

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

8.1 Key Findings

- Farmsteads in Shropshire are an integral part of how landscapes have changed to the present day.
- The project has deepened our understanding of Shropshire's landscape, and the patterns of local distinctiveness.
- It has highlighted the diversity of Shropshire's landscape over very short distances
- Farmstead plan form and size are intricately linked to the fieldscapes and wider landscape they sit within.
- The best farmstead survival is across the Oswestry Uplands and along the northern border of the Shropshire, where small to medium farms have developed. Correlating with sheds located to the side of historic farmsteads
- Moderate to good survival of larger farms is still apparent. Sheds on the site of these can indicate greater survival than desk based mapping can reveal.
- Pre-1600 farmsteads are recorded in almost all parts of the county, with the most significant concentrations found in the south
- The Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills that has one of the highest percentages of 17th century farmsteads
- The greatest concentration of 18th and 19th century farmsteads are in the north and east of the county spread across the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain NCA and the Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau
- It has highlighted the lack of understanding of Shropshire's historic settlement pattern, and the need for further research in this area.
- Smallholdings play a very significant role in Shropshire industrial landscape, with more in-depth analysis is needed.

8.2 Landscape Context

The density of farmsteads is intricately related to the development of the landscape over time. Areas with the highest densities of farmsteads typically include smaller-scale enclosed fields with large numbers of small-medium-scale farmstead types, and at the other end of the spectrum are areas with larger-scale enclosed fields with low densities of large-scale farmstead types. It becomes clear that as time passed, fields increased in size, and where they did, holdings were amalgamated or enlarged and farmsteads became more and more spread out. The farmsteads themselves also increased in size along with their surrounding fieldscapes.

The location and distribution of farmsteads is heavily influenced by patterns of land use and management over centuries. These are reflected in the scales and patterning of fields, the extent of land cover (including woodland and boundary trees/species diversity). When the farmsteads data is compared to the Shropshire's LCA it becomes clear that the density of farmsteads is intricately related to the development of landscape context, in terms of landscape development, settlement pattern and the fieldscapes. It has been demonstrated that these are closely linked to the key HLC types of common edge encroachment landscapes, ancient landscapes and 18th and 19th century landscapes.

The main landscape types with small-scale farms and fields are:

- *The Upland Smallholdings* around the fringes of high moorland has one of the highest densities of farmsteads. This correlates with the Shropshire HLC, and specifically those areas characterised by small irregular fields and squatter enclosures related to mineral wealth.
- Similarly the *Enclosed Lowland Heaths* have a relatively high farmstead density, characterised by ordered patterns of small to medium planned fields of the 18th and 19th centuries, with earlier common edge encroachments in places.

The main landscape types with medium-scale farms and fields are:

- *Settled Pastoral Farmlands*, *Principal Timbered Farmland* and *Timbered Plateau Farmland* have a medium to high density of farmsteads, relating to a dominant pattern of dispersed settlement with some small villages. Some fields are derived from the informal, piecemeal enclosure of open fields during the late medieval and early modern period, while most derive from a mixture of woodland clearance, together with intakes and encroachment in areas of former common rough pasture.
- *The Pasture Hills and Wooded Hills of Estates and Farmlands* of the hills, valley slopes and upland fringe areas of Shropshire are characterised by dispersed settlement and the fields resulting from piecemeal and ancient enclosure interspersed with woodland.
- The *Principal Settled Farmlands* has medium densities of farmsteads. This reflects a mix of larger fields, resulting from 18th-19th century farm amalgamation and improvement, interspersed with earlier patterns of relatively small, sub-regular fields.

These are predominantly ancient landscapes with a greater prevalence of ancient species rich hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Consequently, these are often smaller-scale landscapes offering more filtered views through trees.

The main landscape types with large-scale farms and fields, mostly resulting from of 18th and 19th century farm amalgamation and improvement, are:

- The *Estate Farmlands* and the *Sandstone Estatelands*, both areas of village-based settlement where isolated farms relate to piecemeal enclosure of open fields and commons. There is more large-scale regular enclosure in the Sandstone Estatelands, the result of the taking in of large areas of heathland for new farms.
- The *High Enclosed Plateau* of the Clun, Shropshire Hills and Oswestry Uplands, which exhibit one of the lowest farmstead densities. Although some common edge encroachments exist on the lower slopes, the higher ground is dominated by large geometric field patterns resulting from planned enclosure during the late 18th and 19th centuries, and in association with large isolated regular planned farmsteads, surrounded by extensive holdings.

These 'improvement landscapes' tend to have greater numbers of thorn hedgerows and with lower numbers of hedgerow trees, creating a sense of a larger-scale, more open landscape.

8.3 Farmstead Character Areas

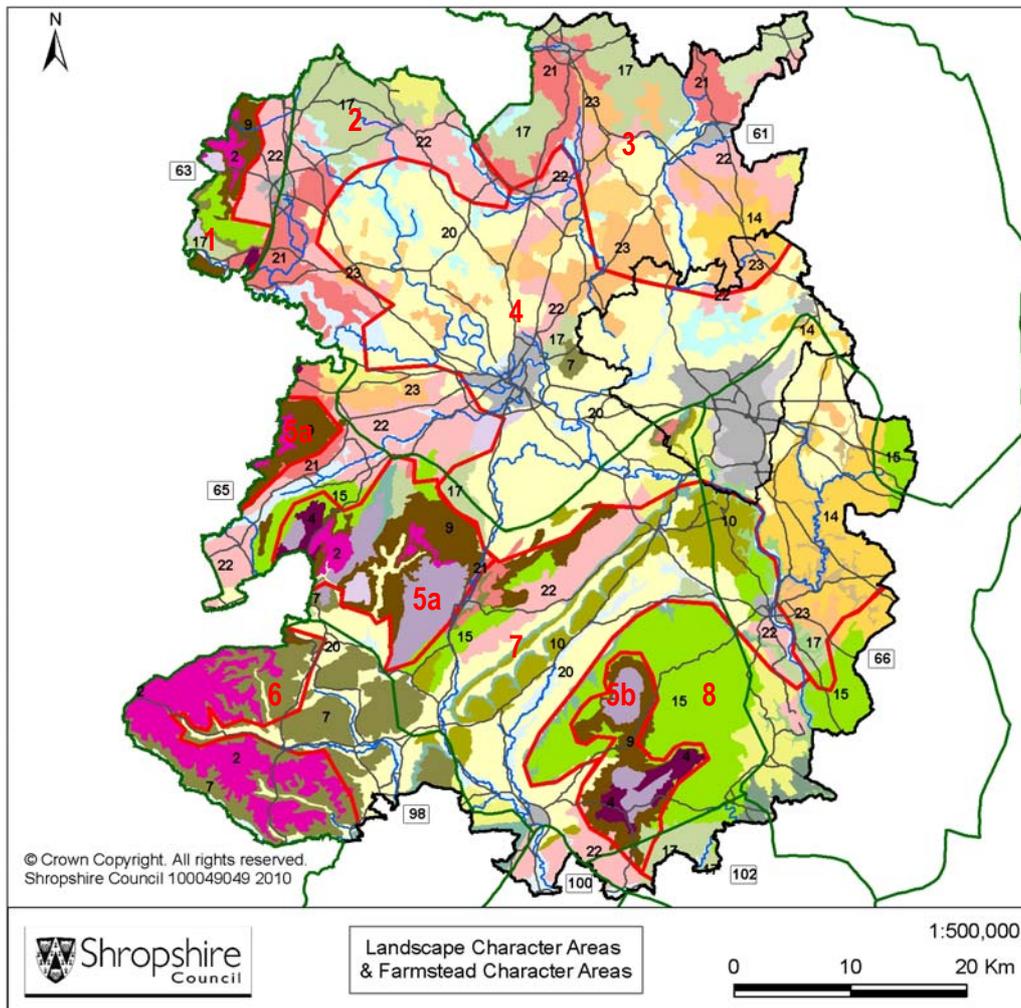


Figure 1: Landscape Character Areas (LCA) and the Farmstead Character Areas

LCA Code	LCA Type	No of Farmsteads	Km/Sq	Av Den Km/Sq
4	Upland Smallholdings	145	47.15	3.08
23	Enclosed Lowland Heaths	373	167.30	2.23
21	Settled Pastoral Farmlands	332	174.09	1.91
22	Principal Settled Farmlands	793	423.70	1.87
17	Principal Timbered Farmlands	483	262.61	1.84
9	Pasture Hills	431	235.87	1.83
20	Estate Farmlands	1383	888.96	1.56
7	Wooded Hills and Farmlands	306	202.73	1.51
15	Timbered Plateau Farmlands	616	423.41	1.45
10	Wooded Hills and Estatelands	132	96.26	1.37
14	Sandstone Estatelands	257	205.69	1.25
2	High Enclosed Plateau	137	155.43	0.88

1. Oswestry Uplands

Landscape and Settlement

- High density of dispersed very small hamlets and isolated farmsteads.
- Medium-scale enclosures to the Pasture Hills and Timbered Plateau Farmland, small-scale to the High Enclosed Plateau
- Cattle rearing, with extensive sheep grazing from the late 18th century

Farmstead Types

- Small to medium-scale farmsteads
- High Enclosed Plateau mainly dominated by small farms.

2. North Western Shropshire

Landscape and Settlement

- High density of dispersed small hamlets and isolated and clustered farmsteads intermixed with medium numbers of small to medium nucleated settlements, increasing in size to the north.
- Livestock and dairying within Principal Timbered Farmland to the north, where small to medium--scale irregular fields result from the enclosure of common and the clearance of woodland
- Mixed arable (cattle and corn), which developed within a landscape of piecemeal and planned enclosure.

Farmstead Types

- General pattern of medium-scale farms, with a weighting towards smaller farms in the north and larger farms to the south-west of Shrewsbury and along the Rea Valley.

3. North East Shropshire Plain

Landscape and Settlement

- High density of dispersed small hamlets and isolated and clustered farmsteads intermixed with a small numbers of large nucleated settlements.
- Landscape with a strong mixture of small to medium-scale enclosures comprising Enclosed Lowland Heath to south west; Principal Timbered Farmland, Settled Pastoral Farmland, Principal Settled Farmland to north east
- Mixed arable and sheep farming to south west; dairying and stock rearing to north east

Farmsteads

- Predominately small--scale farmsteads with medium--scale farms more dominant to the northeast. Limited numbers of large-scale farms within areas of larger enclosure.
- In heathland dense clusters of small farmsteads and smallholdings interspersed by medium to large farms.
- To north east high density of dispersed and isolated medium-size farms, with some large farms and low numbers of small farms and smallholdings.

4. South/Central Shropshire Plain & Sandstone Estates

Shropshire Plain Landscape and Settlement

- Medium density of dispersed small hamlets and isolated farmsteads, inter-mixed with large numbers of very small nucleated settlements
- Mixed arable (cattle and corn) developed within a landscape of piecemeal, reorganised piecemeal and planned enclosure, with pockets of small to large irregular fields on Estate Farmlands and Principal Settled Farmland, continuing down into the Ape and Corve Dale
- Parklands landscapes.

Farmstead Types

- Predominately large-scale farmsteads reflect the reorganisation and amalgamation in the 18th/19th centuries
- Smaller number medium--scale farmsteads increasing along boundary into the more mixed farm areas
- Limited small-scale farmsteads, most in clusters often associated with incremental encroachment onto common land and often associated with smallholdings.

Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau Landscape and Settlement

- Medium density of dispersed hamlets and isolated farmsteads intermixed with small numbers of large nucleated settlements.
- Arable based Sandstone Estates of large--scale planned and reorganised piecemeal enclosure intermixed with pockets of irregular fields.
- Parklands landscapes.
- Includes industrialised Eastern Coalfields, with small--scale dairy farming

Plateau Farmstead Types

- Predominantly large-scale farmsteads intermixed with fewer medium-scale farmsteads and very limited numbers of small-scale farmsteads in clusters
- Eastern Coalfields predominately large farms interspersed with high numbers of smallholdings, mostly absorbed into the post-1960s development of Telford.

5a. Shropshire Hills Western Uplands

Landscape and Settlement

- High density of dispersed small hamlets, isolated farms and chains or clusters of smallholdings and small farms.
- Small--scale regular and irregular fields on Pasture Hills and squatter encroachments (Upland Smallholdings) around unenclosed upland, with some small and large areas of planned enclosure.
- Small--scale subsistence farming with common grazing on moorland and small fields cropped for corn and hay.
- Supplementary income derived from industry.

Farmstead Types

- Predominantly small farmsteads and smallholdings
- Interspersed with small number of medium and large farms

5b. Cleve Hills

Landscape and Settlement

- High density of dispersed small hamlets, isolated farms and chains or clusters of smallholdings and small farms.
- Small--scale regular and irregular fields on Pasture Hills and squatter encroachments (Upland Smallholdings) around unenclosed upland, with some small and large areas of planned enclosure.
- Small--scale subsistence farming with common grazing on moorland and small fields cropped for corn and hay.
- Supplementary income derived from industry.

Farmstead Types

- Predominantly small farmsteads and smallholdings
- Small number of medium and large farms around the edge of the Cleve Hills Plateau

6. Clun Uplands

Landscape and Settlement

- Low density of isolated farmsteads with very small scatter of hamlets, increasing in density around the southern and eastern fringes.
- Small--scale and irregular enclosure on Wooded Hills and Farmland, with large regular enclosure on High Enclosed Plateau
- Predominantly sheep and cattle rearing, with crops mainly grown on a subsistence basis.
- Few smallholdings in area.

Farmstead Types

- Small farmsteads predominated, interspersed with medium farmstead on the slopes and upland fringe.
- Large farms predominately mainly on the High Enclosed Plateau

7. Central Shropshire Hills, Clun Lowlands & Northern Severn Gorge

Landscape and Settlement

Mixed densities of settlement with a mixture of small, medium and large farms across the area. There are broad distinctions between:

The Valleys and Valley Sides

- Village-based, and isolated farms associated with the enclosure of open fields in the valleys.
- Predominantly mixed arable (cattle and corn) on Estate Farmlands, Principal Settled Farmland of the valleys.
- Predominantly piecemeal enclosure and some regular enclosure with later boundary removal and reorganisation.

The Hills

- Increased densities of isolated farmsteads and hamlets with some villages.
- Mainly sheep and cattle rearing on the Pasture Hills and Wooded Hills of both the estates and other farmland.
- Smaller--scale fields enclosed from common fields intermixed with the clearance of woodland on the hills. Some later boundary removal and reorganisation is also apparent.
- Large blocks of woodland and common retained within a varied hilly topography.

Farmstead Types

- Large farms are concentrated around the valley bottoms
- Medium farms are spread across the area
- Small farms predominantly occur among the smaller enclosures of the hills and valley slopes with some set within settlements.
- Small pockets of smallholdings

8. Cleve Hills Plateau and South Severn Gorge

Landscape and Settlement

- Medium to high density of dispersed small hamlets and isolated farms.
- Dominance of Timbered Plateau Farmland and Wooded Estatelands reflect a pattern of predominately ancient piecemeal enclosure intermixed with small irregular fields, and small areas of late regular enclosure.
- Large blocks of woodland and common retained within a varied hilly topography.

- Small-scale farming focused on stock rearing and fattening, interspersed with some medium-scale arable-based farms
- Where the Clee Hills plateau blends into the Teme Valley, it is characterised by mixed farming, with fruit growing and hopyards

Farmstead Types

- Predominantly medium-scale farmsteads (regular courtyard U-shaped plans predominate) with a strong underpinning element of small farms and a limited number of large farms.

8.4 Research Questions

- Need to understand the variation, chronology and character of Shropshire's rural settlement patterns.
- Need to further understand the distribution, chronology and character of dated farmsteads, along with the enhancement of the dating evidence for the remaining farmsteads, with 71.4% dated to the 19th century due to lack of substantiating evidence.
- Need to further understand the relationship with farmsteads within their landscape context, in particular detailed analysis between the farmsteads results and the Shropshire HLC and LCA.
- Need to understand the potential for older buildings encased by later 18th and 19th century farmsteads; their date, distribution, character and their potential within different farmstead and landscape types.
- Need to develop further understanding of the social and economic factors affecting farmsteads, their present and future character, and their survival with Shropshire.
- Distribution of individual farms building within farmsteads: the different types, their dates and their distribution, from granaries to barns, and from cart sheds to sheds for cattle or sheep.
- Need to understand the patterns, variation, chronology and character of smallholdings which are a highly vulnerable element of the built environment.
- Further understanding of outfarms and field barns which are a highly vulnerable element of the built environment.