repair; but no user identified or under threat of vacancy with no obvious user.
6	Building not at risk from neglect	F	Repair scheme in progress and end use or user identified; functionally redundant building with new use agreed, not yet implemented.

Source: English Heritage (1992); English Heritage (1999)

the second stage the information was entered onto a computer database and analysed to determine the level of risk to each building. This was intended to enable local authorities to evaluate the level of risk to all listed buildings in their areas on a common basis and to help in establishing priorities for action (English Heritage 1992).

However, while most authorities undertaking BAR surveys have adopted the general principles of the English Heritage methodology there are four important variations.

- Some authorities use the list entry rather than individual buildings as the unit of record. In some cases, authorities also include curtilage buildings in their registers as well as the principal buildings described in the list entries.
- There are variations between authorities with regard to the amount of information presented for each entry or building. For example, two of the local authority BAR registers omit the listing grade of the entries.
- Some authorities do not use the 1989 risk categories, only the priority categories introduced in 1998, making comparison between lists difficult.
- The timing, frequency and spatial coverage of BAR surveys vary greatly between authorities.

Given this degree of divergence from the English Heritage guidelines, local authority BAR surveys in their current form do not provide robust baseline data with which to assess the threat to the listed agricultural building resource at national or regional level. Some caution, therefore, must be used when interpreting the data contained within the registers. The strength of the registers lies in what they reveal about the character of the buildings known to be at risk.

### Distribution of local authority BAR registers

All of the 224 (rural and urban fringe) LPAs and 34 County Councils covered by the project were surveyed to determine whether they maintain a BAR register for their listed buildings. Those that have a register were then asked if it was based on a survey of all list entries and whether it had been updated since 1998. BAR surveys conducted before 1998 were considered to be too out of date to provide useful information. Occasionally it was found that two registers covered the same local planning authority area, one held by the authority and the other by the County Council. Where this occurred the registers were checked to ensure that there was no

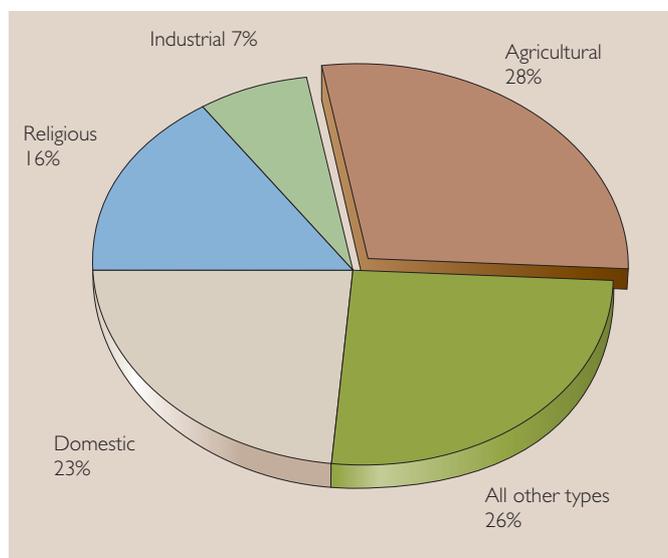
double counting.

While 70 per cent of LPAs are covered by registers, only 32 per cent are based on a census of list entries and contain reasonably up-to-date information. Hard copies of the up-to-date registers were obtained from 66 of the authorities. This means that nationally just 30 per cent of authorities were able to provide usable data on the buildings at risk within their areas. Given the lack of balanced coverage across the regions it has not been possible to undertake a regional analysis of the data.

### Contents of the local authority BAR registers

The 66 BAR registers contain a total of 3,483 records of buildings of all types that are at risk from neglect or decay. Thus, for those authorities with a register, the average number of buildings at risk is 53. One in ten of the buildings are listed grade I or II\* (9.1%). Variations in the way in which local authorities define building type mean that it is not possible to distinguish between working and domestic farmstead buildings and between farmstead and non-farmstead agricultural buildings. One in four local authorities presents details of building type, which generally means the inclusion of an 'agricultural building' category including both working and domestic farmstead buildings as well as non-farmstead buildings such as domestic stables. It was not possible to break down this broad category to identify farmstead buildings. It is likely, therefore, that a substantial proportion of the records in the agricultural building category are non-farmstead buildings and this must be borne in mind when

**Figure 12** Types of buildings at risk on local authority registers



Source: 66 local authority BAR registers

interpreting the results.

An important finding of the analysis is that agricultural buildings are the most frequently recorded buildings at risk (Figure 12).

The analysis also shows a number of important differences in the characteristics of agricultural buildings at risk compared with the other types of buildings. In general, agricultural buildings are in worse condition, at greater risk and given a higher priority for action than the other types of building (Tables 10, 11, 12).

Four out of five agricultural buildings on local authority registers are in poor or very bad condition. Where authorities have adopted the priority categorisation introduced by English Heritage in 1998, over one quarter

of agricultural buildings are at immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric, while a solution to their long-term future is yet to be found (category A). The future of only 25 per cent of agricultural buildings has been secured (categories B, D and F) and 41 per cent are suffering slow decline with no solution in sight (category C).

### Comparing the English Heritage 1990–1 BAR survey with the local authority BAR registers

During 1990–91 English Heritage undertook a sample survey of 43,000 listed buildings in England. The main purpose of the survey was to determine the general condition of listed buildings and the extent to which repairs were needed (English Heritage 1992). The sample

**Table 10** Structural condition by building type for local authority BAR records

Type of record	Condition (%)				Total
	Good	Fair	Poor	Very bad	
Agricultural	3.5	10.1	61.0	24.6	100
Non-agricultural	5.7	16.6	61.0	16.7	100
All records	5.2	14.9	61.2	18.7	100

Source: Local authority BAR registers

**Table 11** Degree of risk by building type for local authority BAR records

Type of record	Risk category (%)			Total
	High risk	Vulnerable	Low risk	
Agricultural	82.1	9.2	8.7	100
Non-agricultural	64.9	16.8	18.3	100
All records	69.1	15.0	16.0	100

Source: Local authority BAR registers

**Table 12** Priority category by building type for local authority BAR records

Type of Item	Priority category# (%)						Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
Agricultural	28.6	8.3	40.5	13.1	6.0	3.6	100
Non-agricultural	21.1	7.9	48.4	10.0	3.2	9.5	100
All records	23.4	8.0	46.0	10.9	4.0	7.7	100

Source: Local authority BAR registers

# See Table 9 for key (See page 57)

**Table 13** National estimate of buildings at risk in 1990–91 by building type

Type of building	Number of buildings	% of all buildings	Number of buildings at risk	% of building type at risk
Working farmstead	29250	5.9	5000	17.1
Domestic (inc. farmhouses)	313750	62.8	10800	3.4
Religious	23150	4.6	1250	5.4
Other	133850	26.8	19650	14.7
Total	500000	100.0	36700	7.3

Source: Based on English Heritage (1992) p.20

survey data was weighted and extrapolated to provide national level statistics. It was estimated that 37,000 of England's 500,000 listed buildings (7%) were at risk from neglect (Table 13). While working farmstead buildings only accounted for 6 per cent of all listed buildings they were the second most numerous category of building type at risk. Seventeen per cent of working farmstead buildings were at risk from neglect and these buildings accounted for 14 per cent of buildings in the 'at risk' category.

Twenty-seven authorities had BAR registers that were broadly compatible with the English Heritage survey data. Together these registers contained 1,410 buildings at risk from neglect of which 20 per cent were working farmstead buildings. Bearing in mind that the survey of local authority BAR registers excluded most urban authorities, and therefore would accentuate the importance of working farmstead buildings, there is little reason to believe that the proportion of working farmstead buildings at risk from neglect has diminished during the last decade.

### COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY CONSERVATION DATABASE

Under Section 9 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 it is a criminal offence to demolish a listed building, or alter or extend such a building in a way that would affect its character, without Listed Building Consent (LBC) from the appropriate LPA. Under section 15 of the Act 1990, the Secretary of State was given powers to direct LPAs to notify five national amenity societies, including the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), of any applications for consent to works that comprise or include the demolition of the whole or any part of a listed building.

In 1996 the CBA created a computer database to assist in the management of the statutory LBC consultation process. The database provides baseline data on proposals for high-impact change (Chitty 2000) including:

- building function;
- location;
- date of construction;
- grade and relationship to list entry;
- type of work proposed;
- current or last known use and proposed use.

The CBA provided a condensed version of the Conservation Database for a three-year period between 1998 and 2000. The 224 LPAs were subject to 10,615 LBC applications involving demolition over the three years with a slight reduction in the number of applications each year. On average each authority received 15.8 applications per year, although this covered a considerable range from 12 authorities where no applications were recorded to four with over 100.

The CBA database included a large amount of information about list entries. The unit of record not only included principal buildings but also buildings situated within the curtilage of the principal building and, very occasionally, buildings that influenced the setting of a principal building. In the context of this project this is a very important distinction, as many agricultural list entries comprise a single principal farmhouse with associated curtilage buildings.

### LBC applications and building type

The CBA employs a similar classification system to determine building type as the one used for the English Heritage BAR database. However, the CBA system identifies two different agricultural building categories:

Agricultural and Domestic/Agricultural. Figure 13 shows that, overall, a relatively small proportion of LBC applications (17%) involve an agricultural building. Applications involving non-agricultural domestic buildings are most common, accounting for just over half the total. The distribution of applications according to building type remained relatively stable year on year between 1998 and 2000.

### **Farmstead buildings and LBC applications**

The agricultural building categories used by the CBA are very broadly defined and include many types of non-farmstead building. To facilitate a more detailed analysis of the type of building affected by LBC applications, a random sample of 600 agricultural records was drawn and manually matched with their list descriptions. In total, matches were found for 505 records (83%). The list descriptions were then analysed to determine the presence or absence of working and domestic farmstead functions. Each record was then coded into one of four categories according to the functions identified (Table 14).

A striking finding of the analysis is just how numerous curtilage buildings are in terms of the overall proportion of LBC applications. Almost half of all the buildings subject to an application fall into this category. Only very occasionally does an application refer to a building that would affect the setting of a listed building. An equally striking finding of the analysis is that nine out of ten LBC applications concerning single domestic list entries (farmhouses and farm cottages) are for works to their curtilage buildings. Overall, 93 per cent of LBC applications for major works involve working farmstead buildings, while only 7 per cent involve farmhouses and farm cottages.

Taken together this evidence clearly shows that it is the working buildings of the farmstead rather than the farmhouse which are the focus for developments requiring LBC approval. The analysis also shows that reliance on the list entries alone can provide a very misleading picture of the types of building being affected directly by proposals for total and partial demolition. While 48 per cent of farmstead list entries contain a farmhouse or farm cottage, these residential properties are affected directly by only 7 per cent of LBC applications.

Further information is available on the type of work proposed for 208 of the applications (41%). Partial demolition is proposed for 61 per cent of cases, in schemes that would retain rather than remove the building from the landscape. In 38 per cent of cases the

application is for the complete demolition of the building. Table 15 shows that there is a clear difference in the extent of demolition proposed for working and domestic farmstead buildings. Working buildings are characterised by applications to develop and adapt the building, while the majority of farmhouse applications are for demolition.

With regard to the future use of the buildings, Table 16 shows clearly that the proposed changes are part of schemes to convert working farmstead buildings into dwellings. Of 42 vacant agricultural buildings, 86 per cent are intended to become dwellings compared with 10 per cent intended for a new business use. Half the buildings that are in agricultural use would be converted into houses while 15 buildings have already been converted into houses and further work is proposed. Of the 103 working buildings, 69 per cent are to be converted into dwellings and only 12 per cent to economic use.

Overall a clear pattern emerges from the LBC application data, with the most activity focused on the conversion of working farmstead buildings to residential use. A small proportion of applications directly involve farmhouses and these are mainly for the clearance of the site through demolition.

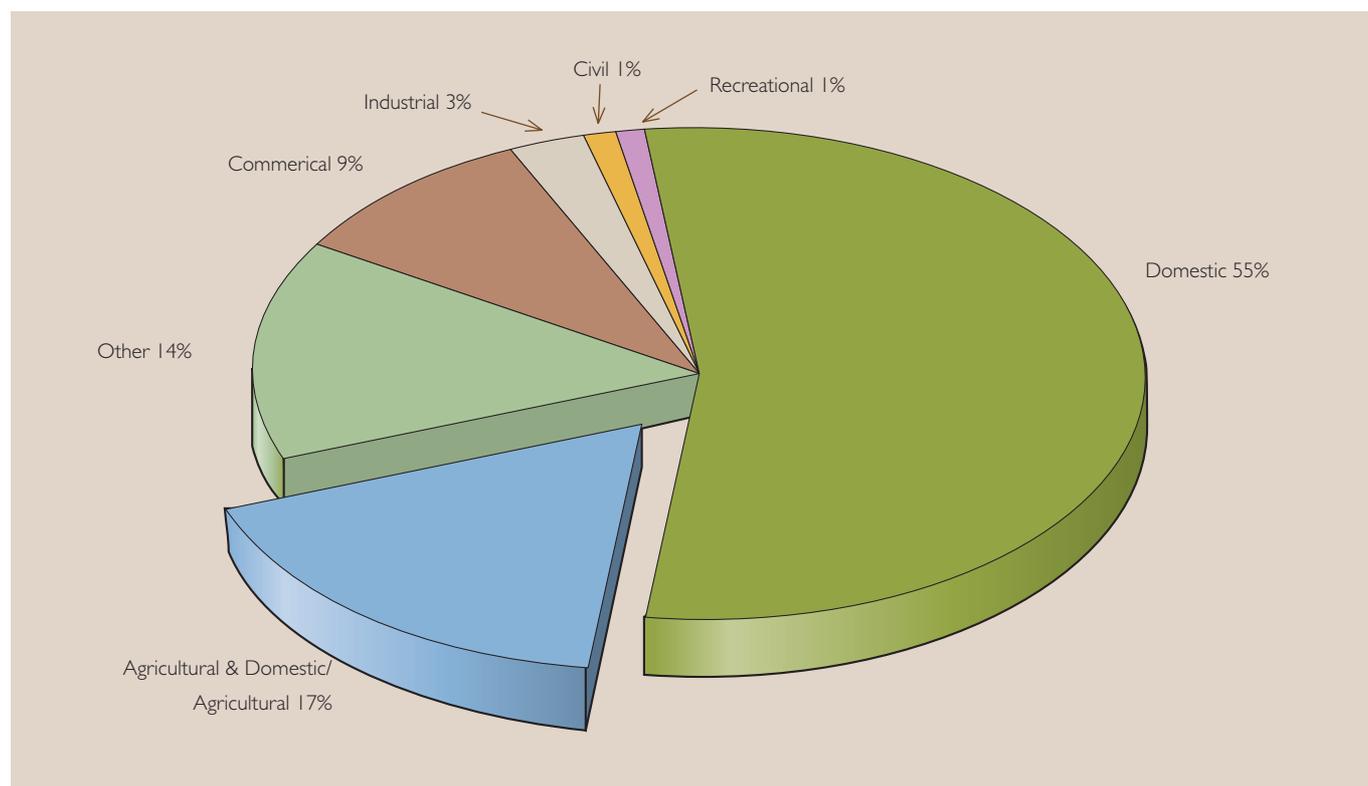
### **THE PLANNING HISTORY SURVEY**

The 224 LPAs in the study were asked to provide details of the planning histories of a random sample of agricultural list entries, with the purpose of determining the development pressure being brought to bear on the listed agricultural building resource. The aim was to provide nationally and regionally representative statistics on the proportion of agricultural list entries that had been subject to planning applications and LBC applications between 1980 and 2001.

The analysis of LBC applications for total or partial demolition shows clearly the importance of looking beyond the principal buildings of the farmstead to provide a comprehensive picture of change. The planning history survey recognised the importance of curtilage buildings and included them in the survey. In an attempt to capture the growth in farm diversification, coupled with increasing demand for the adaptive re-use of farm buildings, planning histories were sought for the period 1980–2001.

Given the restricted resources that authorities could devote to the survey, a limit of 20 forms per authority was set. In terms of data collection, emphasis was placed on determining the number and proportion of list entries

**Figure 13** Type of building subject to LBC applications for total or partial demolition, 1998–2000



Source: CBA Conservation Database

that had been subject to one or more LBC applications and what proportion had been successful. To place the data from the CBA Conservation Database in a broader context, information was collected on the proportion of list entries that had been subject to an LBC application for total or partial demolition and the proportion of entries where the applications had been successful.

Similar information was also collected for planning applications, but with additional data on the nature of the planning consent for the first application to be granted.

This was to provide an insight into the nature of the developments agreed. As with the CBA Conservation Database, the planning history survey provides an indicator of potential rather than actual development because data is not available on whether or not the consents were implemented. In total 129 authorities provided planning histories for 2,502 agricultural list entries.

**Table 14** LBC application association with list entry by list entry function

Type of function	Association with list entry			Total
	Principal	Curtilage	Setting	
Farmstead working	76.3	22.8	0.9	100
Farmstead domestic	11.8	88.2	0.0	100
Farmstead domestic & working	68.3	31.7	0.0	100
Non-farmstead	63.3	32.2	4.4	100
Total	55.5	43.3	1.2	100

Source: CBA Conservation Database

**Table 15** Type of work proposed by list entry function

Type of function	LBC applications (%)		Total
	Partial demolition	Total demolition	
Farmstead working	70.6	29.4	100
Farmstead domestic	37.7	62.3	100
Farmstead domestic & working	66.7	33.3	100
Non-farmstead	77.1	22.9	100
Total	61.5	38.5	100

Source: CBA Conservation Database

**Table 16** Current and proposed use for working farmstead list entries

Current use	Proposed use (No.)				Total
	Agricultural	Business	Domestic	Other	
Vacant agricultural	1	4	36	1	42
Agricultural	16	2	19	0	37
Business	0	6	1	0	7
Domestic	0	0	15	0	15
Other	0	0	0	2	2
Total	17	12	71	3	103

Source: CBA Conservation Database

## Listed Building Consent

LBC applications provide a useful indicator of development intensity. An important finding of the analysis is that 53 per cent of all agricultural list entries have been subject to an LBC application since 1980 (see Table 17, page 64).

At a regional level the North East stands out as being subject to less development pressure than elsewhere. In contrast, almost two thirds of the list entries in the East Midlands received an LBC application.

Another major finding of the survey was that where development proposals affect agricultural list entries they tend to be serial rather than one-off events. Over half the entries were subject to multiple applications. A smaller, but significant, proportion of LBC applications involve the total or partial demolition of a listed building. Since 1980, 8 per cent of the list entries have been subject to an application for demolition and permission has been granted for a little less than 6 per cent. This evidence, taken together with the findings of the CBA analysis,

shows that there have been a significant number of LBC applications for major invasive works.

## Planning applications

A planning application is required when proposed development falls outside the scope of permitted development allowed by the General Development Order, although the coverage of the GDO has changed over time. The legal definition of 'development' contains two important elements: operational development and change of use.

- Operational development refers to activity that gives rise to a physical change in land. It includes new building, structural alterations to existing buildings, rebuilding and demolition.
- Change of use covers any variation in the activities carried out on land. Physical change can be irrelevant. The key test, however, is whether the

**Table 17** Proportion of agricultural building list entries subject to LBC applications, 1980 – 2001

Government Region	% of agricultural list entries	Standard error #95% confidence level ±
South West	58.8	4.9
South East	54.7	5.1
East of England	55.3	5.5
West Midlands	43.5	5.8
East Midlands	61.5	5.4
Yorkshire & the Humber	54.2	5.8
North East	29.6	6.4
North West	51.6	6.1
England	53.4	2.0

Source: Planning history survey

# This means that, for example, the proportion of list entries subject to LBC applications in England lies between 51.4 per cent and 55.4 per cent (i.e. 53.4% ± 2.0%) with 95 per cent confidence.

change in use is material i.e. whether any new use is sufficiently different in character to the previous activity.

The planning history survey condensed planning applications into three broad categories reflecting the classification used by authorities to categorise applications:

- change of use;
- alterations, extensions and other works;
- new building.

It is perhaps not surprising that the pattern of planning applications closely mirrors that for LBC applications, as many types of development require both consents. The survey also shows that the number of planning applications submitted per list entry also mirrors that for LBC applications. This adds weight to the view that multiple development proposals often affect list entries; almost two-thirds of the entries were subject to multiple applications.

The overall approval rate for planning applications affecting listed agricultural buildings in England was 81 per cent, which appears to be broadly in line with the findings of other studies that have investigated aspects of farming and the planning system. A recent Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions study of farm business diversification in England (DTLR 2001a) found that 83 per cent of all applications for farm diversification were approved during a three-year period

from 1997 to 2000 compared to a national average approval rate for all planning applications of 88 per cent.

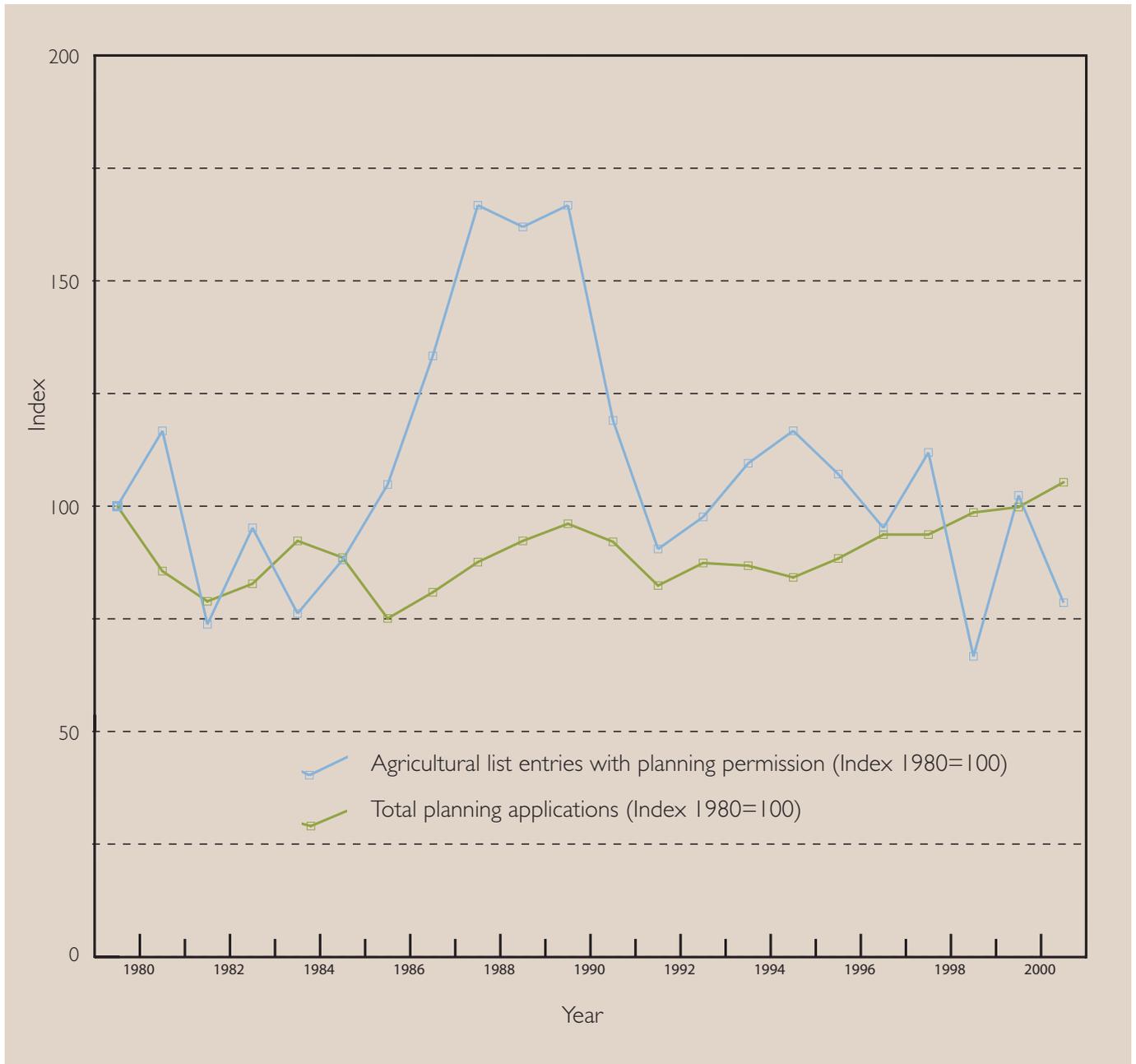
The DTLR study identified a marked variation in approval rates between different types of local planning authority. Urban fringe authorities had a markedly lower approval rate than accessible and remote rural authorities. It was suggested that authorities in remote rural areas had a more positive attitude to farm diversification compared to those in the urban fringe, where development pressures were greater. In the present study this pattern was repeated, but the association was weak and there was not a particularly marked difference between the various categories of LPA.

### **The initial application for each list entry to receive planning consent in detail**

Additional information was sought for the first planning application to be granted for each list entry between 1980 and 2001 to provide a more detailed picture of the nature of the initial development that was taking place. This effectively provided a stratified sample of the granted planning applications.

There are 1,314 agricultural list entries that have had at least one planning consent and an average of 2.7 consents per entry. In practice this meant that, for the purposes of this project, additional information was sought for one-third of all granted applications. Figure 14 shows that granting planning permission for list entries broadly follows the annual trend in planning applications

**Figure 14** Trends in annual planning applications submitted in England compared with planning permissions received for agricultural building list entries, 1980–2001



Source: Planning History Survey; data from ODPM

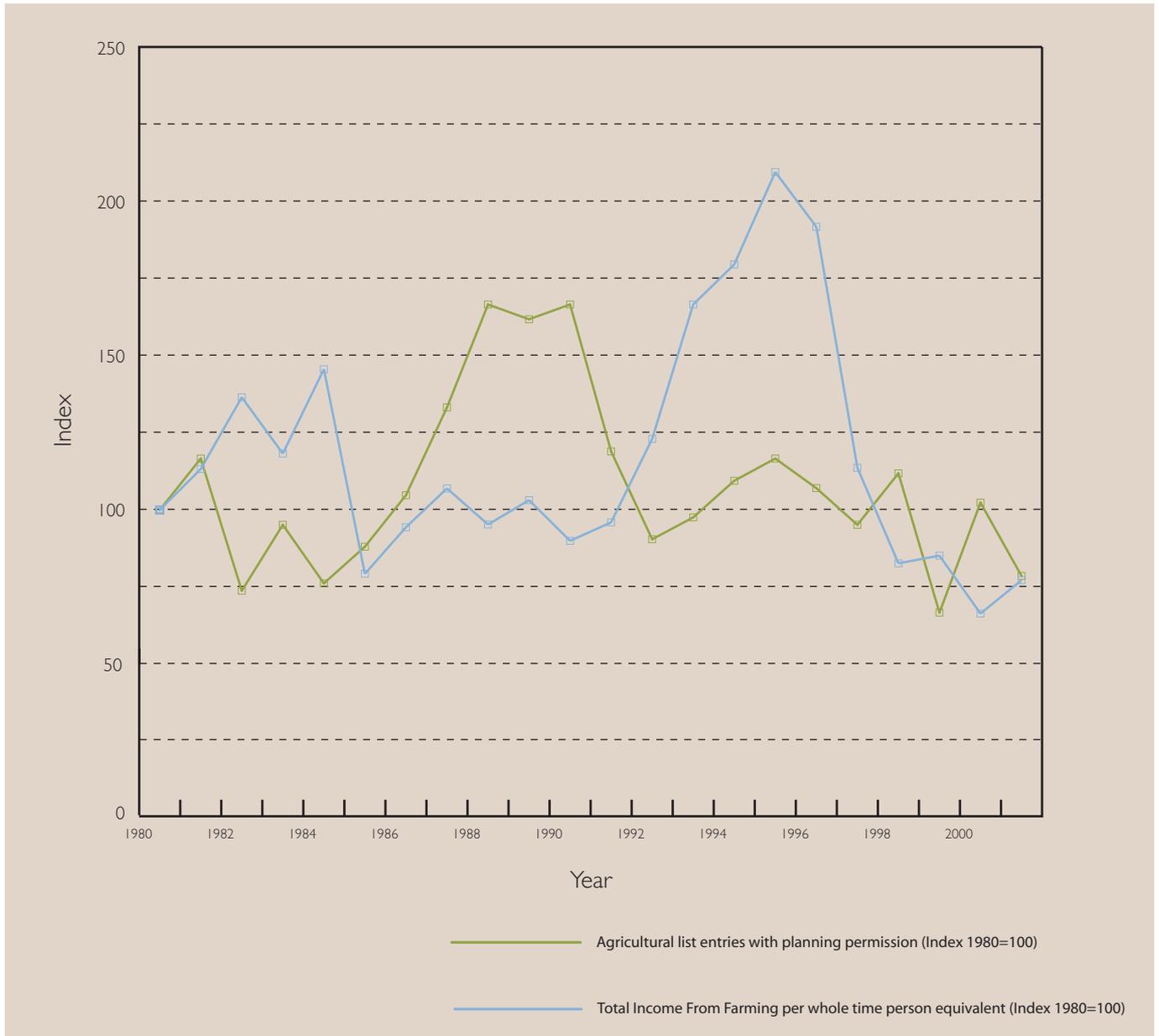
submitted during the 1980s but has not matched the sustained increase in planning applications during the 1990s.

Figure 15 shows that there was an increase in planning permissions granted for agricultural list entries after farm incomes declined in the mid 1980s, but there has not been a similar increase after the collapse of farm incomes during the late 1990s. However, it is difficult to interpret the data with any confidence, as the number of agricultural list entries rapidly increased during the mid 1980s as a result of the Accelerated National Resurvey.

It is clear that the pattern of development, as indicated by the granting of planning permission, varies according to rurality. Figure 16 shows that while all three types of area experience a cyclical pattern of development urban fringe areas tend to peak first.

Just over half the list entries (54%) have had consents granted for additions, alterations and other works (Table 18). This was to be expected given the large number of farmhouses contained within the statutory lists. Over one third of entries have had permission for a change of use (39%) and 18 per cent have had permission granted

**Figure 15** Trends in Total Farm Income compared with planning permissions received for agricultural building list entries, 1980–2001



Source: Planning History Survey; Defra

for new building work. This new building work is mainly related to the erection of agricultural buildings requiring planning permission due to location and size. A greater proportion of list entries are subject to a change of use in urban fringe authorities than in the other LPA categories. The reduced sample size means that it was not possible to determine an accurate regional picture.

Change of use, particularly the conversion of working farmstead buildings to dwellings, can have a significant impact on the character of historic farm buildings (English Heritage 1993). Taken as a proportion of all list entries,

21 per cent are known to have received permission for a change of use since 1980. This is a conservative estimate as subsequent consents for the same list entry, which were not investigated by the project, may also have included permission for change of use.

It is clear from Table 19 that the working buildings of the farmstead are most affected by consents for change of use. The existing, or last known, use of nine out of ten buildings is for agriculture. The majority of consents (71%) were for conversion into permanent dwellings and only 15 per cent were for a change of use to

**Figure 16** Trends in planning permissions received for agricultural building list entries by rurality, 1980–2001



Source: Planning History Survey; data from ODPM

**Table 18** Type of planning consent by rurality, 1980–2001

Rurality	Alterations, extensions & other		Change of Use		New building	
	% consents	95% confidence level $\pm$	% consents	95% confidence level $\pm$	% consents	95% confidence level $\pm$
Remote rural	53.5	5.0	42.3	5.0	14.5	3.5
Accessible rural	53.7	4.0	32.7	3.7	18.9	3.1
Urban fringe	59.7	5.8	58.8	5.9	20.2	4.8
England	54.3	2.8	39.0	2.7	17.5	2.1

Source: Planning history survey

**Table 19** Previous and proposed use

	Previous use		Proposed use	
	% list entries	95% confidence level ±	% list entries	95% confidence level ±
Agricultural	88.5	2.0	1.8	1.1
Business	1.3	0.9	15.3	3.0
Residential	5.4	1.9	71.2	3.7
Holiday	0.4	0.5	5.6	2.0
Other	4.5	1.7	6.1	2.0
Total	100		100	

Source: Planning history survey

**Table 20** Change of use according to previous use

Previous use	# Proposed use (%)					Total
	Agriculture	Business	Residential	Holiday	Other	
Agriculture	1.9	13.9	73.5	5.3	5.5	100
Business	0.0	27.3	72.7	0.0	0.0	100
Residential	0.0	23.1	50.0	11.5	15.4	100
Holiday	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100
Other	0.0	14.3	42.9	0.0	42.9	100
Total	1.7	14.6	71.2	5.2	7.3	100

Source: Planning history survey

# Based on 534 list entries with data for previous and proposed use

**Table 21** Change of use according to proposed use

Previous use	#Proposed use (%)					Total
	Agriculture	Business	Residential	Holiday	Other	
Agriculture	100.0	84.6	91.8	89.3	66.7	89.0
Business	0.0	3.8	2.1	0.0	0.0	2.1
Residential	0.0	7.7	3.4	10.7	10.3	4.9
Holiday	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2
Other	0.0	3.8	2.4	0.0	23.1	3.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Planning history survey

# Based on 534 list entries with data for previous and proposed use.

business categories.

Information was collected from 534 list entries that recorded both previous and proposed use. This enabled a matrix to be constructed showing the types of building being converted into new uses. Tables 20 and 21 show clearly that the nature of change primarily involves the conversion of working farmstead buildings into dwellings. Almost three quarters of agricultural buildings are to become permanent dwellings, or put another way, 92 per cent of residential conversions are sourced from buildings still or last in agricultural use. Only 14 per cent of agricultural buildings are to be converted into business uses, but nearly all proposed business uses are sourced from previous agricultural buildings.

## THE PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

The photographic survey provided a longer-term perspective on change in the listed agricultural building resource. The method was relatively straightforward and was based on the comparison of two photographs of the same listed building taken roughly 15 years apart. The structure and condition of the building was recorded for each date along with any clearly visible changes that had taken place. While this method cannot identify subtle variations in structural condition and maintenance to the same degree as the appraisal method developed by English Heritage to identify buildings at risk, it does identify the most serious cases of structural failure as well as reliably tracking changes of use. The method therefore provides an effective indicator of the major trends over time and provides a robust baseline for long-term monitoring of change.

The photographic survey used two different sources for the photographs.

- **Accelerated National Resurvey photographs:** the first source comprised monochrome photographs of listed buildings taken as part of the Accelerated National Resurvey during the 1980s (1982–88). The decision to take photographs of the principal list entry buildings was taken part way through the survey, which means that the coverage is not comprehensive. The majority of the photographs were deposited in the National Monuments Record (NMR) in Swindon, although part of the archive is held by individual County Councils.
- **Images of England<sup>15</sup> digital images:** the second source comprised colour digital images of listed buildings taken as part of English Heritage's lottery-funded Images of England project. The photographs were taken between 1999 and 2003 and are held on a computer database.

It was possible to match 3,463 Accelerated National Resurvey photographs provided by English Heritage with the corresponding digital images provided by Images of England. Both sets of images were then indexed and merged with the LBS-derived agricultural list entry database.

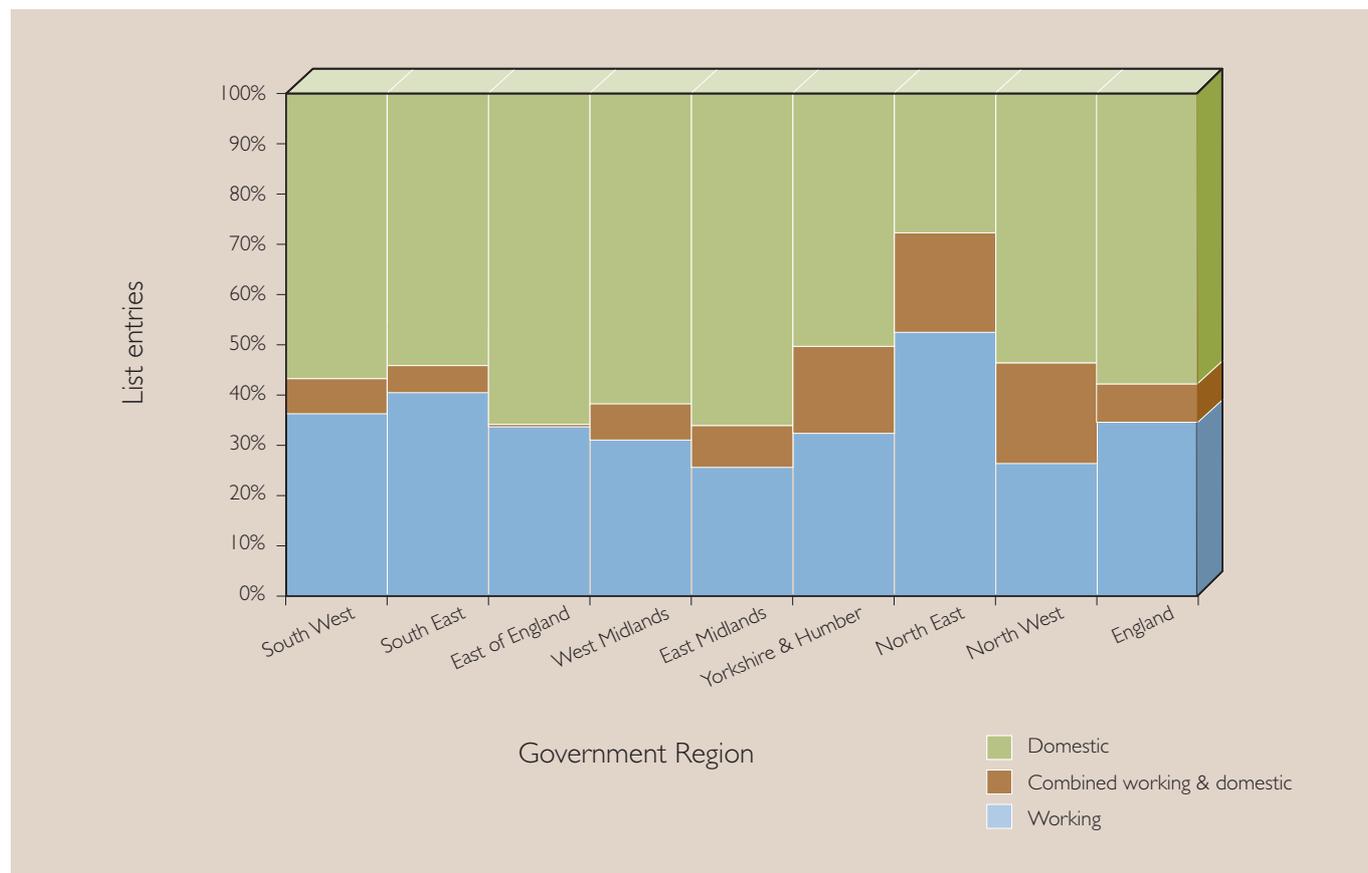
The aim was to provide nationally and regionally representative statistics. The target was a minimum of 400 agricultural list entries per Government Region. This was achieved in five of the eight regions (Table 22). There is little that can be done to increase the number

**Table 22** Regional distribution of listed agricultural building photographs

Region	List entry photographs
South West	667
South East	567
East of England	507
West Midlands	609
East Midlands	401
Yorkshire & the Humber	339
North East	227
North West	146
England	3463

Source: English Heritage LBS and photographic survey

**Figure 17** Type of listed farmstead building in England and by region



Source: HFBPS  
Weighted national figure

of Accelerated National Resurvey images for the North East and North West, as the photographic coverage for these regions was low. The analysis presented in the following section uses unweighted data at the regional level and weighted data to produce national figures.<sup>16</sup>

### Type of listed farmstead building

Each agricultural building list entry on the database was matched with its own list description. The list descriptions were then analysed to determine the presence or absence of working and domestic farmstead functions. Each record was then coded into one of three categories according to the functions identified:

- farmstead working;
- farmstead domestic;
- non-farmstead.

Of the 3,463 records, 343 (10%) were found to contain non-farmstead buildings such as domestic stables and industrial granaries. These records were excluded from

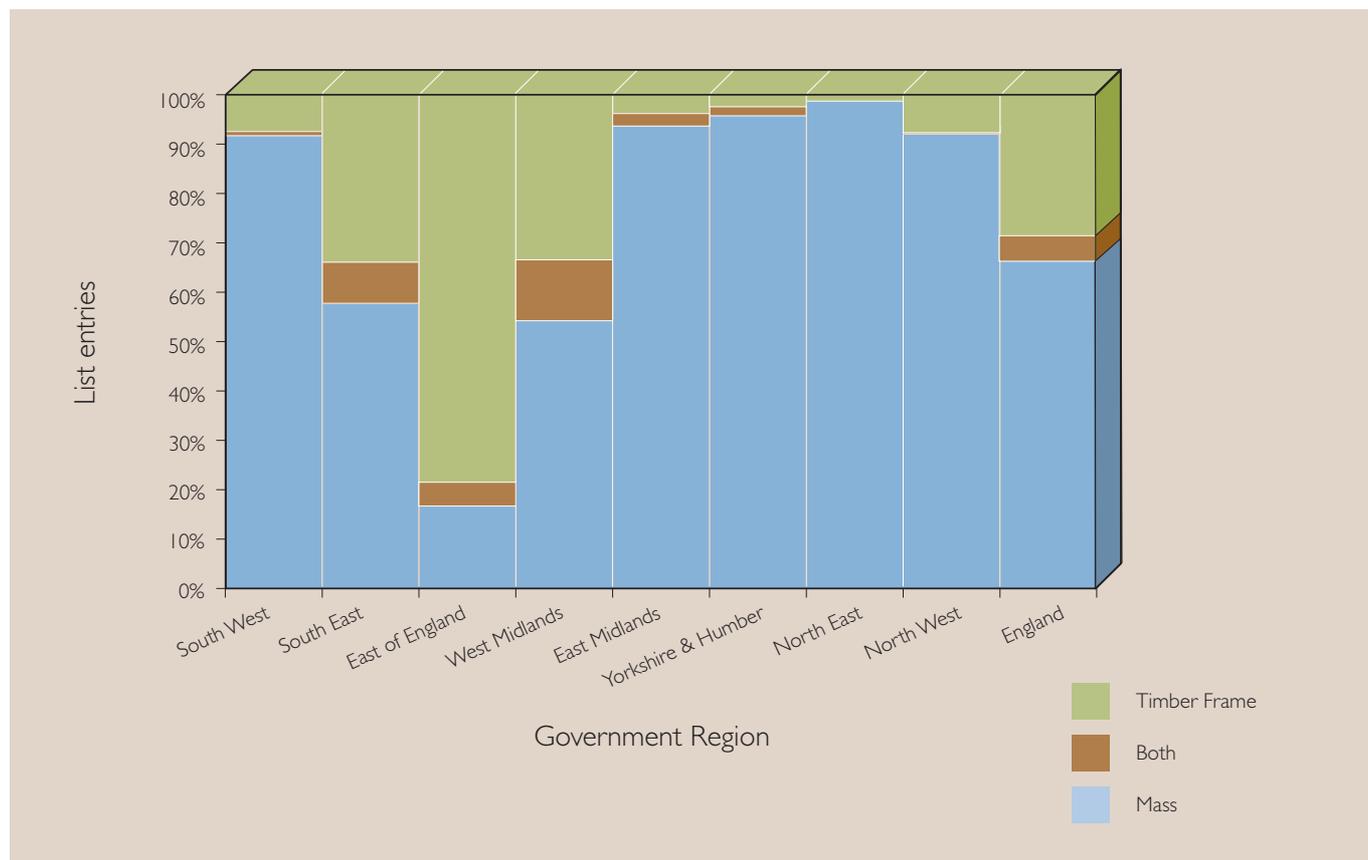
the analysis. The total number of farmstead records was therefore 3,120 and of these 3,096 (99%) had matching photographs that could be analysed.

Farmhouses dominate the agricultural list entries (65%) and this is clearly shown in Figure 17. Just over one third of the records contain working farmstead buildings on their own and 8 per cent contain both, usually in the form of a farmhouse with an attached working building. There was also a distinct regional variation in building type. Combined dwelling and working building arrangements are much more common in the three northern regions (Yorkshire and the Humber 17%, North East 20% and North West 20%). This was in marked contrast to the regional pattern found in the East of England where farmstead dwellings and working buildings are rarely joined (0.8%).

### Listed farmstead building construction techniques

Figure 18 shows that mass-walled buildings dominate the list entries (67%) with timber framing accounting for

**Figure 18** Listed farmstead building construction techniques in England and by region



Source: HFBPS  
Weighted national figure

**Table 23** Accelerated National Resurvey (1982–88): Visible change of use by farmstead function

Type of farmstead building	Visible re-use (%)			Total
	Residential	Other	None	
Working	4.8	1.6	93.6	100
Combined working and domestic	18.4	2.0	79.6	100
Domestic	0.2	0.8	99.0	100
All Farmstead	3.3	1.2	95.5	100

Source: English Heritage LBS and photographic survey

just over one quarter of entries. Again there is a marked regional variation with the majority of timber-framed buildings being concentrated within three regions: East of England (77%), South East (34%) and West Midlands (33%). Mass-walled buildings in contrast dominate in the East Midlands (94%), the South West (92%) and the three northern regions: Yorkshire and the Humber (96%), North East (99%) and North West (92%).

### Condition and use at the time of the Accelerated National Resurvey

Overall the structural condition of farmstead buildings at the time of the Accelerated National Resurvey during the 1980s was very good, with the caveat that only major and externally visible structural failures could be identified from the images. The vast majority of farmhouses appeared to be in good structural condition.

**Table 24** Images of England (1999–2003): Roof condition by listed farmstead building type

Type of farmstead building	Roof condition (%)			Total
	Intact	Clear visible holes	Collapsed/removed	
Working <sup>#</sup>	94.8	3.8	1.4	100
Combined working and domestic	97.6	1.6	0.8	100
Domestic	99.7	0.1	0.2	100
All Farmstead	98.3	1.2	0.5	100

Source: HFBPS

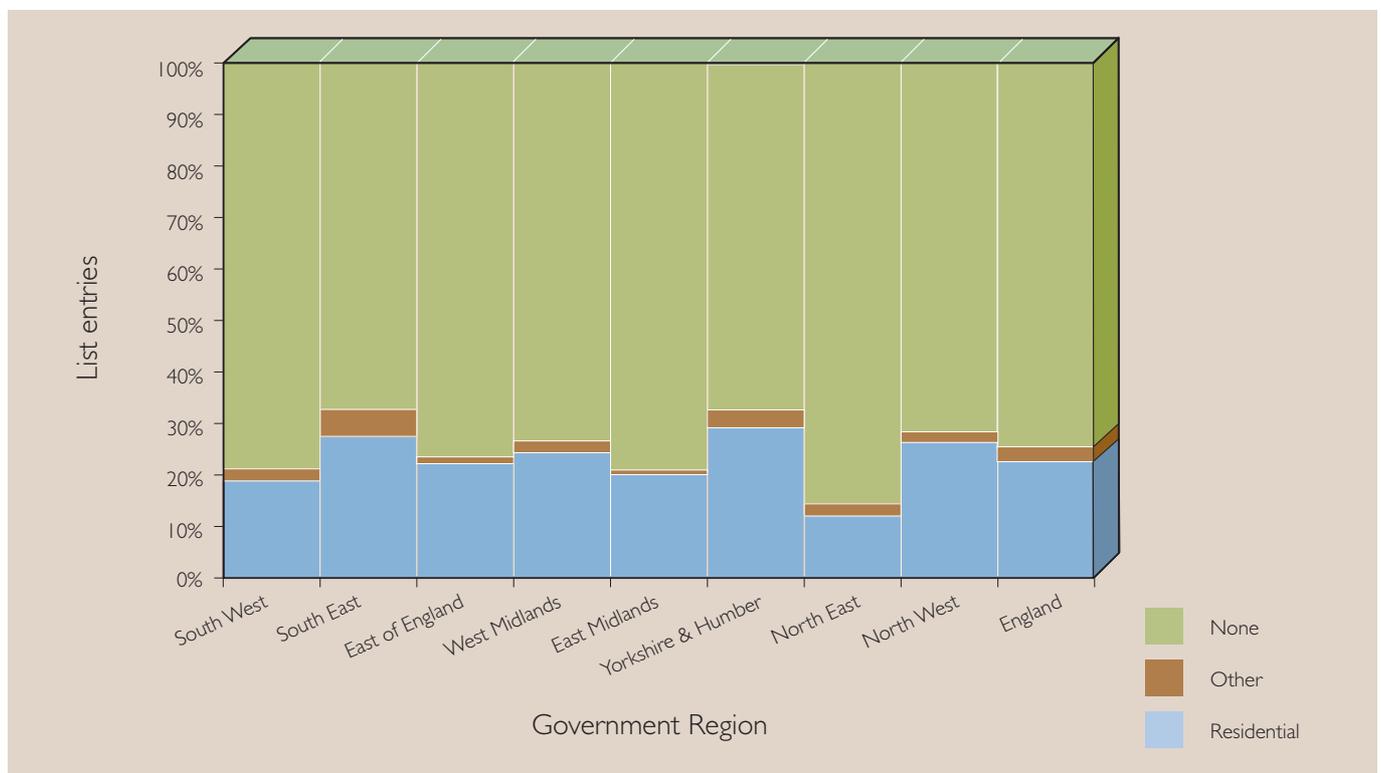
<sup>#</sup> Excluding converted buildings

**Table 25** Images of England (1999–2003): Visible change of use by listed farmstead building type

Type of farmstead building	Visible re-use (%)			Total
	Residential	Other	None	
Working	21.8	2.7	75.5	100
Combined working and domestic	28.0	2.0	70.0	100
Domestic	0.6	0.8	98.6	100
All Farmstead	10.2	1.6	88.3	100

Source: English Heritage LBS and photographic survey

**Figure 19** Images of England (1999–2003): Visible change of use of listed working farmstead buildings in England and by region



Source: HFBPS

Weighted national figure

**Table 26** Change in wall condition by listed farmstead building type

Type of farmstead building	Wall condition (%)			Total
	Negative	Positive	No change	
Working	1.7	0.6	97.8	100
Combined working and domestic	1.2	0.0	98.8	100
Domestic	0.1	0.4	99.5	100
All Farmstead	0.7	0.4	98.9	100

Source: English Heritage LBS and photographic survey

**Table 27** Change in roof condition by listed farmstead building type

Type of farmstead building	Roof condition (%)			Total
	Negative	Positive	No change	
Working	2.6	2.0	95.3	100
Combined working and domestic	1.6	0.8	97.6	100
Domestic	0.2	0.3	99.5	100
All Farmstead	1.2	0.9	97.9	100

Source: English Heritage LBS and photographic survey

**Figure 20** Change in the condition and use of listed working farmstead buildings



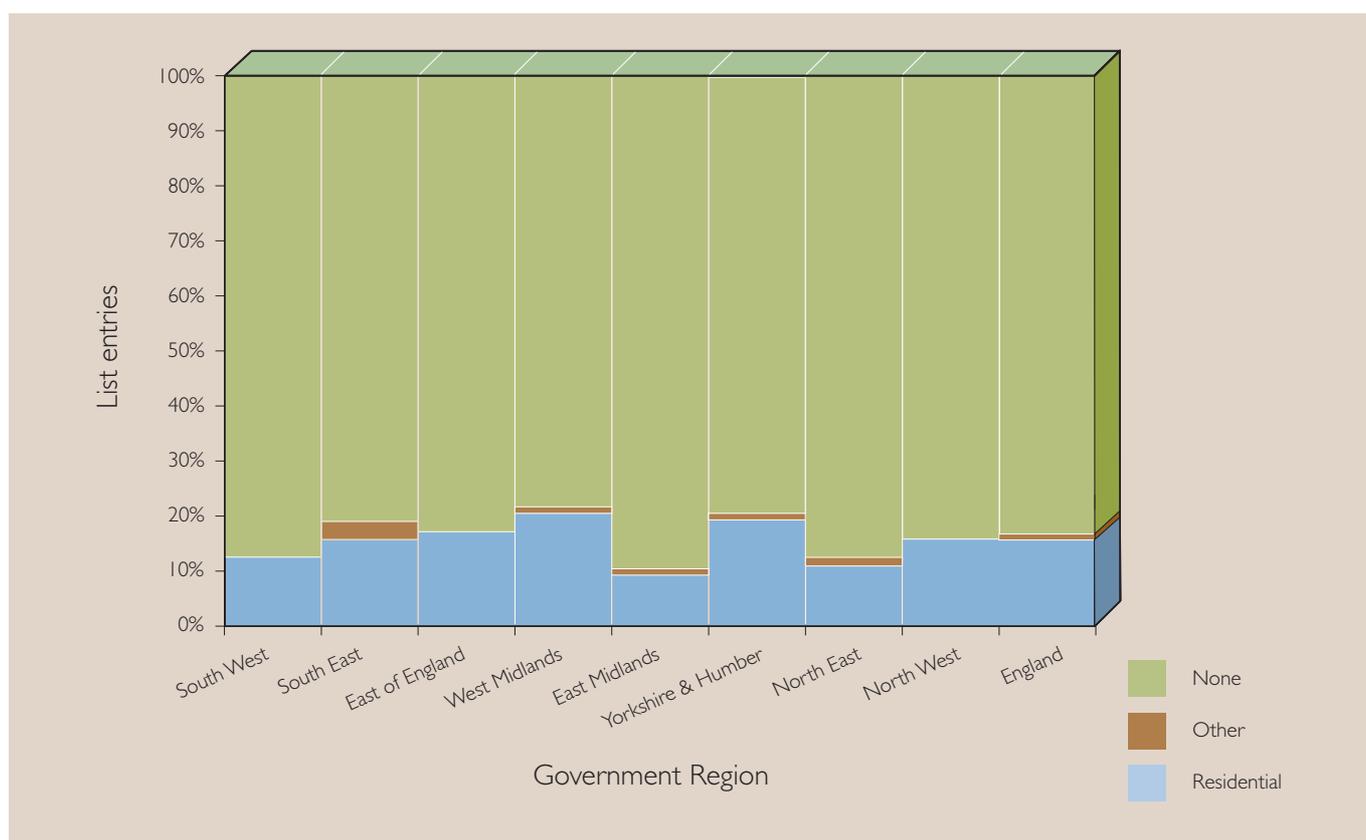
Source: Photographic survey

**Table 28** Visible change of use by listed farmstead building type

Type of farmstead building	Visible re-use (%)			Total
	Residential	Other	No change	
Working	16.9	1.2	81.9	100
Both	9.5	0.0	90.5	100
Domestic	0.4	0.0	99.6	100
All Farmstead	6.9	0.4	92.7	100

Source: English Heritage LBS and photographic survey

**Figure 21** Visible change of use of listed working farmstead buildings in England and by region



Source: HFBPS  
Weighted national figure

There was, however, a slight difference between domestic and working farmstead buildings, with a tendency for the working buildings to be less well maintained at the time of listing. What is surprising, however, is that one in five working buildings (20%) that are attached to dwellings and 6 per cent of isolated working buildings had been converted to another use at the time of the Accelerated National Resurvey. Table 23 shows that the majority of conversions were for residential rather than

economic use, although it must be borne in mind that it is more difficult to identify economic conversions from photographic evidence.

### Condition and use at the time of the Images of England survey

As with the Accelerated National Resurvey photographs, the vast majority of the farmstead buildings at the time of the Images of England survey were seen to be intact

(98%). However, there was a tendency for the roofs of working farmstead buildings that had not been converted to be less well maintained and have clear signs of serious disrepair (Table 24).

By the time of the Images of England survey a substantial proportion of the working farmstead buildings had been visibly converted to non-agricultural uses. Table 25 shows that one-quarter of isolated working buildings and 30 per cent of attached working buildings had been converted. In both cases the vast majority of conversions were for residential use.

Figure 19 shows that there is a considerable regional variation in the proportion of working farmstead buildings that have been converted to non-agricultural use. In the South East and Yorkshire and the Humber one third of working buildings have been converted (33% in each region) while in the North East the conversion rate falls to 15 per cent.

### Comparison of the two surveys

Evidence of both major visible structural decline and repair was recorded. There were a number of examples where buildings had deteriorated in condition between the dates of the two surveys. There were also examples where buildings had been repaired as part of conversion schemes. However, there appeared to be very little overall change in the level of serious and visible dereliction of the buildings in the period between the two surveys (Tables 26 and 27 and Figure 20).

Table 28 clearly shows that the major process of change taking place between the two surveys has been the conversion of isolated working farmstead buildings to residential dwellings. At a regional level most of the activity has taken place in the West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber (Figure 21).

## EVALUATING THE EVIDENCE

### The national picture

The project sought to determine the nature and pattern of passive and active change affecting the listed agricultural building resource.

#### Passive change: neglect and decay

Passive change is characterised by a decline in the structural condition of the resource due to neglect and decay. Evidence from the photographic survey shows that most listed agricultural buildings have remained intact

during the last 15 years or so. Major structural failures are largely confined to working farmstead buildings. Two per cent of the buildings covered by the photographic survey are in a ruinous state. This would suggest that most listed agricultural buildings remain intact to the extent that they have walls and a roof. However, the evidence of neglect and decay that can be obtained from photographic analysis is not as reliable an indicator of condition as that obtained from Buildings at Risk surveys where broken pipes, water ingress and deficiencies in wall bonding and timberwork can be easily logged. The evidence from the English Heritage BAR database indicates that 6 per cent of grade I and II\* agricultural list entries are known to be at risk. Furthermore, nearly half of the buildings contained within the list entries are not farmstead buildings.

In 2001 there were 93 grade I and II\* farmstead buildings at risk. Beneficial uses for farmhouses were much easier to identify than for working farmstead buildings such as barns and animal housing. Using English Heritage criteria, it was clear that the historic and architectural interest of the majority of working farmstead buildings listed at the highest grade would be compromised by most types of beneficial use. This meant that low-key uses were recommended for over half of the buildings. The long-term maintenance of these buildings would be threatened if public funding were not available.

The evidence provided by the local authority BAR registers showed that agricultural buildings are the most numerous category of listed building at risk (28% of all BAR records). It is also clear that agricultural buildings tend to be in worse condition, at greater risk and have a higher priority for action than other types of building. Forty-four per cent of all conservation officers consider the loss or dereliction of historic farm buildings due to redundancy a significant problem within their local authority areas.<sup>17</sup> This suggests that passive change resulting in structural decay is perceived as a nationally significant process.

Further evidence of significant and widespread levels of disrepair is provided by the Farm Practices Survey (Defra 2004a). Figure 22 shows that at least one in ten farmers had traditional working farmstead buildings in a state of disrepair. The survey found that disrepair was not restricted to buildings that were no longer used: 11 per cent of farmers had traditional working farmstead buildings in disrepair that remained in agricultural use. There were also marked regional variations in the proportion of farmers who had traditional buildings in disrepair, with the South East and East of England scoring highly in all use categories compared with the North West where few farmers reported buildings in disrepair.

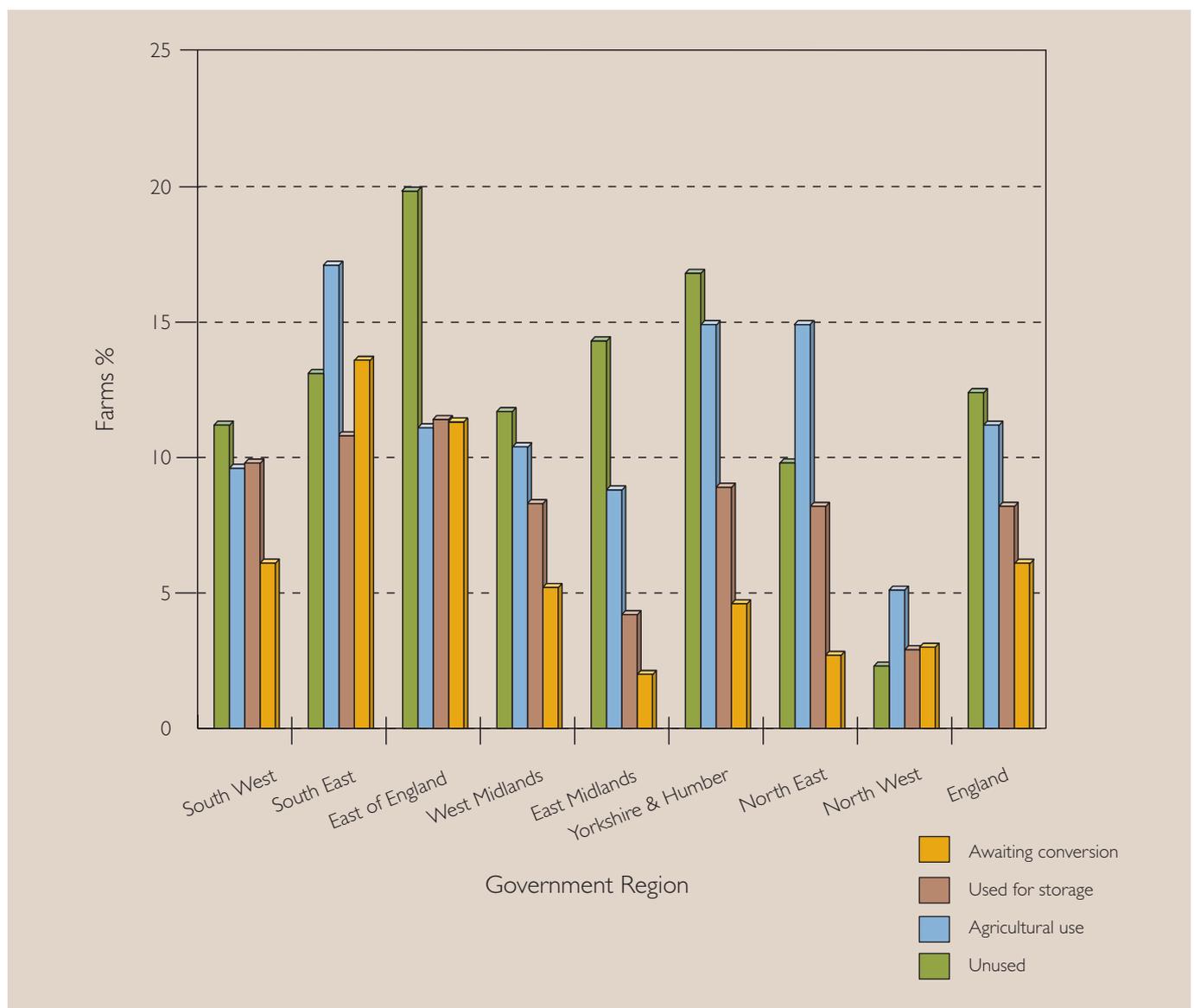
### Active change: conversion and demolition

A much clearer picture of the national situation is presented by the data on active change. The planning history survey shows that the majority of sites with listed agricultural buildings experience significant development pressures. Fifty-seven per cent of list entries have been subject to a planning application since 1980 and two-thirds of these have been subject to multiple applications. Eight out of ten applications were approved. Planning consent for alterations and extensions tended to be associated with farmhouses, while consent for change of use related almost entirely to working farmstead

buildings. At least one in five of all list entries have had permission granted for change of use during the study period.

There is a remarkable degree of consistency in the evidence provided by the different data sources for the conversion of listed agricultural buildings. The planning history survey shows that one in five list entries have received permission for change of use since 1980, while the photographic survey shows that 24 per cent of working farmstead buildings have been converted to a new use. In addition, the planning history survey, CBA

**Figure 22** Current use of traditional farm buildings in disrepair in England and by region



Source: Data supplied by Defra from the Farm Practices Survey 2004 (see Defra 2004a)

# Traditional farm buildings were defined as pre-1940 and excluded farmhouses. The results are expressed as a percentage of farms with traditional buildings in the specified combination of use and disrepair.

**Table 29** Management of listed agricultural buildings by rurality

	Remote rural	Accessible rural	Urban fringe	England
LPAs (%)	33	44	23	100
Agricultural list entries (%)	40	49	11	100
Average number of list entries per LPA	339	383	154	309
Grade I & II* at risk (%)	5	5	11	6
Agricultural local authority BAR records (%)	37	26	25	28
Loss and dereliction is a problem (%)	64	36	32	44
List entries subject to planning applications (%)	51	62	54	57
Average No. planning applications	2.5	3.8	3.0	3.2
Planning application approval rate (%)	84	80	79	81

Source: Planning history survey; Conservation officer survey; English Heritage BAR survey; Local authority BAR survey

Conservation Database and the photographic survey all suggested that the change of use is characterised by the conversion of working farmstead buildings into permanent dwellings (70–80% of all conversions). The adaptive re-use of working farmstead buildings for employment and businesses is far less common (10–20% of all conversions), despite Government planning guidance promoting this type of conversion.

The questionnaire survey of conservation officers supports these findings. Three quarters of all conservation officers (73%) report a significant demand for the conversion of listed agricultural buildings into dwellings compared with 21 per cent for economic re-use. They also report that in the previous year (2000/01) 66 per cent of planning applications for change of use involving listed agricultural buildings proposed residential conversion.

Outright demolition of listed agricultural buildings is a less common event. The planning history survey shows that 8 per cent of list entries have been subject to an LBC application involving the total or partial demolition of a building since 1980, and 6 per cent have received approval. Evidence from the CBA Database shows that only 38 per cent of applications proposed the total demolition of a building and these mainly referred to farmhouses. The majority of applications involved the partial demolition of working farmstead buildings in the curtilage of listed farmhouses to facilitate their conversion into permanent dwellings.

### Variations by rurality

The data collected from the four sources also point to a number of clear differences in the state of, and planning response to, listed agricultural buildings between the different categories of local planning authority. The major differences are summarised in Table 29.

#### Remote rural areas

These account for 33 per cent of LPAs in the study and 40 per cent of all agricultural list entries. Overall there is an average of 339 list entries per authority. Only 5 per cent of grade I and II\* agricultural list entries are at risk, but a higher than average number of records (37%) on local authority BAR registers belong to the agricultural category. The risk to listed buildings in remote rural areas is confirmed by the conservation officer survey, which shows that 64 per cent of officers in rural locations feel that the loss or dereliction of historic farm buildings due to redundancy is a significant problem in their areas. Half of the agricultural list entries located in remote rural areas have been subject to a planning application (51%) with an average of 2.5 applications per entry. This is the lowest number of applications of the three categories of local planning authority, although the approval rate at 84 per cent is the highest.

#### Accessible rural areas

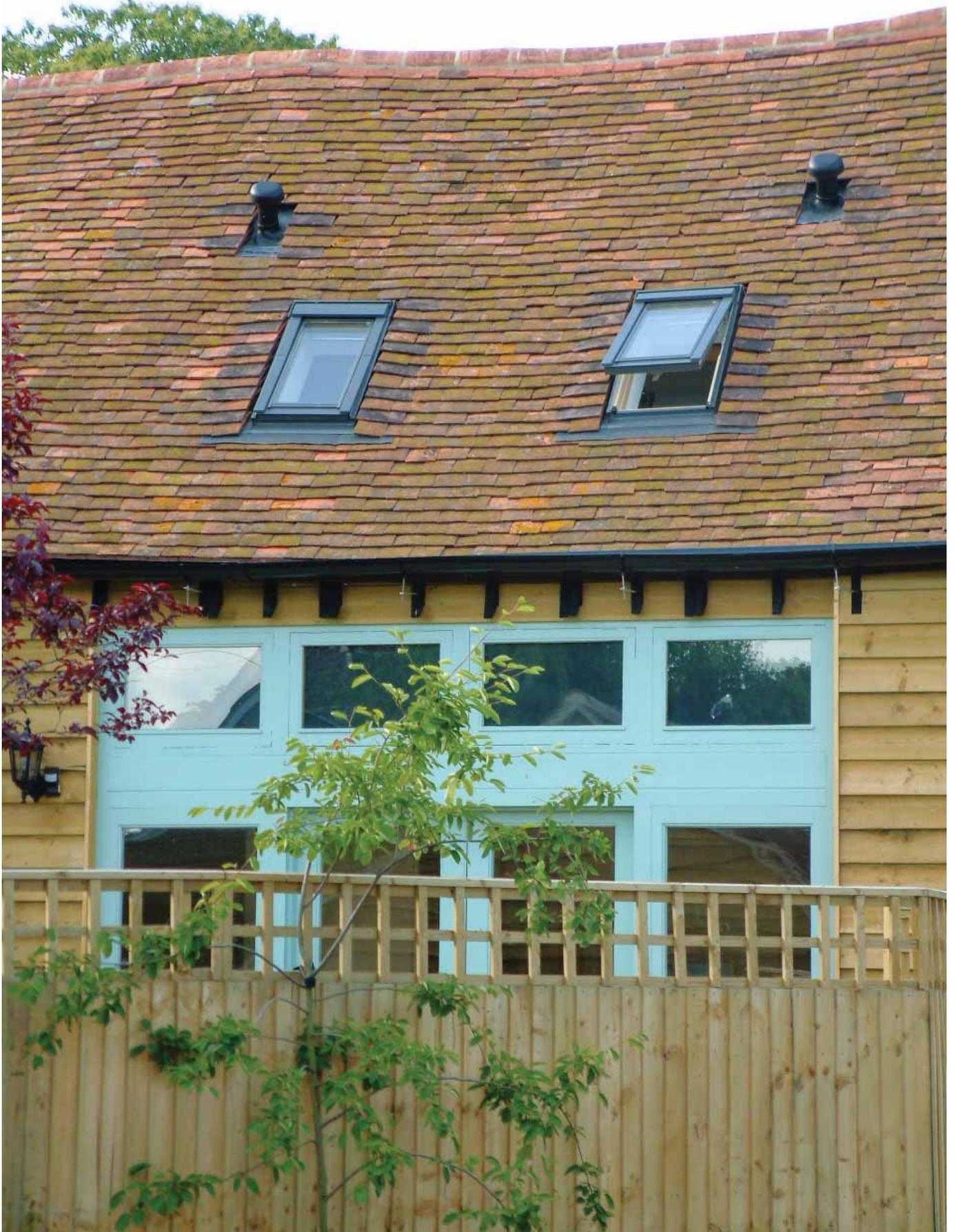
These account for 44 per cent of authorities and 49 per cent of the list entries. There is an average of 383 entries per authority. As with the remote rural authorities, 5 per

cent of grade I and II\* agricultural list entries are at risk. However, agricultural buildings at risk are less prominent within local authority registers, with the domestic and 'other' categories being equally important. The loss of historic farm buildings through redundancy is not an issue in most authorities where two-thirds of conservation officers say it is not a problem. Development pressures are greater in accessible rural authorities compared with the other categories. Sixty-two per cent of list entries have been subject to a planning application with an average of 3.8 applications per entry and an approval rate of 80 per cent.

### **Urban fringe areas**

These account for less than one quarter of authorities and only 11 per cent of the list entries. The average number of entries per authority is, at 154, the lowest of the three categories. Although urban fringe areas contain a relatively small proportion of the listed resource it appears to be at more risk from neglect and decay. One in ten grade I and II\* entries (11%) are on the English Heritage BAR register. Agricultural buildings are the second most important category of building, after 'other', on the local authority BAR registers. Interestingly, however, only one in three conservation officers say that there is a problem of dereliction in their areas. Just over half of the agricultural list entries (54%) have been subject to a planning application, with an average of three applications per entry and an approval rate of 79 per cent. Urban fringe authorities also record the highest proportion of planning consents for change of use.

The evidence suggests that there are distinct variations in the changes affecting historic farm buildings in the different types of rural areas. In the remoter parts of England the redundancy of historic farm buildings is strongly linked with dereliction, while in more accessible and urban fringe areas there is a higher level of development activity indicated by the proportion of list entries subject to planning applications.



Source: Countryside & Community Research Unit  
© Peter Gaskell

## HISTORIC FARM BUILDINGS AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM



Source: Countryside & Community Research Unit  
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## KEY POINTS

- Implementation of policies for historic farm buildings varies across England. Fewer than one-third of planning authorities have information that allows them to characterise the historic farm building resource; fewer than one-half monitor change to listed buildings; fewer than one-third update their registers annually.
- Just over one-half of authorities offer grants for the upkeep of historic farm buildings, but budgets are very modest and generally restricted to listed buildings. Only a minority of authorities appear to refer enquirers to Defra grant schemes.
- Some planning authorities and other stakeholders appear unclear about the main objectives of national planning policy for historic farm buildings. There is confusion over whether the main objective is to re-use a building resource to assist economic regeneration, or to conserve the character of historic farm buildings.
- Few stakeholders at the local level feel that local planning policies satisfactorily integrate either of the two main objectives of national planning policy with regard to historic farm buildings: fostering economic re-use and conserving a valuable historic asset.
- National policy is thought to be insufficiently sensitive to differences between places, economic circumstances and different buildings, but planning authorities feel vulnerable to challenge at appeal if they depart from national guidance.
- Just over 40 per cent of the authorities surveyed have produced supplementary planning guidance relevant to historic farm buildings. Where it exists, it is generally regarded as helpful.
- There is clear disagreement between planning officers and applicants for planning permission about the re-use of farm buildings as permanent dwellings. Planning officers think that most conversions for residential use are inappropriate and that the 'sequential test' should be applied more rigorously, whereas applicants feel that national policy towards residential re-use is too restrictive.
- Formal but flexible planning policies are important for providing a framework within which successful conversion of historic farm buildings can be negotiated. Pre-application discussions are one of the most commonly identified critical factors for achieving a successful conversion in the implementation of planning policy.
- While there is some disagreement about what constitutes a successful outcome of a conversion, most stakeholders are agreed that retaining as much of the original historic fabric of the building as possible and minimising alterations helps to preserve the character of the building

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to provide a comprehensive review of planning policies for historic farm buildings and the approaches taken by planning authorities to their management.<sup>18</sup> The section:

- analyses the contents of policies at national, regional, county and local levels, and explores the relationships between policies at these different levels;
- describes and evaluates the approach taken by remote rural, accessible rural and urban fringe local authorities to the management of historic farm buildings;
- explores the views of a range of stakeholders on the ways planning authorities handle the relationships between conservation and economic regeneration, and evaluates the performance of planning policies in delivering intended outcomes;
- investigates through a literature review and interviews with planning authorities and landowners the ways in which the authorities use whole farm plans and planning gain to secure appropriate and adaptive re-uses of historic farm buildings.

## ANALYSIS OF PLANNING POLICIES

A comprehensive analysis was undertaken of Regional Planning Guidance, Structure Plans, Local Plans and non-statutory guidance, usually supplementary planning guidance, relating to policies affecting historic farm buildings. The analysis investigated the extent to which these policies and guidance are informed by a rounded appreciation of the historic farm building resource.

All Regional Planning Guidance except London was examined. Two structure plans were analysed in each government region (except Yorkshire and the Humber from where only one was forthcoming). Development plans and other relevant policy documents were also analysed at the local (district/unitary) level. All 224 remote rural, accessible rural and urban fringe local planning authorities (LPAs) in the study were asked to supply copies of all relevant policy documents. In total 95 LPAs provided copies of their development plans. Of the 58 LPAs that produced supplementary planning guidance, 20 provided copies of that guidance.

An examination was undertaken into how policies at these different levels relate to each other, charting the relationships between relevant policies at local, county and regional levels in the wider context of national policy. 'Vertical analyses' were carried out on six Local Plans from three different regions, their six respective Structure Plans and the appropriate regional planning guidance (Table 30). This was then compared with relevant national policy contained in the amended PPG7 of March 2001 and PPG15. It was not generally possible to investigate conformity between levels of the hierarchy of plans, because they were not produced sequentially; for instance, the Regional Planning Guidance examined was all produced within the last two years, and so post-dates most of the Local and Structure Plans. The approach used, therefore, was to investigate relationships, rather than conformity, between policies at different levels.

The documentary analysis was conducted in relation to three key themes at each level of policy:

- farm buildings and the conservation of the historic environment;
- characterisation and understanding of the historic farm building resource;

**Table 30** Hierarchy of case study policies analysed

National	Regional	County	Local Planning Authority
PPG7 and PPG15	South West	Cornwall Devon	Penwith Mid-Devon
	East Midlands	Derby and Derbyshire Northamptonshire	Amber Valley East Northants
	West Midlands	Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Worcestershire	Staffordshire Moorlands Bromsgrove

- re-use and conversion of historic farm buildings.

### Farm buildings and the conservation of the historic environment

While all Regional Planning Guidance includes policies promoting conservation and enhancement of the region's historic, architectural and cultural assets, there are no specific policy references to historic farm buildings per se in any Regional Planning Guidance. Again, all Structure Plans have policies promoting conservation and enhancement of the county's historic, architectural and cultural assets, and all have policies for listed buildings, but very few have specific policies for historic farm buildings. Almost all Local Plans have policies for listed buildings, but only one-third have policies for unlisted buildings and fewer than half of all plans explicitly recognise the contribution of farm buildings to the historic environment.

Relationships between policy levels are fairly strong and consistent with regard to values attached to the historic environment. The importance of conserving the historic environment is stressed at all levels of the policy hierarchy. All adhere to the guidance in PPG15. Less frequently recognised, however, is the historic value of unlisted buildings; albeit consistent with each other, the majority of Local Plans and Structure Plans do not refer to unlisted buildings and do not therefore fully reflect the intent of PPG15.

### Characterisation of the historic farm building resource

All Regional Planning Guidance and half the Structure Plans mention character assessment generally but none makes specific reference to historic farm buildings within character assessments. Over one-third of Local Plans make reference to the use of some form of landscape character assessment, but these are mainly confined to spatially designated areas such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), and historic farm buildings

are rarely mentioned as part of the assessment. There is little evidence from the plans analysed that policies are based on a rounded appreciation of the historic building resource. The adoption of character assessment is variable at county and local levels. For the most part, however, Regional Planning Guidance, and indeed the amended PPG7, post-dates many of the selected development plans so this may partly account for this lack of consistency in approach.

### Re-use and conversion of historic farm buildings

The majority of Regional Planning Guidance addresses the re-use of 'rural buildings' generally. Some highlight the opportunities for re-using historic farm buildings specifically, emphasising that the re-use of rural buildings can contribute to the development of local economies. Almost all Structure Plans have policies for the re-use of rural buildings, and all refer to stricter controls over buildings in the open countryside. Very few include a clear statement of policy on the protection of their historic and/or architectural character in considering re-use. Slightly fewer than half state a preference for economic rather than residential re-use, some specifying criteria based on historic and/or architectural character that should be used to determine planning applications for re-use.

While all Local Plans have policies for the re-use of rural buildings, and most have stricter controls in designated areas and in the open countryside, under one-third make specific reference to protecting the historic and/or architectural character of farm buildings (Table 31). Almost all include reference to an economic justification for the re-use of rural buildings and there is a strong preference for economic over residential re-use. Authorities justify their policies on re-use in two main ways: firstly, that residential re-use is a greater threat to the character of the building and, secondly, that residential use does not benefit the local economy or employment.

**Table 31** Local plan policies for the re-use of rural buildings

Policy	% Local Plans
Stricter controls on the re-use of rural buildings in the open countryside	73.4
Identification of historic farm buildings as a special case for re-use	47.9
Plan contains an economic justification for re-use	90.4
Plan contains a conservation justification for re-use	71.3

Source: Local Plan review

**Table 32** Local Plan criteria for the re-use of rural buildings

Criteria for the re-use of rural buildings	% Local Plans
Buildings should be capable of conversion without requiring substantial extensions/alterations	69.1
Their form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings	68.1
Attention to setting	60.6
No loss of the character/integrity/special interest of the building	58.5
They are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction	56.4
Any curtilage development should not have a harmful effect on the countryside	54.3
Does not result in additional heavy vehicle use inappropriate to the surrounding road network	50.0
Does not cause unacceptable intrusion or other impacts on neighbouring uses	39.4
Buildings are of permanent and substantial construction	38.3
Conversion proposals should respect local building styles and materials	26.6
Does not require unnecessary expenditure on the provision of infrastructure	23.4
Alterations/extensions should be architecturally consistent with the existing building	10.6
Conversion does not lead to a dispersal of activity of a scale to prejudice town/village vitality	10.6
Other	6.4
Does not harm employment/economy	1.1

Source: Local Plan review

Over a quarter of authorities' policies require the application of the 'sequential test' in response to a planning application for the conversion of an historic farm building to a new use. An assessment is made of the potential viability of different re-uses for the building, with the highest priority given to business use and the lowest to residential use. Local Plans generally make reference to criteria for permitting the re-use of rural buildings (Table 32), the most commonly cited of which include:

- the buildings should be capable of conversion without substantial alteration;
- the form of the proposed building alteration should be in keeping with its surroundings;
- there should be no loss of character from the building.

Across the policy hierarchy there is a lack of consistency with regard to re-use of historic farm buildings, particularly in relation to prioritising employment over residential re-use. A number of Local Plans and Structure Plans explicitly cite PPG7, and stress their consistency with government advice. All the Local Plans analysed contain criteria for determining re-use, but they differ somewhat from those cited in PPG7. Where criteria are

set out in the Structure Plan, Local Plan criteria tend to be consistent with this. Overall, however, there is variation between criteria for re-use, both between authorities and with regard to conformity with PPG7. There is ambiguity between the levels of the policy hierarchy on prioritising employment over residential re-use, which is favoured by some and not by others.

In the context of this study Regional Planning Guidance appears to be a rather isolated level of policy, not referred to by either the national policy or the county and local policies. The strongest relationship overall appears to be between Local Plans (and their related supplementary planning guidance) and Government planning policy guidance. Local Plans often cite PPGs, or contain government advice, in their policies. In determining individual planning applications, Local Plan policies are the most likely to be cited, with occasional references to national or county policies.

### Supplementary planning guidance

Supplementary planning guidance covers matters that are too detailed to form part of a development plan. However, if it passes through appropriate procedures, including public consultation, it can be regarded as a

material planning consideration. Just over 40 per cent of the authorities surveyed have produced such guidance relevant to historic farm buildings. Most focuses on mitigating the impact of adapting farm buildings for re-use, with particular attention being paid to changes that will affect the character of a building and its landscape setting. Advice is given on converting buildings in such a manner as to conserve the resource, with examples of what types of change are and are not acceptable.

Supplementary planning guidance illustrates the value that authorities assign to historic farm buildings. It identifies the specific character of historic farm buildings and their landscape setting, recognising the significant contribution these buildings make to landscape character. It tends to reinforce the broader policy guidance that residential conversions may be detrimental to their character. Specifically, it offers detailed recommendations about the design features of proposed conversions. The subjects of these recommendations typically include: roofs, wall openings, interiors, building materials, extensions, landscape setting and curtilage. The form of supplementary planning guidance varies from heavily illustrated design guides to simple A4 leaflets. The majority explicitly refer to national, regional and Local Plan policies.

## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES AND THE MANAGEMENT OF HISTORIC FARM BUILDINGS

In examining the approach taken by planning authorities to the management of historic farm buildings the research sought firstly to describe the approaches taken and, secondly, to gain a better understanding of the processes involved in managing historic farm buildings.

To achieve the former aim, a structured postal questionnaire was sent to the 224 planning authorities. The questionnaire had four main elements:

- to identify where responsibility lies within authorities for the conservation and management of historic farm buildings;
- to determine the extent to which authorities have taken steps to collect information that enables them to understand better their historic farm building resource and inform development policy making;
- to identify the demand for the re-use of listed and unlisted agricultural buildings within authorities;
- to determine the role of the planning authority in the conservation and recording of historic farm buildings.

In total, 165 LPAs completed and returned the postal questionnaire, a welcome response rate of 74 per cent that did not vary significantly across Government regions or between the different types of local authority.

To achieve the latter aim, 25 telephone and face-to-face interviews were held with planning officers to seek clarification of some of the questionnaire responses and explore in more detail some of the issues raised. The format of the interviews was based around five discussion topics:

- responsibilities for the conservation of historic farm buildings;
- characterising the historic farm building resource;
- monitoring change in the resource;
- the re-use of historic farm buildings;
- the conservation of historic farm buildings.

The results from both these research elements are combined in the following discussion.

## The national situation

### Responsibilities for conserving historic farm buildings

The planning authority's conservation officer usually has responsibility for historic farm building conservation. Four out of five respondents were conservation officers mainly working in planning departments. The location of conservation officers within planning departments is seen as a distinct advantage, especially when dealing with development control issues. Daily contact with development control officers helps to keep conservation officers up to date with planning applications for the re-use of historic farm buildings, even though the normal practice in all authorities is to consult conservation officers formally only where listed buildings are involved.

### The character of the historic farm building resource

Under one third of authorities have access to information with which to characterise the historic farm building resource. The nature of this information varies considerably. Nineteen authorities have commissioned their own surveys; a further twelve are part of broader county-scale initiatives; seven have utilised the work of students and local historians, while six have used the results of thematic surveys conducted by English Heritage and work undertaken by the former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.

Of the 45 authorities that have information on

the character of historic farm buildings, 22 have comprehensive information in terms of spatial coverage and range of farm building types. Reasons given by respondents in follow-up interviews for the lack of comprehensive information in their local authority area include:

- characterisation work is most likely to take place where there is a perception within the authority that significant change is taking place either through the process of development or dereliction;
- authorities lack the resources to carry out characterisation work;
- the absence of a straightforward methodology for characterising historic farm buildings and clear guidance on how it could inform planning and conservation policy may make some authorities reluctant to carry out such work.

The impact of characterisation work in influencing development plan policy and supplementary planning guidance is very limited. Only a quarter of local authorities that have undertaken characterisation work have adopted it as supplementary guidance and just one-third have fed the work into their development plan.

### Monitoring the historic farm building resource

Slightly fewer than half of all authorities have undertaken work that could be used to monitor changes taking place to the stock of listed agricultural buildings and only 15 per cent collect information that could be used to monitor the changes to unlisted agricultural buildings. Much of this work is undertaken in an informal and ad hoc manner. As one respondent says:

*“[There are] approximately 300 listed barns and 200 other listed agricultural buildings. Some are near the road*

*and are therefore monitored regularly. Those that are more isolated and remote are not monitored.”*

Only 14 per cent of the authorities that collect information on the condition of their listed agricultural buildings have developed formal monitoring procedures<sup>19</sup> and kept their records up to date, usually in the form of a Buildings at Risk (BAR) register that includes all types of listed buildings rather than just historic farm buildings. Only five authorities have developed formal monitoring procedures and keep their records up to date for unlisted buildings. Where formal monitoring takes place it is part of broader BAR surveys.

The follow-up interviews show that formal monitoring of the historic building stock by local authorities is uncommon. This is because work of this type can be expensive and the magnitude of the changes taking place and/or the perceived threat to historic farm buildings is not accorded high priority by many authorities. Interviewees suggest that listed buildings are accorded a higher priority because they are firmly entrenched in Local Plan policies and local authorities have a statutory responsibility to protect them from inappropriate development.

Most authorities have created a BAR register at one time or other although it is a relatively recent practice for many. The first was created in 1977, but by the end of the 1980s only 5 per cent of authorities had one. At the beginning of the 1990s the English Heritage BAR initiative was a catalyst for far greater involvement and by the end of 1994 over half the authorities had created a register. By the end of 1999 this had risen to just over three quarters (Table 33).

BAR registers are only as good as the information they contain and few authorities have the resources to

**Table 33** Known start dates for BAR registers

Date started	Cumulative %
1975–79	0.7
1980–84	2.7
1985–89	4.7
1990–94	54.7
1995–99	75.6
2000–01	77.0

Source: Conservation officer survey  
Note: No data 15 LPAs

update their registers regularly. Fewer than one-third of authorities update their registers annually and one in five no longer undertake updating work. Furthermore, one-third do not record the reason for taking a building off the register, which means they cannot distinguish between buildings that have been successfully rehabilitated and those that have declined beyond repair. Most BAR registers record only the threat to listed buildings and only 15 authorities have assessed the risk to the unlisted building resource.

### The re-use of historic farm buildings

The greatest demand for re-use of historic farm buildings is for conversion to permanent dwellings. Over half the authorities report a high demand for unlisted buildings and just under half for listed buildings. One in five authorities say there is little demand for permanent residential conversions, while a large majority of authorities report limited demand for temporary residential and economic re-use. Demand for permanent residential re-use is nearly four times as high as that for economic re-use. There are roughly three applications for the re-use of unlisted buildings to every one for a listed building, irrespective of the type of re-use sought (Table 34). However only 12 per cent of authorities were able to provide details of the number of planning applications received in the previous year for the re-use of historic farm buildings.

Very few authorities follow the advice of PPG7<sup>20</sup> to be proactively involved in finding new uses for historic farm buildings. Only 17 authorities have undertaken, or gained access to, work to identify historic farm buildings suitable for conversion to new uses. Furthermore, only seven have comprehensive coverage for their district. In areas where dereliction is perceived to be a problem, however, authorities do seem to be taking a more active role in finding alternative uses for farm buildings.

## Conservation

### Grant aid

Just over half of the authorities offer grants for the upkeep of historic farm buildings. It is common for such grant aid to be targeted at listed buildings. Of those authorities that provide grant aid, at least half stipulate that it is restricted to listed buildings or for buildings in conservation areas, while 10 per cent say the building has to be on the authority's BAR register to be eligible.

The majority of authorities have very small budgets and historic farm buildings are only one of a number of building types eligible for funding. Only very small sums are designated for the repair or conversion of historic farm buildings so that the size and scale of the grants is often insufficient to meet the demand. Six authorities that provided details have a budget of £10,000 or less per annum, a further six have a budget of between £11,000 and £40,000, while the remaining one has a budget of £90,000. Four authorities say that funding for conservation of historic farm buildings has been discontinued; ten authorities note that the grants they had provided were based on a percentage of the total project cost. These ranged from 10 per cent to 40 per cent, with a maximum of approximately £1,000. No authority responding to the survey had provided a grant of more than £6,000.

These findings broadly correspond with the findings of research commissioned by English Heritage and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation into local authority conservation provision in England (see Grover 2003). Grover found that conservation spending by local authorities had declined in real terms in the past five years. Although half of authorities operated their own grant programmes, budgets were usually very modest.

**Table 34** Number of planning applications received for the re-use of historic farm buildings, 2000

Type of re-use	Listed	% listed	Unlisted	% unlisted	All buildings	% all buildings
Permanent residential	90	66.2	259	66.9	349	66.7
Temporary residential	19	14.0	63	16.3	82	15.7
Economic re-use	17	19.9	65	16.8	92	17.6
All types of re-use	136	100.0	387	100.0	532	100.0

Source: Conservation officer survey

Note: 28 out of 224 LPAs contacted provided data

**Table 35** Perceptions of problems resulting from loss or dereliction due to redundancy by rurality

Type of LPA	% Problem	% No Problem
Remote rural	63.5	36.5
Accessible rural	36.1	63.9
Urban fringe	32.4	67.6
All LPAs	44.3	55.7

Source: Conservation officer survey

**Table 36** Perceptions of problems resulting from loss or dereliction due to redundancy by region

Region	% Problem	% No Problem
South West	69.2	30.8
South East	26.7	73.3
East of England	48.0	52.0
West Midlands	50.0	50.0
East Midlands	31.8	68.2
Yorkshire & the Humber	53.3	46.7
North East	37.5	62.5
North West	37.5	62.5
England	44.3	55.7

Source: Conservation officer survey

Nearly two-thirds of authorities provide advice on sources of conservation grants for the repair and upkeep of historic farm buildings. Mostly, however, they refer enquirers to their own grants, with only a minority mentioning the availability of Defra grants as part of agri-environmental schemes or the availability of English Heritage grants for I and II\* listed buildings.

#### Local planning authorities and statutory listing

Fewer than half of the respondents think that the criteria underpinning the selection of farm buildings for statutory listing are clearly understood within their local authorities. A large majority think that the publication of the evaluative framework used in the listing process would be of assistance in the evaluation and management of buildings in their areas. The listing process is perceived to have both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that listing can:

- raise the profile of historic farm buildings within

planning authorities;

- influence the local authority's response to planning applications;
- provide a focal point for targeting financial resources for the repair of historic buildings.

The disadvantages are that it:

- may not fully reflect the character of the whole historic farm building resource;
- may draw attention away from changes taking place to the broader historic farm building resource.

Over half the questionnaire respondents think that farm buildings on the statutory lists provide an accurate reflection of the character of the historic farm building resource in their areas. However, a number also point out that it is difficult to say whether or not the statutory lists reflect the local heritage as little work has been undertaken to characterise the wider resource.

Some respondents feel that there is a need for more research and survey work to characterise the resource and enable the statutory list to reflect more closely the character of their areas. Many feel that farm buildings constructed during the latter part of the 19th century make an important contribution to the character of their areas but are significantly under-represented in the statutory lists due to the strict criteria for selection. Further, they feel the lists fail to reflect the character of historic farm buildings because emphasis is placed on older and more visually impressive structures, most notably farmhouses and barns, rather than their associated farm buildings. Some think that more farm buildings require listing in their own right rather than relying on the somewhat indirect protection associated with curtilage listing.

### **Recording historic farm buildings as a condition of planning or listed building consent**

Almost three-quarters of the questionnaire responses indicate that there are occasions when authorities make the recording of historic farm buildings a condition of planning or listed building consent for listed agricultural buildings. However, only 59 per cent of authorities have actually imposed recording conditions, including pre-determination recording and analysis, to inform the development and decision-making process. Where recording is specified as a condition it tends to be of a fairly limited nature; only 29 per cent of authorities have specified a requirement for a detailed survey (e.g. the production of scale drawings and a long report). It is more common for authorities to require an extensive survey (e.g. photographs, sketch plan and a short report) or even a simple photographic survey. Where recording is undertaken, the majority of authorities confine the investigations to the local level. Under half of the authorities request that the recording incorporates a regional and national dimension to provide context.

### **Variations according to region and rurality**

Overall, there are few meaningful variations according to region and rurality. However there are some specific instances of interest.

- There is significant variation between regions in the work undertaken to characterise the historic farm building resource. Authorities in the East and West Midlands are least likely to have carried out characterisation work (12% and 13% respectively) compared to 50 per cent in the North East.
- Well over half the authorities in the South West

have undertaken monitoring of listed agricultural buildings compared with fewer than a quarter in the North East.

- Respondents from remote rural authorities are twice as likely to perceive problems of loss or dereliction due to redundancy of historic farm buildings than their counterparts in more accessible rural areas. Considerable problems are reported in this regard in some regions, most notably the South West (69%), Yorkshire and the Humber (53%), West Midlands (50%) and the East of England (48%). This is in marked contrast with the South East where only 27 per cent of respondents perceive a problem (Tables 35 and 36).
- Both remote and accessible rural authorities experience a significantly higher demand than urban fringe authorities for the permanent residential conversion of farm buildings, both listed and unlisted, during the year prior to the survey. Remote rural authorities also experience a higher demand for temporary residential conversion of unlisted agricultural buildings;
- There is considerable variation in the provision of grant aid between the regions: urban fringe authorities are significantly less likely than remote or accessible rural areas to provide grant aid for the repair of historic farm buildings.

## **EVALUATION OF PLANNING POLICIES**

In evaluating planning policies the research pursued two strategies: firstly, to develop an understanding of the nature of development pressures on historic farm buildings by investigating the application of planning policies at the local scale; secondly, to evaluate the performance of the planning system in implementing national and local planning policies for historic farm buildings.<sup>21</sup>

### **The application of planning policies**

In relation to the first of these strategies, the focus was to explore the way planning authorities handle the relationship between protecting the architectural and historic integrity of farm buildings and government policy advice encouraging authorities to look favourably on the re-use of such buildings. Information about the application of planning policies was gained from qualitative case studies of 16 selected authorities, involving semi-structured interviews with local planning officers, and

**Table 37** Case-study LPAs: Application of planning policies

Region	County	Local Planning Authority
South West	Cornwall	Penwith District
	Devon	Mid Devon District
South East	East Sussex	Wealden District
	Buckinghamshire	Aylesbury District
East of England	Bedfordshire	Mid Bedfordshire District
	Suffolk	Suffolk Coastal District
West Midlands	Worcestershire	Bromsgrove District
	Staffordshire	Staffordshire Moorlands District
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire District
	Derbyshire	Amber Valley District
Yorkshire & the Humber	Yorkshire	Richmondshire District
	Yorkshire	Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
North East	Durham	Sedgefield Borough
	Durham	Wear Valley District
North West	Lancashire	Pendle Borough
	Cumbria	Eden District

**Table 38** Case-study LPAs: Evaluation of planning policies

Region	County	Local Planning Authority
South West	Devon	Mid Devon District
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire District
	Derbyshire	Amber Valley District
Yorkshire & the Humber	Yorkshire	Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
North East	Durham	Sedgefield Borough
North West	Lancashire	Pendle Borough

the scrutiny of a sample of planning applications in each authority. Case studies were selected to include a cross-section of authorities based on three criteria:

- location – two authorities were selected in each government region;
- rurality – case studies were selected to include a mix of types of rural area (remote rural, accessible

rural and urban fringe);

- policy characteristics – case studies were selected both with and without supplementary planning guidance relating to historic farm buildings.

The local authorities selected for this evaluation are listed in Table 37.

The main points deriving from these interviews are as follows.

- Historic farm buildings are valued as an important element, sometimes a defining element, of the rural landscape; building materials and form are the characteristics referred to most frequently.
- The impact of development on the character of historic farm buildings is a very important factor in the determination of planning applications.
- The formulation of policies for historic farm buildings is stimulated by two main factors: pressures from within the district, particularly for residential conversions, and national policy guidance in the form of PPGs and English Heritage advice (English Heritage 1993).
- There are variations between planning authorities in the rigour of Local Plan policies relating to historic farm buildings.
- Supplementary planning guidance is viewed as useful and effective in helping to influence the re-use of historic farm buildings, although some was still in initial preparation or even out of date.
- Planning authorities believe pre-application discussions are important: most problems are resolved before the application is determined resulting in a low proportion of refusals of planning consent.
- Most planning applications for the conversion of historic farm buildings are delegated to officers, although applications relating to listed buildings tend to go to the appropriate committee.
- There is widespread confusion about who are the statutory consultees in the process, with most respondents assuming erroneously that parish councils are included. Amongst statutory consultees, all planning authorities consult the Highways Agency, a majority consult English Heritage and the Environment Agency, and a minority consult the County Council. Amongst non-statutory consultees, most respondents consult parish councils and a range of 'civic societies'.
- While most authorities report that members almost always followed officer recommendations (estimated at around 90% on average), a somewhat uncomfortable relationship between officers and members is reported in a number of authorities. References are made, for instance, to members taking a personal rather than objective stance in

determining planning applications, and being tolerant to applications from farmers where they are themselves farmers.

- Where planning consent is refused, the most common reason is that the proposal contravenes either Local Plan policy or national policy. Other reasons commonly included: damage to the character of the building, poor design, too great a magnitude of change proposed, and unsatisfactory access arrangements.
- When planning consent is granted, conditions are almost always attached; most authorities refer to the withdrawal of Permitted Development Rights and to building design and materials.

About half the local planning officers questioned recognise a tension between protecting the architectural and historic integrity of farm buildings and adopting a favourable attitude to conversion for re-use. Some feel that national policy is a cause of tension, in particular a perceived conflict between PPG7 and PPG15. They identify as an issue the pressure placed on historic farm buildings by Government policies that prevent any new development in the countryside yet permit conversion of existing farm buildings. The most commonly cited means of resolving tension is by negotiation and compromise through pre-application discussions. Another key mechanism is the existence of strong policies in the Local Plan or supplementary planning guidance that ensures an outcome acceptable to the authority.

### **Evaluating the performance of the planning system**

Information was collected through semi-structured interviews with a range of 'stakeholders' in each case study area:

- an applicant (or his/her agent) for planning permission for the conversion of historic farm buildings in the area, selected from the planning applications that had formed part of the case-study material;
- local authority officers (conservation officers and/or planning officers) involved in the process;
- statutory consultees who had been involved in relevant planning applications;
- a representative of parish councils nominated by the relevant County Association of Parish and Town Councils.

Six of the case studies were selected for detailed examination. In selecting the case studies, the research team sought to include:

- authorities located in each of the three types of area – remote rural, accessible rural and urban fringe;
- authorities that had displayed a range of different responses to the questions posed in the earlier interviews;
- one National Park Authority.

The local authorities selected for the detailed examination are listed in Table 38.

The most significant issues arising from the case studies, which are discussed in turn below, are the following:

- the perceived failure of national policy;
- policies not delivering the right outcomes;
- the need for discrimination in local policy;
- the issue of residential re-use;
- other matters including supplementary planning guidance and pre-application discussions.

### **The perceived failure of national policy**

At the national level, policy is based on the assumption that conservation and economic re-use are not exclusive activities, and indeed that economic re-use is an important driver of conservation activity. At the local level there can be tensions in trying to make the two processes work together. This appears to stem mainly from a perceived lack of clarity within PPG7, and between PPGs 7 and 15, about the main objective of planning policy for historic farm buildings. There is confusion over whether the main objective is to re-use a building resource to assist economic regeneration, or to conserve the character of historic farm buildings. Further, they are unclear whether, in a specific geographical area, these two objectives are mutually exclusive or whether, in the pursuit of 'balance', they can be complementary. While many believe that conservation and economic re-use need not be mutually exclusive, others believe it would be naïve to assume that this complementarity can be achieved in all situations.

Some respondents feel that PPG7 appears to point in two different directions simultaneously. They suggest also that the guidance given in PPGs 7 and 15 is in conflict,

and that it is possible to advance the case for either re-use or conservation depending on which PPG is chosen. Others feel that while a narrow view of PPGs 7 and 15 suggests that most types of re-use should be opposed because they compromise the character of historic farm buildings, a broader view of these PPGs could accommodate almost any re-use.

A clear majority of participants in the research feel that national policies are not appropriate, but this is for sharply contrasting reasons. There is a marked difference of opinion between local authority officers and the applicants or their agents. Officers feel that national policy is too strongly weighted in favour of re-use regardless of the impact on historic character; it is driven by economics at the expense of conservation. They believe that PPG7 leans too far towards encouraging re-use; they want a stricter policy on conversions, including the suggestion that demolition should be subject to formal planning control, and consider that PPG15 provides more appropriate policy guidance. By contrast, applicants and their agents in the main feel that national policy is too strongly weighted in favour of conservation; it is insufficiently flexible with regard to re-use and is dominated by PPG15 rather than PPG7. This divergence of view is reflected in the responses of the key government, professional and voluntary organisations interviewed in a separate part of the research. Some think the planning system is too constraining and favours conservation over development. Others think that it favours development over conservation. Some think, in addition, that there are deep-seated problems with the planning system because it has not clarified what aspects of the character of historic farm buildings should be protected and conserved. This situation should be improved in future as a result of the reform of the heritage protection system, which will require all listings to have clear statements of significance (DCMS 2004).

There was general agreement that policies should be more tolerant of conversions within settlements than in the open countryside and that policies should make reference to the whole farmstead and surrounding building groups rather than focusing on the re-use of single buildings.

### **Policies do not deliver the right outcomes**

Stakeholders do not seem to feel that planning policies deliver the right outcomes in terms of either of the two important objectives of PPG7: fostering economic re-use or conserving a valuable historic asset. Many officers view the sequential test with a degree of cynicism, considering that applicants need only go through the motions of

marketing sites for economic use without success before returning to the original intention of residential use, which will yield far higher financial returns. Officers feel they are reduced to trying to ensure that the eventual residential conversions, as they expressed it, 'do not look too bad'. There was also a feeling that the emphasis of PPG13 *Transport* (DETR 2001a) on reducing motorcar travel as the overwhelmingly important criterion for sustainability makes conversion to business use even more difficult, particularly outside settlements.

With regard to PPG7's conservation objective, historic farm buildings are almost universally valued as an important element of the rural landscape. However, a large number of respondents believe that planning policies do not successfully address problems relating to the use of historic farm buildings. Generally they feel that the outcomes of residential conversions are poor. There is a view that this is a result of poor-quality design rather than the intrinsic nature of residential conversion and that there should be greater use of 'place-specific' rather than 'authority-wide' policies and guidance to secure good-quality design. There is a widespread feeling that planning policies only deliver effective conservation outcomes where buildings are listed, but that listing is both incomplete and poor. In addition, decisions on planning applications deal only with the proposal contained in the application and can do little to prevent subsequent incremental change, which can be highly detrimental to the character of farm buildings.

### **The need for discrimination in local policy**

Another principal criticism of national policy is that it is insufficiently sensitive to important variations between different places, different economic circumstances and, indeed, different types of building. Representatives of all constituencies feel that a uniform national policy is inappropriate. While planning authorities are not bound by national planning guidance, and development plans are entitled to depart from national guidance if there is good reason, national policy almost wholly prescribes local policy. Many Local Plan policies respond to national policy rather than to the pressures on historic farm buildings from within their districts. Planning authorities feel vulnerable to challenge at appeal if they depart from PPG7 guidance to seek different solutions for particular cases; a blanket approach seems to be taken as the 'safe' option.

The most commonly cited example of the need for discrimination in the development and implementation of local policy is the contrast between remote rural areas

where there may be very little demand for business use and accessible rural/urban fringe areas where such demand often clearly exists. PPG7 as a single policy instrument is thought not to respond to these sharply differing situations. Specifically, insufficient distinction is made between the historic/architectural merits of different buildings or groups of buildings. The distinction between listed and unlisted buildings is too crude; there are many farm buildings worthy of conservation that are not listed, and the listing is often patchy. There is a 'one size fits all' approach to applications, which is not sensitive to local circumstances or to the qualities of individual buildings.

### **The issue of residential re-use**

While PPG7 explicitly favours re-use for employment purposes, most proposals for conversion (approximately 80%) are for residential use. Planning officers feel that national policy too easily allows residential re-use, despite the sequential test implied in the policy. They feel it is too easy for applicants to argue that employment uses are not viable. In many areas residential property values are so high it is felt that owners do not seriously consider conversion to business use and 'hang on' knowing that in the end they will be granted planning consent for residential use. A perceived fundamental flaw in PPG7 is that it is founded on the assumption that business re-use is a viable alternative to residential use, but that in practice this is rarely the case.

Generally, officers think that conversions for residential use are inappropriate. They think that residential conversions normally destroy the historic/architectural character of the buildings, not just because of their impact on the buildings themselves but also within the curtilage and in the surrounding area. Officers believe in the firmer application of the sequential test.

Most applicants, on the other hand, feel that national policy is too restrictive and the sequential test too onerous and unrealistic. They do not accept that residential re-use need be inappropriate. If conversions are handled sympathetically with good and innovative design they feel that historic character can be safeguarded, but they think that planners are too often tied to restrictive land-use policies. They think that there are situations in which well-designed conversions for residential use could be appropriate. Overall they point to the absence of any stated rationale for business use being preferable to residential use, albeit PPG7 states explicitly that residential use can have minimal economic impact and is often detrimental to the character of the building.

Amongst the key organisations interviewed in a separate part of the research there is general agreement that both listed and unlisted historic farm buildings are subject to stronger pressure for residential conversion than for economic re-uses, such as offices or light industry, or temporary residential re-uses. However, there is considerable variation in opinion over whether residential conversion is more damaging to the character of the buildings and the countryside than other forms of adaptive re-use. There is also variation in opinion on the contribution of residential conversions towards more sustainable rural economies. The supply and demand for the re-use of historic farm buildings varies between different localities, as there are spatial variations in the make-up of rural economies. Accessibility and proximity to urban centres are seen to be key factors.

### Other matters

There is widespread agreement that supplementary planning guidance is very useful in dealing effectively with historic farm buildings. In practice, such guidance identifies the specific character of historic farm buildings and their landscape settings, recognising the contribution these buildings make to landscape character and offering detailed recommendations about the design features of proposed conversions. It 'puts flesh on the bones of policy' and is widely valued as a means of implementing conservation-led policies. The caveat is that the guidance must be good quality and should avoid being over-prescriptive, thereby restricting ideas and designs unique to particular circumstances.

Similarly, most people involved agree that pre-application discussions are particularly helpful in negotiating away potential problems before planning applications are submitted. On the other hand there is a widespread feeling that building regulations are inappropriate to historic farm buildings. In addition, the application of Highways Department standards to farm building conversions is considered damaging to the special character of historic farm buildings being designed for suburban housing schemes.

Overall the research presents a picture of uncertainty on the part of key participants in the front-line about the main thrust of national policy, with clearly perceived tension between conservation and economic regeneration objectives. Despite widespread recognition of the value of historic farm buildings, there is a lack of clarity about the purpose of national policy and a perceived lack of success in its implementation locally. Policies are not seen to deliver the right outcomes and are thought to be insufficiently sensitive to local

circumstances. In particular the conversion of historic farm buildings to residential use is a difficult issue generating significant disagreement between participants.

Research by Shorten *et al* (2001) for the Welsh Assembly yielded conclusions similar to those presented above.

- Local planning policies for farm diversification strike a more restrictive stance than that set out in national policies.
- There are frustrations with the planning system especially in the clarification of policy.
- It is the impact of development rather than the type of use that is the key concern.

The Welsh Assembly study concluded that there should be changes to national planning guidance to clarify the approach to diversification, including the recommendation that national guidance should encourage development plan policies for rural and farm diversification based on clear understanding of local circumstances.

### PLANNING GAIN AND WHOLE FARM PLANS

The research investigated the ways in which, and the extent to which, LPAs have used planning gain and whole farm plans to secure appropriate and adaptive re-uses of farm buildings. The research concluded overall that neither mechanism had more than a marginal influence. The extent and nature of both of these instruments was explored through a number of case studies and interviews, as well as a literature review. As part of this process, 19 planning officers were interviewed.

In terms of national policy, planning gain should assist in achieving sustainable development through the pursuit of social, economic and environmental benefits to the community as a whole (DTLR 2001b). There is less well-developed national policy for whole farm plans in relation to the development process, the only mention of such plans in national policy guidance appearing in an annex to PPG7. This allows, but specifically does not require, whole farm plans in support of planning applications.

In respect of the use of *planning gain*, the following matters were explored:

- the extent to which planning gain has been used in development relating to historic farm buildings;
- the different uses of Section 106 agreements in respect of both economic and historic/ environmental benefits.

In respect of *whole farm plans*, the following matters were explored:

- the extent to which whole farm plans overtly embrace historic farm buildings as an integral part of the farm resource;
- the extent to which such considerations have involved consultation with the local planning authority;
- the extent to which authorities acknowledge such plans as a legitimate consideration in land use planning.

### **Planning Gain and the use of Section 106 agreements**

Under Section 106 of the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act a local planning authority can enter into a legally binding agreement with a developer over an issue that is related to the development. This planning obligation can either be positive, requiring the developer to do or provide something, or negative, restricting them from doing something.

The literature review revealed that securing planning gain through Section 106 agreements has rarely been used in relation to agriculture. Where agreements have been used, the most common purpose has been to control occupancy in the context of farm diversification. Other examples of the use of agreements include:

- controlling curtilage developments for farm buildings in sensitive locations;
- securing the repair of farm buildings;
- restricting the use of betterment from farm conversions to other diversification activities;
- allowing permission for one building in exchange for the restoration of others.

However, planning authorities are reluctant to use Section 106 agreements more widely in agriculture because they are expensive to set up, can be altered after five years and are difficult to enforce. The size of development at the individual farm level is generally considered too small to merit a Section 106 agreement in this context. It is felt that planning conditions are a more satisfactory means by which to achieve appropriate benefits and remove Permitted Development Rights in diversification proposals.

### **Whole Farm Plans**

Whole farm plans are designed to integrate conservation and farming, but originally they were not concerned with the planning system. The *Policy Commission Report on the Future of Farming and Food* (Defra 2002b) felt that regulation and incentive were the keys to environmental quality in respect of agriculture's impact on the rural environment, and that whole farm plans and audits had a significant role to play. Few local authorities in the survey were aware of whole farm plans at all, let alone their potential importance in the planning process.

The study identified three examples where whole farm plans were used in a planning context:

- the National Trust uses whole farm plans as a means to integrate environmental, production and developmental goals;
- some individual estates use them for business and development planning;
- a small number of authorities encourage landowners to submit farm management plans in support of planning applications.

A number of authorities feel that whole farm plans, as they understand them, are too broad and all embracing to be of significant value in informing development decisions. However, some authorities are beginning to make references to the possibility of whole farm plans being treated as a material planning consideration in determining planning applications. There are also some references to the possibility that they might influence the formulation of planning policies. Most authorities are sympathetic to this kind of supplementary information, but there is no consensus amongst them as to whether whole farm plans should be incorporated into Local Plans or adopted as supplementary planning guidance. It must be emphasised that, to date, very few whole farm plans have been submitted to authorities in support of planning applications.

### **BEST PRACTICE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HISTORIC FARM BUILDINGS**

#### **Scope of the investigation**

An investigation was undertaken into what, in the opinion of local authority officers and applicants for planning permission, constitutes good policy and best planning practice for achieving successful outcomes to the re-use

of historic farm buildings. Re-use can have a substantial impact on the character of an historic farm building and its surroundings, and on the local economy. It is therefore necessary to ensure, firstly, that it is appropriate to convert the building and, secondly, that any detrimental impacts on the building, its surroundings and the community are avoided as far as possible.

This section investigated what is perceived as best practice in terms of managing the historic building resource, and looked at methods for achieving successful outcomes if re-use does occur. Information for the former aim was derived from interviews held with both local authority officers and applicants for planning permission. For the latter aim, it was obtained by asking 16 conservation officers from different planning authorities to nominate two examples in their areas where they felt that successful re-use of historic farm buildings had been achieved. Interviews were then conducted with the officers and others involved in the scheme to ascertain the factors and conditions that

had influenced the success of each conversion. Finally, a selection of the examples nominated as successful re-use was discussed with a panel of English Heritage Building Inspectors specifically convened for this project. The local authorities involved are listed below in Table 39.

### Best policy for managing historic farm buildings

Although none of the respondents feel that formal planning policies alone could ensure a successful conversion, a number feel that they are important for providing a framework within which a successful scheme can be negotiated, and that they aid the re-use process.

Most respondents stress the importance of flexibility within planning policies. Some feel that this should be achieved by producing policies that are strict in principle, but which contain minimal detail and so allow flexibility within a firm framework. Due to the distinctive nature and circumstances of different areas, it is not considered possible to produce an appropriate single national

**Table 39** Case-study LPAs: Successful re-use outcomes

Region	County	Local Planning Authority
South West	Gloucestershire	Tewkesbury Borough Council
	Wiltshire	North East Wiltshire District Council
South East	Hampshire	Winchester City Council
	Kent	Sevenoaks District Council
East of England	Essex	Uttlesford District Council
	Hertfordshire	St Albans City Council
West Midlands	Shropshire	North Shropshire District Council
	Worcestershire	Bromsgrove District Council
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Peak District National Park Authority
	Nottinghamshire	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Yorkshire & the Humber	Lincolnshire	North East Lincolnshire District Council
	Yorkshire	Richmondshire District Council
North East	Durham	Durham City Council
	Northumberland	Tynedale District Council
North West	Cheshire	Chester City Council
	Cumbria	Lake District National Park Authority

policy for the whole country, and therefore scope for variation is necessary. Detailed formal policy is sometimes perceived as a straightjacket for applicants, designers and, indeed, for the LPA. A 'good' policy in this context would therefore appear to be one that allows enough flexibility to enable individual solutions. However in order to operate flexible policies it is necessary to have sufficient experienced staff to interpret them.

There is no clear consensus as to whether policies should favour particular end uses. Generally officers feel that conversions for residential use are inappropriate because they often damage the historic/architectural character of the building and its surroundings. On the other hand, most applicants believe that national policy is too restrictive and they do not accept that residential re-use need necessarily be inappropriate. It is therefore not possible to identify the 'best' policies in terms of the type of re-use.

Adequate funding can enable the repair of farm buildings for continued agricultural use, or their restoration and conversion to a non-agricultural use. This may help maintain the historic farm building resource. This is certainly the case in the Lake District, where funding available through the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme has enabled the repair and restoration of approximately 800 buildings. Means of funding suggested by officers include providing financial incentives for commercial conversions and allowing tax breaks for farmers who repair historic farm buildings.

### **Best practice for the conversion of historic farm buildings**

If conversion of a historic farm building is deemed appropriate, it is necessary to ensure that it is undertaken as successfully as possible. However, there is debate about what constitutes a successful conversion. There is general agreement amongst officers, and it is commonly stated in various types of planning policy, that retaining as much of the original building as possible and minimising alterations to it helps preserve the character of the building and thus contributes to achieving a successful conversion. Specific aspects of this principle that officers feel to be important include:

- minimising new openings;
- retaining the internal volume as far as possible;
- maintaining the form of the building;
- keeping the curtilage as tight as possible to the building;

- retaining fittings including doors;
- not adding extensions;
- keeping insulation as unobtrusive as possible.

Despite seeming agreement on these matters, there is some disagreement in assessing individual cases. For example, a group of English Heritage specialists were convened for the purpose of this project to study a sample of the conversions nominated by conservation officers as successful and judge whether or not they deemed them successful. The English Heritage group felt that only a few had been completely successful in this respect, others being thought to comprise some elements that were good and others that were poor. In the eyes of the group a successful conversion is one that does not exceed the building's capacity to absorb change. They stressed that the key to achieving a successful outcome is the ability to make judgements about the value and significance of the building or steading, its relationship to the landscape and its broader historical context. This requires an understanding of what is important and the ability to 'read' historic buildings and their landscapes. Once the significance of a building and its landscape setting has been determined it is then possible to make informed decisions about its capacity to absorb change without irrevocably damaging the things that made the building significant in the first place.

There may be a number of reasons for this disagreement over the success of the conversions. Firstly, officers may have nominated conversions that, although not considered to be perfect, were felt to be the best examples in their area. For this reason, the research team found it extremely difficult to find local authorities that were prepared to provide examples of successful outcomes. Secondly, officers who are involved in the practical aspects of conversion on a day-to-day basis do not have access to clear criteria from English Heritage for the evaluation of a building's significance and capacity for change. The result is that 'significance' and 'capacity for change' can be subject to different interpretations. A framework for understanding the significance of buildings and their landscapes would reduce such differences of opinion in the future. Thirdly, officers may consider the social or economic effects of re-use when judging success, even if this results in some compromise of the character of the building, whereas the English Heritage specialists were purely focused upon determining the success or otherwise of a scheme in conserving the character of the building.

Physical factors, people and processes may all influence the relative success of the conversion of an historic

farm building to a new use. Respondents identified the following 'critical success factors' for achieving a good conversion, both generally and in terms of the individual case studies.

### Physical factors

Conservation officers identified a range of building types that they feel have the best potential for conversion. The buildings most frequently referred to are animal shelters, including shippens, stables and cattle pens. These are more likely to have windows and some internal subdivision, which minimises the extent of alterations necessary to convert the building. Such buildings are more likely as a result of conversion to retain more of their historic and architectural character. For similar reasons, cart sheds were thought by a few respondents to be the most suitable buildings for conversion.

Some officers identified the following building types as inherently unsuitable for conversion: granaries, large threshing barns, tithe barns and isolated field barns. This is due to their lack of openings, large internal volumes and, in the case of field barns, the impact of the 'domestic paraphernalia' of a conversion on the immediate surroundings. However there is greater demand for converting larger barns because they provide more accommodation, particularly for residential use. Approximately half of the nominated examples of successful conversions comprised farmstead complexes, incorporating a range of building types; the remainder were conversions of barns and of several types of animal shelters, including cattle byres, shippens and stables. This would suggest that the process of achieving a successful conversion is made easier when the buildings are characterised by numerous openings and where blank-walled buildings like barns reside within farm complexes.

The majority of officers believe that the end use to which a farm building is converted influences the success of the scheme. There are mixed views however on the extent to which this is true. For example, some officers feel that end use is absolutely crucial whereas others believe that although it has an influence on the success of the scheme, it does not determine its success. End use is thought to be a key factor in the success of several of the case study examples. English Heritage also stresses the importance of matching the capacity of a building to absorb change with an appropriate end use. Here the key is to ensure that the end use fits in with the requirements of the building rather than vice versa.

Officers generally think that employment uses are more likely to result in a good conversion because:

- they require fewer windows and less subdivision;
- building regulations for commercial buildings are less stringent;
- the applicant tends to be less insistent on specific details;
- employment use serves the community as a whole, providing social and economic enhancement;
- less curtilage is required for employment use.

However many respondents believe that it is possible to achieve a successful residential re-use; indeed, over half of the examples of successful conversion nominated by conservation officers are for residential re-use. Generally the applicants for planning permission do not accept that residential re-use must be inappropriate. If handled sympathetically with good design and innovation they feel that heritage character can be safeguarded.

### Stakeholders in the re-use process

A number of people involved in the conversion process are thought to have a more influential role than others. However several officers point out that everyone who is involved in a conversion scheme has an important contribution to make and that it is necessary for them all to work as a team to achieve a successful conversion.

Most officers believe that the applicant plays a very important role in determining the success of a conversion; comparisons are made between applicants who understand what they are doing, and those who simply want a house in the countryside. The aspirations of applicants, their involvement in the process and their relationship with the local authority is thought to influence the success of a scheme. As one conservation officer says, *"...however hard any of the other players try, a successful outcome will not be achieved unless the applicant is on board."*

Agents appear generally to be viewed by officers as a hindrance rather than a help, with regard to achieving a successful conversion. They are deemed to be too conservative, without vision, poor at design and having little understanding of historic farm buildings. The case studies of successful conversions provide a few exceptions to this. In one case study the agent, who had been involved in facilitating the conversion of a number of redundant farmsteads into business parks, was thought to be key to the successful conversion of a redundant farmstead into a business centre.

All respondents agree that architects are key players in obtaining a successful outcome. They are described as 'very important', 'absolutely crucial' and 'a good first step', and credited with the ability to 'make or break' a scheme. A good architect is thought to have played a critical part in the success of at least half of the case study conversions. A few successful schemes have been achieved despite the involvement of 'a poor architect', or no architect at all, but extensive input from the local authority officers has been necessary in order to compensate for this.

Nearly all respondents feel that builders are important; some describe them as 'invaluable' or 'absolutely crucial' once on-site development proceeds. For example, as one officer explains, a scheme is only as good as the quality of its execution. However, the builder was thought to be a key factor in only a few of the case studies. In one of these, the presence of an experienced craftsman was thought to have 'made' the conversion. A couple of respondents stress that the ability to work with local materials in a traditional way enables a good-quality conversion.

Consultation with both statutory and non-statutory consultees is always undertaken as part of the planning process. This is thought by most to have a positive impact on the outcome of a re-use scheme. Those with local or specialist knowledge are thought to be particularly helpful. English Heritage is considered by some to be a useful consultee and is thought to be a key factor leading to the success of two of the nominated conversions. In one of these, the advice of an English Heritage structural engineer enabled a leaning timber-framed barn to be retained and straightened rather than dismantled and reassembled. The parish council is sometimes viewed as a less useful consultee, with some officers feeling that they can be too uncritically supportive of local applicants.

The majority of officers feel that local authority members are usually, although not always, supportive of their recommendations. However issues arise over their perceived lack of objectivity and their supposed susceptibility to local influence. Emotional detachment or otherwise inevitably appear to be a key factor. Those involved with processing the application within local authorities are thought to influence the success of the conversion. The respondents are predominantly conservation officers, and, predictably, they frequently feel that their role is paramount in ensuring the success of a scheme. Conservation officers differ in what they believe they contribute to the success of a conversion; however the following roles were mentioned:

- identifying the value of a building;

- providing pre-application advice;
- supplying comments and observations on the proposed scheme;
- negotiating details of the scheme with the relevant parties;
- acting as a facilitator to draw all parties together and mediating between them.

The last of these roles is mentioned most frequently.

Several respondents stress the importance of sympathetic and flexible building control officers, who are willing to look at different ways of achieving the necessary standards for building regulations. Their involvement at the earliest possible stage of the process is considered by some to be essential for ensuring success.

## Processes

All officers stress the importance of understanding and appreciating the building in terms of its history, function, architecture and relationship with surrounding buildings. It is thought that this knowledge can help to ensure a sympathetic and enlightened conversion.

The use of local materials and traditional methods is deemed to be an important factor by over half of the officers. By contrast, other respondents feel that a contemporary approach, with a willingness to consider new materials, is more likely to secure a good conversion.

Officers generally feel that supplementary planning guidance and informal policy is helpful for securing good conversions. It is thought to provide constructive advice and is seen as a means of placing policy within a local context.

In terms of the case study examples, pre-application discussions are one of the most commonly identified 'critical factors' for achieving a successful conversion. Pre-application discussions are perceived to have contributed to the success of the conversion in approximately half the case studies. Pre-application consultation usually involves a site visit by the conservation officer, sometimes accompanied by building or development control officers. There are often on-site or office-based discussions with the applicant, agent or architect. Officers will generally discuss opportunities for conversion of the buildings, give an indication of the likelihood of approval, issue supplementary planning guidance, look at sketch schemes and, in some cases, draw-up sketch plans for the applicant

The most frequently mentioned benefit of pre-application discussion is that it enables consideration of issues and potential difficulties at the outset of the scheme, which allows for their resolution at an early stage. This reduces later confrontation and facilitates the smooth running of the process. Some officers think that pre-submission advice saves time and money in the long run. Some respondents also suggest that it helps improve the relationships between all parties, getting all the players on board at an early stage. One also notes that pre-application discussions are useful for identifying and discouraging inappropriate schemes at the earliest possible stage.

Despite the stated benefits of pre-application consultation, it is not always undertaken. This is for two reasons: firstly, applicants are under no obligation to consult planning authorities prior to application, and often do not do so; secondly, resources, particularly in conservation departments, may be limited and this constrains the amount of pre-application advice that they are able to provide. In some areas, conservation officer visits are limited to complex schemes or listed buildings only.

Approximately half of the respondents think that the relationships between those working in the local authorities are important. A close working relationship between conservation, development control and building inspectors is felt to enhance the process. Many officers feel that their authorities have an integrated approach to dealing with planning applications for buildings of conservation value. For example, one officer explains that they work as a team and are not physically or mentally compartmentalised, which helps achieve successful outcomes. In a few of the authorities, the respondents have the dual role of development control and conservation, thereby enabling a combined understanding of both building requirements and conservation philosophy, which may be beneficial in ensuring a good conversion.

Several respondents emphasise the importance of a good relationship between the applicant/architect/agent and the local authority; this is seen by some respondents as critical for a scheme to succeed. One officer believes that, in order to achieve a successful conversion, all parties need to understand fully not only the nature of the advice proffered, but also the reasoning behind it, and that a relationship with good communication is necessary to facilitate this. Nearly half of the case studies are described as having involved good communication, extensive discussions or a good relationship between all players, and this is thought to be a key factor in their success.

Most officers feel that strong enforcement is sometimes useful for influencing outcomes. It is seen as a tool for 'getting things done' and ensuring quality; for example by enforcing the discharge of conditions. The likelihood of enforcement by local authorities varies greatly, with some stating that their authorities are strong on enforcement, and others believing that they are not strong enough, typically due to lack of resources. A few respondents feel that enforcement does not have a useful role to play: one officer pointed out that compromise and negotiation have far more to offer than enforcement. Prosecution is described as both 'time consuming' and 'a nightmare'.

Officers feel that increased resources in the conservation department would allow greater input by conservation officers, which would improve the quality of conversions. Specifically it would allow increased pre-application consultation and more time for enforcement, both of which are seen as important for ensuring a successful conversion.

The two main 'critical success factors' identified through this study are good architects and pre-application consultation, but neither are enshrined in policy. Only one Local Plan analysed in the research advocated pre-application consultation, and only a few encouraged the employment of an architect. However these factors are more commonly referred to in supplementary planning guidance; one fifth of the supplementary planning guidance notes examined refers to one or the other of these factors.

### **Respondents' recommendations for best practice**

The interviews with local authority officers and other stakeholders in the re-use process yield a variety of suggestions for improving the process and thereby leading to more successful conversions. These suggestions can be divided into 'education, training and dissemination of information' and 'improvements to the planning process'.

#### **Education, training and dissemination of information**

The most frequent suggestions given by officers for improving the process of re-use that involve training, education and dissemination of information were the following:

- There should be increased training for development control and other planning officers in conservation matters.
- Architects' education should place more emphasis

on historic buildings and their conservation.

- Greater time should be available for conservation officers to accumulate the necessary knowledge.
- Provision should be made for the education of agents, who must be aware of the requirements of a good conversion in order to best advise the applicant on the choice of architects and contractors.
- There should be training for all participants in the process of conversion.
- Training should be available for existing officers in assessing justifications for conversion, particularly economic justifications.
- A more positive view of historic buildings should be encouraged amongst the general public.
- Perception of the planning system should be improved amongst the general public.
- Information should be provided for local authority officers concerning grants for the diversification and maintenance of buildings in agricultural use.
- Leaflets should be sent out to prospective developers explaining what is expected in a barn conversion.
- A more 'contemporary' approach to conversions should be encouraged, especially at the preliminary stages.

### **Improvements to the planning process**

A number of respondents offer suggestions to improve the planning process with regard to historic farm building conversions. Some officers are concerned about the quality of planning applications; one notes that most applications do not provide an adequate level of detail at the outset, and thus many conditions need to be added to provide a decent conversion. This difficulty is compounded because the application is not recognised as deficient until it reaches the conservation officer many weeks after its initial arrival, by which time it is too late to return it.

The eight-week period in which planning applications must be determined is seen by a few officers to result in poorer outcomes because it limits the amount of time available for negotiation and draws resources away from pre-application consultation. It also makes it more likely that it will be necessary to attach conditions.

# 6

## CONCLUSIONS



Source: Rural Development Service  
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The countryside is undergoing a period of significant change and historic farm buildings are not immune from this process. As the most numerous type of historic structure in the countryside, they play an important role in defining the character of the historic environment in addition to being an essential component of the rural scene. It follows, therefore, that changes affecting the historic farm building resource will also have a significant impact upon the character of the historic environment. However, in comparison with other components of the agricultural landscape, such as land cover and field boundaries, very little is known about the nature and extent of change taking place to historic farm buildings. This is a limiting factor in the development of policies to protect and enhance the countryside. The problem was recognised over two decades ago but the difficulties of collecting data means that there is still insufficient information with which to describe the character of the resource and to monitor change. Fundamental baseline data are required, such as the number and distribution of extant historic farm buildings in England.

Well-founded strategic decisions on the future management of historic farm buildings will need accurate descriptions of the resource and effective monitoring of change. The statutory lists provide the only national-scale data on historic farm buildings and must be the starting point for developing an understanding of the pressures of change, acting on the most important part of the resource. Despite the current challenges posed by using the statutory lists, they are an invaluable data source on historic farm buildings and provide data on location, relative importance, building function, date of construction and building materials. These can be analysed against other data sets and thus enable the broad character of the resource to be described.

## THE LISTED AGRICULTURAL BUILDING RESOURCE

Analysis of the English Heritage Listed Building System (LBS) shows that the statutory lists continue to be dominated by farmhouses despite the move to include a broader range of farmstead buildings that began with the Accelerated National Resurvey. The analysis shows that whilst there are 69,000 agricultural building list entries in the study, the number of these entries containing working farmstead buildings is likely to be nearer 30,000. A more accurate figure must await some form of sample field survey. There are several clear differences between the age and construction of the buildings that house domestic and working farmstead functions and interesting variations between the working functions themselves.

## LISTED AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS AND THE PRESSURES FOR CHANGE

A number of clear patterns emerge from the analysis in terms of the management of and threat to listed agricultural buildings. The evidence shows that a significant number of historic farm buildings are at risk from neglect and decay and that major structural failures are largely confined to working farmstead buildings. The Farm Practices Survey shows that the working farm buildings of at least one in ten farmers are in a state of disrepair and that lack of maintenance affects buildings that are still in use for agriculture and storage as well as those that are unused or awaiting conversion to other uses.

The English Heritage Buildings at Risk (BAR) survey shows that 6 per cent of the highest graded (I and II\*) agricultural buildings are at risk and agricultural buildings comprise the largest category at risk on local authority BAR registers. Moreover, just under half of all conservation officers say the loss or dereliction of historic farm buildings due to redundancy is a significant problem in their areas.

There is significant development pressure on the listed resource. Over half the list entries have been subject to Listed Building Consent (LBC) and planning applications since 1980 and at least one in five of all list entries have permission for change of use. The photographic survey shows that 26 per cent of working farmstead buildings had been converted to a new use by 2003. Change of use is dominated by the conversion of working farmstead buildings into permanent dwellings. The adaptive re-use of working farmstead buildings for employment and businesses is far less common despite encouragement for this type of development in government planning policy over a number of years.

It is clear that listed agricultural buildings are under a great degree of development pressure. How the planning system deals with these applications for development and the extent to which the historic and architectural interest of the buildings is taken into consideration is therefore of major importance.

Historic farm buildings are a valued resource both in their own terms and as an important element of wider landscape character. This resource is vulnerable to neglect or demolition as a result of disuse and to a loss of historic character as a result of inappropriate conversion. Many of these threats derive from economic and/or policy changes relating to agriculture. The financial health of the agricultural industry is very important in determining whether or not farmers can afford to maintain their

historic farm buildings or maximise their value through conversion projects.

A combination of financial pressures on farmers, changes in farming practice and changes in agricultural and rural development policies means that many historic farm buildings are no longer needed as part of farming activity. This is a major factor in their disuse and neglect. At the same time, more people wish to live in the countryside. The lack of available housing in the countryside to absorb this pressure puts a premium on the conversion of historic farm buildings to residential rather than other uses, which in turn leads to the sometimes damaging physical adaptation of such buildings and their landscape settings.

This transfer of activities from towns and cities to rural areas has coincided with a corresponding shift in Government planning policy towards greater encouragement of economic, but sustainable, development in rural areas, partly to counteract the decline of agriculture. The general shift towards a more permissive stance on some types of rural development, combined with the specific emphasis on the re-use of historic farm buildings, is likely to increase pressure on the historic farm building resource for its conversion and re-use.

## **HISTORIC FARM BUILDINGS AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM**

Trends in Government planning, land-use and agricultural policy are likely to fuel demand both for new development and changes of use to existing buildings. Coupled with specific statements encouraging the re-use of farm buildings, this is likely to exert significant pressure for the re-use of the historic farm building resource, particularly for employment-generating uses. It is probable that the physical fabric of such buildings and the form of their immediate surroundings will require alteration to accommodate changes of use or function and this will affect their character.

Although the re-use of disused farm buildings for business purposes remains a cornerstone of Government policy and is reiterated in PPS7, none of the key stakeholder groups involved appears to consider existing planning policy towards historic farm buildings to be satisfactory in its present form. At a local level there appears to be widespread uncertainty about the main thrust of national planning policy and, despite a belief at the national level that re-use and conservation are compatible,

there are clear tensions when it comes to the practical reconciliation of these objectives on the ground. Few stakeholders feel that planning policies deliver the right outcomes in terms of either of these two important objectives. Policy as set out in PPG7 did not seem to participants to be working effectively and seemed to translate somewhat uneasily into local planning policies and decisions. A perceived flaw in PPG7 is its implicit assumption that business re-use is a viable large-scale alternative to residential use, whereas, in practice, this does not appear to be the case. There is no reason to believe that the issuing of PPS7, with its less detailed and more strategic approach, will help to resolve these concerns.

Many respondents perceive a lack of success in the implementation of policy locally. Policies are not seen to deliver the right outcomes and they are thought to be insufficiently sensitive to important differences between different places, different economic circumstances and, indeed, different buildings. Relationships between policies at the different spatial scales are fairly uneven, with the regional level being rather isolated. There is much variation between local authority areas in the management of historic farm buildings. Many planning authorities lack reliable and comprehensive information on historic farm buildings on which to base policies and individual development decisions. Statutory listing of working farmstead buildings is acknowledged to be incomplete and sometimes does not fully reflect the historic importance of all aspects of the local farm building stock. Monitoring of the historic farm building resource is very patchy across authorities and slightly fewer than half of all authorities have undertaken work that could be used to monitor changes taking place to the stock of listed working farmstead buildings. The rigour of Local Plan policies relating to historic farm buildings varies greatly between authorities. Fewer than half of the Local Plans examined explicitly recognise the contribution of farm buildings to the historic environment and few attempt to characterise the resource.

Residential re-use of historic farm buildings is a contentious issue generating significant disagreements. Plans at all levels indicate a strong preference for employment-related uses rather than residential use. This preference is usually justified as being less damaging to the character of the building and providing greater economic benefits. In practice the majority of conversions are for residential use, for which the demand is greatest and profits may be highest. Local authority officers generally feel that the outcomes of residential conversion are poor, and that national policy allows them to take place too easily. Applicants for planning permission for the

conversion of historic farm buildings and some officers consider that this is a result of poor design rather than the intrinsic nature of residential conversion. They tend to think that there should be greater use of place-specific policies and guidance rather than the imposition of blanket policies to secure good design.

## **BEST PRACTICE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HISTORIC FARM BUILDINGS**

There are, of course, many examples of successful outcomes to the process of converting historic farm buildings to alternative uses. A number of conditions have been identified that contribute to successful outcomes. Strong but flexible policies are judged by most to help in allowing for adaptation to individual circumstances within a firm framework. In terms of process, the single most important factor likely to result in a successful conversion is pre-application discussion. This allows consideration of important issues at the outset, which in turn facilitates their early resolution. It seems particularly sensible that pre-application discussions should be undertaken in the context of good-quality, place-specific supplementary planning guidance. The involvement of a good architect and a sympathetic owner are frequently cited as critical factors in the success of a scheme, together with a good working relationship, firstly, between different local authority departments and, secondly, between the local planning authority and the applicant. There is general agreement that retaining as much of the original building as possible, minimising alterations, and using local materials and traditional methods, helps preserve the character of the building and thus contributes to achieving a successful conversion.

# APPENDIX I



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## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES SELECTED FOR STUDY

Government Region	County	LPA
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Amber Valley District Council
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Derbyshire Dales District Council
East Midlands	Derbyshire	High Peak Borough Council
East Midlands	Derbyshire	North East Derbyshire District Council
East Midlands	Derbyshire	Peak District National Park Authority
East Midlands	Derbyshire	South Derbyshire District Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Blaby District Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Charnwood Borough Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Harborough District Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Melton Borough Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire	North West Leicestershire District Council
East Midlands	Leicestershire	Rutland Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire	Boston Borough Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire	East Lindsey District Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire	North Kesteven District Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire	South Holland District Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire	South Kesteven District Council
East Midlands	Lincolnshire	West Lindsey District Council
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Daventry District Council
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire District Council
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Kettering Borough Council
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	South Northamptonshire District Council
East Midlands	Northamptonshire	Wellingborough Borough Council
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Bassetlaw District Council
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Newark & Sherwood District Council
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire	Rushcliffe Borough Council
East of England	Bedfordshire	Bedford Borough Council
East of England	Bedfordshire	Mid Bedfordshire District Council
East of England	Bedfordshire	South Bedfordshire District Council
East of England	Cambridgeshire	East Cambridgeshire District Council
East of England	Cambridgeshire	Fenland District Council
East of England	Cambridgeshire	Huntingdonshire District Council
East of England	Cambridgeshire	Peterborough City Council

## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES SELECTED FOR STUDY (cont.)

Government Region	County	LPA
East of England	Cambridgeshire	South Cambridgeshire District Council
East of England	Essex	Basildon District Council
East of England	Essex	Braintree District Council
East of England	Essex	Brentwood Borough Council
East of England	Essex	Castle Point Borough Council
East of England	Essex	Chelmsford Borough Council
East of England	Essex	Colchester Borough Council
East of England	Essex	Epping Forest District Council
East of England	Essex	Harlow District Council
East of England	Essex	Maldon District Council
East of England	Essex	Rochford District Council
East of England	Essex	Tendring District Council
East of England	Essex	Uttlesford District Council
East of England	Hertfordshire	Dacorum Borough Council
East of England	Hertfordshire	East Hertfordshire District Council
East of England	Hertfordshire	Hertsmere Borough Council
East of England	Hertfordshire	North Hertfordshire District Council
East of England	Hertfordshire	St Albans City Council
East of England	Hertfordshire	Three Rivers District Council
East of England	Hertfordshire	Welwyn Hatfield District Council
East of England	Norfolk	Breckland District Council
East of England	Norfolk	Broadland District Council
East of England	Norfolk	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
East of England	Norfolk	King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
East of England	Norfolk	North Norfolk District Council
East of England	Norfolk	South Norfolk District Council
East of England	Suffolk	Babergh District Council
East of England	Suffolk	Forest Heath District Council
East of England	Suffolk	Mid Suffolk District Council
East of England	Suffolk	St Edmundsbury Borough Council
East of England	Suffolk	Suffolk Coastal District Council
East of England	Suffolk	Waveney District Council
North East	Cleveland	Redcar & Cleveland Council
North East	Durham	Darlington Borough Council

## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES SELECTED FOR STUDY (cont.)

Government Region	County	LPA
North East	Durham	Derwentside District Council
North East	Durham	Durham City Council
North East	Durham	Easington District Council
North East	Durham	Sedgefield Borough Council
North East	Durham	Teesdale District Council
North East	Durham	Wear Valley District Council
North East	Northumberland	Alnwick District Council
North East	Northumberland	Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council
North East	Northumberland	Castle Morpeth Borough Council
North East	Northumberland	Northumberland National Park Authority
North East	Northumberland	Tynedale District Council
North West	Cheshire	Chester City Council
North West	Cheshire	Congleton Borough Council
North West	Cheshire	Crewe & Nantwich Borough Council
North West	Cheshire	Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council
North West	Cheshire	Macclesfield Borough Council
North West	Cheshire	Vale Royal Borough Council
North West	Cumbria	Allerdale Borough Council
North West	Cumbria	Carlisle City Council
North West	Cumbria	Copeland Borough Council
North West	Cumbria	Eden District Council
North West	Cumbria	Lake District National Park Authority
North West	Cumbria	South Lakeland District Council
North West	Lancashire	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
North West	Lancashire	Burnley Borough Council
North West	Lancashire	Chorley Borough Council
North West	Lancashire	Fylde Borough Council
North West	Lancashire	Lancaster City Council
North West	Lancashire	Pendle Borough Council
North West	Lancashire	Ribble Valley Borough Council
North West	Lancashire	Rossendale Borough Council
North West	Lancashire	West Lancashire District Council
North West	Lancashire	Wyre Borough Council
South East	Berkshire	West Berkshire Council

## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES SELECTED FOR STUDY (cont.)

Government Region	County	LPA
South East	Buckinghamshire	Aylesbury Vale District Council
South East	Buckinghamshire	Chiltern District Council
South East	Buckinghamshire	Wycombe District Council
South East	East Sussex	Lewes District Council
South East	East Sussex	Rother District Council
South East	East Sussex	Wealden District Council
South East	Hampshire	East Hampshire District Council
South East	Hampshire	New Forest District Council
South East	Hampshire	Test Valley Borough Council
South East	Hampshire	Winchester City Council
South East	Isle of Wight	Isle of Wight Council
South East	Kent	Ashford Borough Council
South East	Kent	Canterbury City Council
South East	Kent	Dover District Council
South East	Kent	Maidstone Borough Council
South East	Kent	Sevenoaks District Council
South East	Kent	Shepway District Council
South East	Kent	Thanet District Council
South East	Kent	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
South East	Kent	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
South East	Oxfordshire	Cherwell District Council
South East	Oxfordshire	South Oxfordshire District Council
South East	Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse District Council
South East	Oxfordshire	West Oxfordshire District Council
South East	Surrey	Tandridge District Council
South East	Surrey	Waverley Borough Council
South East	West Sussex	Arun District Council
South East	West Sussex	Chichester District Council
South East	West Sussex	Horsham District Council
South East	West Sussex	Mid Sussex District Council
South East	Berkshire	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
South East	Berkshire	Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough Council
South East	Berkshire	Wokingham Council
South East	Buckinghamshire	Milton Keynes Borough Council

## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES SELECTED FOR STUDY (cont.)

Government Region	County	LPA
South East	Buckinghamshire	South Bucks District Council
South East	Hampshire	Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
South East	Hampshire	Hart District Council
South East	Kent	Medway Council
South East	Kent	Swale Borough Council
South East	Surrey	Mole Valley District Council
South East	Surrey	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
South East	Surrey	Surrey Heath Borough Council
South West	Avon	Bath and North East Somerset Council
South West	Avon	North Somerset Council
South West	Avon	South Gloucestershire Council
South West	Cornwall	Caradon District Council
South West	Cornwall	Carrick District Council
South West	Cornwall	Isles of Scilly Council
South West	Cornwall	Kerrier District Council
South West	Cornwall	North Cornwall District Council
South West	Cornwall	Penwith District Council
South West	Cornwall	Restormel Borough Council
South West	Devon	Dartmoor National Park Authority
South West	Devon	East Devon District Council
South West	Devon	Mid Devon District Council
South West	Devon	North Devon District Council
South West	Devon	South Hams District Council
South West	Devon	Teignbridge District Council
South West	Devon	Torridge District Council
South West	Devon	West Devon Borough Council
South West	Dorset	East Dorset District Council
South West	Dorset	North Dorset District Council
South West	Dorset	Purbeck District Council
South West	Dorset	West Dorset District Council
South West	Gloucestershire	Cotswold District Council
South West	Gloucestershire	Forest of Dean District Council
South West	Gloucestershire	Stroud District Council
South West	Gloucestershire	Tewkesbury Borough Council

## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES SELECTED FOR STUDY (cont.)

Government Region	County	LPA
South West	Somerset	Exmoor National Park Authority
South West	Somerset	Mendip District Council
South West	Somerset	Sedgemoor District Council
South West	Somerset	South Somerset District Council
South West	Somerset	Taunton Deane Borough Council
South West	Somerset	West Somerset District Council
South West	Wiltshire	Kennet District Council
South West	Wiltshire	North Wiltshire District Council
South West	Wiltshire	Salisbury District Council
South West	Wiltshire	Swindon Borough Council
South West	Wiltshire	West Wiltshire District Council
West Midlands	Herefordshire	Herefordshire Council
West Midlands	Shropshire	Bridgenorth District Council
West Midlands	Shropshire	North Shropshire District Council
West Midlands	Shropshire	Oswestry Borough Council
West Midlands	Shropshire	Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council
West Midlands	Shropshire	South Shropshire District Council
West Midlands	Shropshire	Telford & Wrekin Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Cannock Chase District Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire	East Staffordshire Borough Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Lichfield District Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire	South Staffs District Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Stafford Borough Council
West Midlands	Staffordshire	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
West Midlands	Warwickshire	North Warwickshire Borough Council
West Midlands	Warwickshire	Rugby Borough Council
West Midlands	Warwickshire	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
West Midlands	Warwickshire	Warwick District Council
West Midlands	Worcestershire	Bromsgrove District Council
West Midlands	Worcestershire	Malvern Hills District Council
West Midlands	Worcestershire	Wychavon District Council
West Midlands	Worcestershire	Wyre Forest District Council
Yorkshire & Humber	Humberside	East Riding of Yorkshire Council

## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES SELECTED FOR STUDY (cont.)

Government Region	County	LPA
Yorkshire & Humber	Humberside	North East Lincolnshire Council
Yorkshire & Humber	Humberside	North Lincolnshire Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	Craven District Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	Hambleton District Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	Harrogate Borough Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	North York Moors National Park Authority
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	Richmondshire District Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	Ryedale District Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	Scarborough Borough Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	Selby District Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	York City Council
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire	Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Yorkshire & Humber	South Yorkshire	Barnsley Borough Council
Yorkshire & Humber	South Yorkshire	Doncaster Borough Council
Yorkshire & Humber	South Yorkshire	Rotheram Borough Council
Yorkshire & Humber	West Yorkshire	Bradford City Council
Yorkshire & Humber	West Yorkshire	Calderdale Borough Council
Yorkshire & Humber	West Yorkshire	Kirklees Borough Council
Yorkshire & Humber	West Yorkshire	Leeds City Council
Yorkshire & Humber	West Yorkshire	Wakefield City Council

# NOTES



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- <sup>1</sup> Countryside Quality Counts Tracking Change in the English Countryside 2004. ([www.countryside-quality-counts.org.uk](http://www.countryside-quality-counts.org.uk))
- <sup>2</sup> In England there were 72,581 agricultural building list entries recorded on the English Heritage Listed Building System in 2001.
- <sup>3</sup> A list of the local planning authorities selected for study is presented in Appendix 1. The classification of remote rural, accessible rural and urban-fringe local planning authorities is based on Tarling *et al* (1993).
- <sup>4</sup> These organisations included, for example, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, English Heritage, Royal Town Planning Institute, National Farmers' Union, Council for the Protection of Rural England and National Trust.
- <sup>5</sup> This is the aggregate measure of UK farm incomes.
- <sup>6</sup> Objective 1 areas in England promote development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind. The Objective 1 Programme runs from 2000 to 2006 and Cornwall, Merseyside and South Yorkshire are qualifying areas. Objective 2, which covers a larger area of England, supports the social conversion of areas facing structural difficulties. Objective 2 areas in England are eligible for all ERDP measures.
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk>
- <sup>8</sup> What can be listed through curtilage association is determined by case law.
- <sup>9</sup> Data provided by Images of England.
- <sup>10</sup> There are 159 Landscape Character Areas, which identify broad regional patterns of character in the landscape resulting from particular combinations of land cover, geology, soils, topography and settlement and enclosure patterns. Historic Landscape Characterisation, a process led and primarily resourced by English Heritage, is being developed as a tool for understanding the processes of change in the historic environment as a whole, for identifying what is vulnerable, and for maintaining diversity and distinctiveness in the local scene. It identifies archaeological, historical and other environmental features (attributes) and groups them into land parcels ('HLC polygons' within GIS) that reflect common, predominant historic characteristics.
- <sup>11</sup> The analyses presented here are based on the analysis of the sample of list entries.
- <sup>12</sup> English Heritage determines the risk by combining characteristics of structural condition, occupancy and management.
- <sup>13</sup> English Heritage defines beneficial use as the use of buildings either for their original purpose or for another use consistent with maintaining their special interest, and which is likely to generate sufficient value in the market to secure the maintenance of the building in the long term (English Heritage 2002b).
- <sup>14</sup> Low-key use: buildings whose architectural and historic interest would be severely compromised by conversion to intensive use. They are nonetheless likely to be capable of incidental or low-key uses (English Heritage 2002b).
- <sup>15</sup> Images of England is a project supported by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund to build a digital library of photographs of England's 370,000 list entries.
- <sup>16</sup> The weighting takes account of over and under representation at the regional level to produce a national estimate.
- <sup>17</sup> The conservation officer survey is described in more detail in Section 5.
- <sup>18</sup> It is important to note that the research was conducted more than a year before the publication of PPS7, which replaced PPG7.
- <sup>19</sup> Formal monitoring was defined as the keeping of quantitative records, which were updated at least biannually.
- <sup>20</sup> PPG7 (3.15) recommends that planning authorities should co-operate with local bodies to compile and promote registers of rural buildings with unimplemented planning permission for business re-use.
- <sup>21</sup> The main conclusions from this section of the research have been published separately (Owen & White 2004).

# UNDERSTANDING THE DOCUMENT



Source: Countryside & Community Research Unit  
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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

'Absolute loss' and 'Relative loss'	'Absolute loss' describes the loss of a farm building through destruction, demolition or neglect. 'Relative loss' is the loss of character due to unsuitable repairs or change of use, which damages the historic character of the building.
Agricultural building	A broad term often used by local authorities to include both farmstead and non-farmstead buildings.
Agricultural commodity	An agricultural product that can be processed and resold.
Agri-environment schemes	Government programmes set up to help farmers manage their land in an environmentally friendly way.
Annual Work Unit (AWU)	The AWU corresponds to the work performed by one person who is occupied with an agricultural holding on a full-time basis.
Barn	A building for the storage and processing of grain crops.
Byre	An enclosed building for cattle within which the cattle are normally tethered in stalls.
Commodity support regime	Financial support given to European Union farmers producing a range of agricultural commodities as part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
Counter-urbanisation	The relocation of people and employment from urban to rural areas.
Curtilage	The area within the boundaries of a property surrounding the main building.
Domestic farmstead building	Dwelling to accommodate the farm family and/or labour force.
Dovecote	A building, or part of a building, providing nest boxes for pigeons or doves.
Farmstead	The homestead of a farm where the farmhouse and some or all of the working buildings are located.
Farmstead building	Working and domestic buildings belonging to the farmstead.
Farmstead plan	The spatial layout of the farmstead.
Field barn	A building set within the fields away from the main farmstead. Field barns are often combination buildings providing storage for hay or straw and shelter for animals.
Granary	A building for storing threshing grain crops. Granaries may be freestanding structures or incorporated into other buildings, usually at first-floor level to prevent rodents and damp damaging the grain.
Historic farm building	Working farmstead building of historic significance. Historic farm buildings and farmsteads have been defined in a number of different ways. There is, however, general agreement that the start of the 20th century represented a significant watershed, marking the final demise of largely traditional building styles using local materials and their replacement by modern construction techniques using concrete and steel.
Linhay	Two-storey building with open-fronted cattle shelter and an open-fronted hay loft above characteristic of Devon and south Somerset.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS (cont.)

Listed building	A 'listed building' is one that is considered by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to be of special architectural or historic interest. The statutory lists can be taken to represent England's most important architectural and historic buildings, based on current understanding.
Model farmstead	A planned farmstead often containing buildings erected in the 18th and 19th centuries that were architect-designed rather than built in the local vernacular style.
Non-farmstead building	Agricultural building not related to a farmstead, e.g. domestic stables and industrial granaries.
Range	A group of farmstead buildings.
Shippon	See Byre.
Stable	A building for housing horses or working oxen.
Stakeholder	Person or organisation with an interest or 'stake' in a process, e.g. a planning application.
Threshing barn	A barn used to process grain crops.
Time series data	Data that measure change over time.
Working farmstead building	Building designed to accommodate the activities of the farmstead, e.g. barn, granary, field barn.

## NOTE ON STATISTICS

Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest one-tenth and so may not always total 100.0 exactly.



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Source: Images of England  
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