Shropshire Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project (5560 MAIN)
THE WEST MIDLANDS FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPES PROJECT

1.0 BACKGROUND

Farmsteads – and in particular traditional farm buildings of 19th century or earlier date - make a fundamental contribution to *local distinctiveness* and a *sense of place*, through their varied forms, use of materials and the way that they relate to the surrounding form and patterning of landscape and settlement. This is because their character has been shaped by their development as centres for the production of food from the surrounding farmland. Every part of England's farmed landscape has inherited its own distinct and recognisable characteristics, each resulting from a combination of physical and natural factors such as land form and geology, and historical processes such as how individuals and communities have worked and managed the land, in response to local and distant markets.

Funding from the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands, has enabled an evidence base for farmsteads in their landscape context – begun by English Heritage and its county partners in Shropshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire - to be completed across an entire region for the first time. The principal aims of the project are to:

1. understand and demonstrate how the inherited character of historic farmsteads – the way that present patterns express past development and change - contributes to local distinctiveness and landscape character;
2. identify the forces for present and future change, and how historic farmsteads are contributing to the changing structure of rural economies and communities;
3. inform strategic policy and guidance, and the preparation of local policy and guidance to promote sustainable rural development and communities;
4. develop place-making tools that enable users – at the earliest stages of considering change - to understand the constraints and opportunities offered by farmstead sites in their broader context.

This evidence base is needed because structural changes in the farming industry have hastened the wholesale redundancy of historic farm buildings and the decoupling of entire farmsteads from agricultural production. As a result there is a strong but locally varied demand for their conversion to other uses, particularly housing. This, and the development of planning policy and guidance that emphasises the importance of a positive and evidence-based approach to future change informed by a clear understanding of local needs and circumstances, heightens the need to:

1. develop an understanding of the potential for and sensitivity to change of farmsteads in order to inform and guide future change in the form of land management and planning policy and guidance;
2. help those considering adaptive reuse and new build to consider and, where relevant, capitalise upon the distinctive quality of traditional farmsteads and buildings;
3. consider historic farmsteads as part of the wider landscape and in the context of the changing structure of rural communities and economies.

Readers can now find a useful summary of work completed since then, by English Heritage in association with the former Countryside Agency and other key partners on English Heritage's HELM website - under Regeneration and Design, Living & Working Countryside (www.helm.org.uk/farmbuildings). This includes an audit of the effectiveness of policy at national and

local level, and the proportion of listed buildings that have been subjected to development pressure and change of use. New policy which states that future strategies and approaches towards re-use need to align an understanding of character with sensitivity to and potential for change, is supported by much larger *Preliminary Character Statements*, consultative documents which represent an initial attempt to understand the farmsteads of each region in their national and landscape context. Guidance on the adaptive reuse of farm buildings - *The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: a Guide to Good Practice* – seeks to promote high standards in design and implementation where conversion is considered as a viable and appropriate option.

New character-based tools, focused on the developing an understanding of local character in its broader context, and an assessment framework to inform change at a strategic and site-based scale, are now being developed in order to ensure that future change is informed by an understanding of farmstead character and local distinctiveness.

(See www.english-heritage.org.uk/characterisation for further details on the farmsteads mapping and other work).

Shropshire Council became a Unitary Authority in April 2009, and continued work on the West Midlands Farmstead and Landscape Project, initially started in 2008 under Shropshire County Council. The area covered by the project also includes the Unitary Authority of Telford and Wrekin. The Historic Environment Team undertaking the project is part of Development Services Directorate, responsible for a wide range of economic development and environment services. As part of Strategy and Development, the Historic Environment Team work alongside colleagues responsible for planning and economic development, working together to maintain and enhance Shropshire's environment, and natural and archaeological heritage.

In early 2010 the new Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5) was released, setting out the Government's planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment. This holistic approach identifies elements of the historic environment worthy of consideration in the planning process as 'heritage assets', based on their architectural, historic, artistic or archaeological interest. The document states that the Local Planning Authorities should ensure they have an appropriate evidence base for the historic environment and heritage assets, and within their Local Development Frameworks, set out a positive, proactive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, taking into account the variations in type and distribution of heritage asset, as well as the contribution made by the historic environment.

Within Shropshire at a local level there is an emerging plan known as a Local Development Framework (LDF), which is in the process of being prepared by the Planning Policy Team at Shropshire Council. The Shropshire wide LDF is effectively a collection of planning policy documents which consider a wide range of important planning issues such as housing, employment, retail, the environment, and transport. The LDF will play a crucial role in prioritising and shaping development in Shropshire over the next 20 years. The Planning Policy team are currently preparing the new Core Strategy for Shropshire, which will act as the lead document for the LDF. The evidence base provided by the Farmsteads Project will be used to inform the preparation of the Shropshire Core Strategy, which will ultimately set the clear long term vision, objectives and policies with which to guide future development across Shropshire. Within Shropshire's rural economy farm diversification has been identified as an expanding area of economic activity, with home based working gaining significant recognition, and the strategy aims to support this across areas in need of employment and economic

regeneration. Whilst promoting sustainable communities, the Core Strategy recognises the importance of maintaining local character and a high quality environment. The continued importance of farming and agriculture is also supported, ensuring that development proposals are appropriate in their scale and nature with the character and quality of their location. Both designated and non-designated historic buildings, sites and landscapes will be recognised for their importance to Shropshire's sense of place.

2.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPE PROJECT

2.1 Aims

The principal aims of the Farmsteads and Landscapes Project are:

- to develop an integrated understanding - for the first time across a government region - of farmstead character, survival and current use within their landscape and settlement context;
- to understand and demonstrate how farmsteads contribute to local distinctiveness and landscape character;
- to understand the present use and social/economic role of historic farmsteads;
- to inform strategic policy and guidance, and the drafting of local policy and guidance.

The project will build on the results of several years of research, which has highlighted the importance of three principal priorities to address:

- Understanding the present inherited patterns of farmstead character.
- Understanding the forces for present and future change.
- Developing place-making tools.

2.2 Objectives

Key objective 1: enhance county Historic Environment Records through the creation of GIS-based databases recording farmstead address and location, recorded date, historic farmstead type and degree of change, obtained from modern and historic Ordnance Survey maps and other data.

Key objective 2: analyse this data in combination with a range of address and business data to provide spatial patterning of farmstead use (agriculture, economic, residential) and how farmsteads contribute to the home-based and broader regional economy.

Key objective 3: analyse this data in combination with county-level and listed building data, and Historic Landscape Character mapping and character areas/types, to demonstrate how farmsteads contribute to local distinctiveness and landscape character.

Key objective 4: provide a region-wide overview and context for strategies and guidance on targeting resources, research and monitoring, conservation, restoration or enhancement.

Key objective 5: make available tools for use in developing local planning guidance and casework.

2.3 Products

The key products will be:

- *Farmsteads Mapping*, through the creation of a GIS data set which records the spatial patterning, form, date range and survival of historic farmsteads, capable of analysis against landscape-scale datasets such as Character Areas/Types and Historic Landscape Characterisation.
- *Mapping Current Use and Context,* through the provision of work in progress on developing the evidence base and data that reveals the current social and economic role of farmsteads.
- A *character framework* in the form of regional and character area guidance that enables users to understand farmsteads in their local-regional-national context.
- *Planning tools* based on an understanding of the potential for and sensitivity to change of farmsteads and their buildings, both at a strategic and a site-based level, and that enable local authorities to develop guidance.

2.4 Applications

These products will inform at a strategic scale:

- Strategic planning, within the framework of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the proposed transition to an Integrated Regional Strategy
- Strategic land management within the framework of the ERDP, Environmental Stewardship and AONB and National Park management plans
- Inform the Sustainable Communities agenda (for example with respect to the Welsh Marches Initiative and the growth-points agenda), specifically through:
  i. examination of the role that historic farmsteads can play in the long-term future of rural communities in landscapes of different types and with differing patterns of settlement;
  ii. their potential for live/work, and research at a national level on this little-understood aspect of economic activity in rural areas.
  iii. to provide baseline data to inform SEA/SA assessments of the potential impact of growth options and site allocations on landscape character in areas with a predominantly dispersed settlement pattern
- The identification of priority features and areas, for use in designation and the targeting of funds for the Higher Level Agri-Environment Schemes
- The provision of an evidence base and contextual information to inform Local Development Frameworks and Supplementary Planning Documents

At a local and site-based scale it will facilitate:

- Consistent and evidence-based tools for pre-application discussion and development control, including the preparation of Design and Access Statements, Heritage Statements, and listed building consent;
- Place-specific guidance, including Supplementary Planning Guidance;
- The work of local communities and groups – including Leader + and Local Strategic Partnerships;
- Land use management (Farm Environmental Plans and Whole Farm Plans).

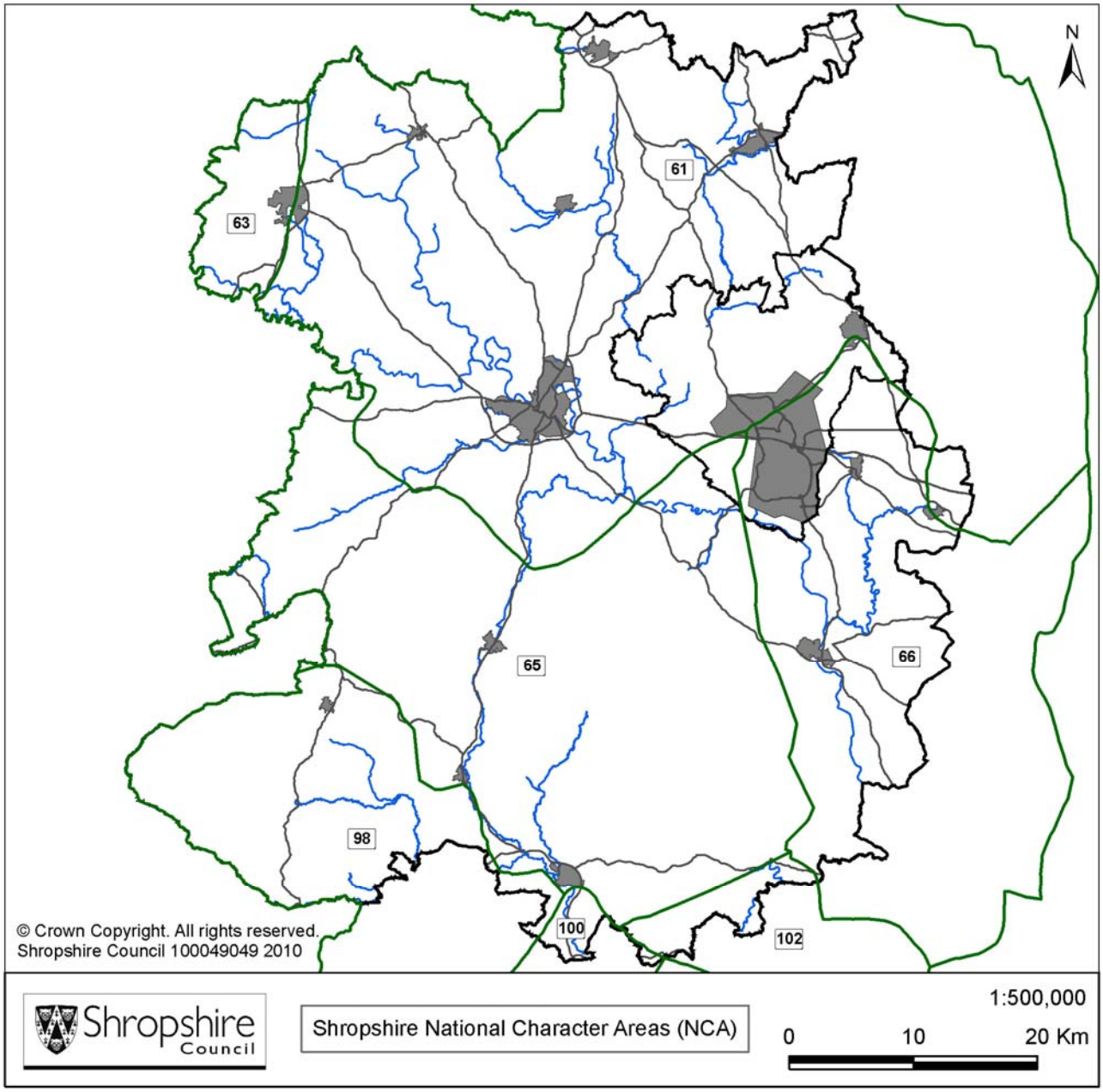

Figure 1: National Character Areas within Shropshire

NCA 61	Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain
NCA 63	Oswestry Uplands
NCA 65	Shropshire Hills
NCA 66	Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau
NCA 98	Clun and the North West Herefordshire Hills
NCA 100	Herefordshire Lowlands
NCA 102	Teme Valley

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introducing Characterisation

Characterisation, as developed since the 1990s, is designed to provide context for the detailed records of individual sites and designated highlights, and inform change, planning and conservation above the scale of individual sites. It has been applied to a wide diversity of outputs outside English Heritage: examples are the Natural Areas developed in order to inform strategies for the protection of wildlife and their habitats, the National Character Areas (www.countryside.gov.uk/lar/landscape) and the development of Landscape Character Assessment as a finer-grained framework for use by local authorities and others (www.landscapecharacter.org.uk).

The National Character Areas have been modified with the assistance of English Nature and English Heritage. These areas (159 in total) are concerned with identifying broad regional patterns of character in the landscape resulting from particular combinations of land cover, geology, soils, topography and settlement and enclosure patterns. They are being used as the framework for the delivery of advice, management and the targeting of resources for many aspects of the environment, most notably in the context of this report the targeting of grant aid under the Higher Level Stewardship Agri-Environment schemes.

Historic Characterisation seeks to interpret and understand the inherited character of all places, and the evidence for change and continuity in the present environment. It is based on the need to understand and help professionals and communities to manage the *present* environment as a product of past change and the raw material for future change. It always works at an area-scale, above that of individual sites and features (protected or not) It differs from research and survey, as undertaken in the historic environment sector, by its promotion of broad and generalised approaches to understanding the historic environment. The key method promoted by English Heritage and its county-based partners (www.englishheritage.org.uk/ characterisation) is Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC). This is 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 is based upon the identification and then analysis using GIS mapping of archaeological, historical and other environmental features (attributes) such as ancient woodland, building plots and enclosed farmland. These are then grouped into land parcels ('HLC polygons' within GIS) and used to identify distinct *character types*, and *historic character areas* which are each defined by a common and/or predominant character. The techniques of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping are then used to map change and time-depth in the landscape.

Throughout the West Midlands Region, English Heritage and its county-based partners are in the process of completing the GIS mapping of the inherited character of the present landscape: this process is known as Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC). Analysing the farmstead mapping data against HLC will deepen our understanding of the degree of change and its resultant character. The Shropshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project was undertaken by the former Shropshire County Council between 2001 and 2004 and the results provide an understanding of how the landscape of the county has changed and evolved over time. It provides a vital starting point for those seeking to manage the direction of future landscape change and has helped inform best practices in the management of the county's historic environment, including Environmental Stewardship schemes and Farm Environment Plans. The project produced over 30,000 records and 58 different Historic Landscape Character Types, which have been imported into the Shropshire HER and will eventually be integrated with other records.

Shropshire Council has also completed and published a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the county. The Landscape Character Assessment includes information about the six components that define landscape character with geology, landform and soils revealing the physical character, whilst settlement pattern, tree cover and land use inform us about the cultural dimensions of landscape. Landscape Character Assessment allows policy makers and landscape practitioners to ascertain the factors that give a locality its identity. This enables us to determine what conditions should be set for new development. In 2006 the former Shropshire County Council also combined the HLC with the Shropshire Landscape Character Assessment, resulting in the definition of a Shropshire Landscape Typology. The published reports for both the Shropshire HLC and LCA are available on the Shropshire Council website (www.shropshire.gov.uk/environment.nsf - follow links to Landscape)

3.2 Introducing Historic Farmsteads Characterisation

In 2004 English Heritage supported a pilot project in Hampshire Project, which aimed to examine methods of assessing and describing the relationships between the character of historic farmsteads and landscape character at a variety of levels from National Character Areas to individual farms. One element of the pilot project was the trial digitisation of farmsteads as point data using a Geographic Information System (GIS) within two pilot areas. The analysis of this method of data collection suggested that there was a correlation between farmsteads and landscape character areas, landscape types and historic landscape character areas. Subsequently, the mapping of farmsteads across the whole of Hampshire, West Sussex, East Sussex and the High Weald AONB was carried out (Edwards 2005-8). This work further demonstrated that the mapping of farmsteads could reveal relationships between farmsteads and landscape character (Lake and Edwards 2006 and 2007). The mapping focuses on historic farmsteads, i.e. those farmsteads that pre-date the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey mapping of the late 1890s as this is considered to be close to the end of the development of the traditional farmstead displaying vernacular forms and details and before the large-scale introduction of mass-produced sheds.

An important aspect of this project is the fact that all the partners are using a consistent methodology for mapping farmsteads so that the data can be combined to produce a regional picture of farmstead character (Lake and Edwards, 2009). A table showing the full set of attributes recorded is presented in Appendix I. Elements of this table are discussed further below.

The Shropshire Farmsteads and Landscape Project has been co-ordinated by Dr Andy Wigley, Historic Environment Countryside Advisor (HECA), with data collection undertaken by Andy Wigley and Charlotte Baxter, Historic Environment Records Assistant. The project was started in Spring 2008 and was undertaken on a periodic basis, alongside the continuing work of the Historic Environment Team. Data collection was completed for all farmsteads in winter 2009, however work on field barns, outfarm and smallholdings continues for a small remaining proportion of the county and will be integrated at a later date.

The data was collected using ESRI® ArcMap™ 9.2 GIS software, with an ArcView licence. The farmsteads data was collated in GIS point format, mapped against digitised raster maps of the 2nd addition, 1:2500 scale, and c.1900 OS maps. A range of other GIS datasets were also used to aid in identification, and enhance the information associated with each farmstead. This includes the following datasets:

- Raster data
    - 2nd addition, 1:2500/1:10,000, c1900 OS maps *(Landmark)*
    - Various modern maps, 1:50000, 1:10,000, 1:5000 *(Ordnance Survey)*
    - 1999 - 2007 Aerial photography *(Ordnance Survey)*
    - 1999 Aerial photography *(UK Perspectives)*
    - Foxall Tithe Award transcriptions *(Shropshire Council)*
    - Sites and Monuments Record scanned 1:10,000 maps *(Shropshire Council)*
- Vector data
    - Master Map modern digital mapping *(Ordnance Survey)*
    - Listed Buildings point data *(English Heritage)*
    - Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) point and polygon data *(Shropshire Council)*
    - Address point data *(Shropshire Council)*
    - Conversion point data *(Shropshire Council)*
    - LCA and HLC polygon data *(Shropshire Council)*
- *Websites*
    - *Bing Maps, formerly Microsoft Live Maps (www.bing.com)*
    - *Geograph (www.geograph.org.uk)*

3.3 Historic Farmstead Character Statements

One of the key products of the project is the development of Farmstead Character Statements relating to the parts of the National Character Areas (NCAs) within the county.

They will:

- Provide a summary statement which identifies the key characteristics of farmsteads within the NCA.
- Describe the key historic influences on the development of the area.
- Describe the settlement patterns (nucleated/dispersed) and key landscape characteristics including the date and type of enclosure, the presence of parkland, woodland or common.
- Identify the characteristic farmstead plan types of the area and the key building types. The area will be set within the national context with regard to the presence and time depth of listed buildings.
- Identify the building materials and details that are characteristic of the area. Traditional materials or building techniques that are becoming rare will also be identified.
- Set out the key drivers for change relating to historic farmsteads.

3.4 Historic Farmsteads Mapping

The creation of the point data set involved the following stages:

<u>Farmstead identification</u>

A *farmstead* is the homestead of a farm where the farmhouse and some or all of the working farm buildings are located, some farms having *field barns* or *outfarms* sited away from the main steading. Some areas have concentrations of *smallholdings* whose occupiers worked in local industries and other forms of employment.

The Shropshire Historic Environment Record (HER) includes a small number of farmsteads records previously recorded through survey work and literature.

- The 1981-1982 Farm Buildings Survey of north Shropshire identified 330 farmsteads associated with over 2100 farm buildings.
- The Shropshire HER includes an additional 37 farmsteads records, the majority collated from unpublished grey literature reports.
- 1729 individually listed farm buildings and farmhouses are also recorded on the Shropshire HER.
- The identification of farmsteads shown on the OS 2nd Edition 25" mapping dating from c.1900.
- Outfarm complexes or field barns were differentiated, where possible, from homestead complexes.
- Smallholdings were identified as individual points.

Farmstead Plan Form

Using the 2nd Edition OS map of c.1900 map as the data source plan form for each farmstead was recorded. Plan form was divided into the following principal plan types:

- Regular Courtyard
- Loose Courtyard
- Dispersed
- Linear
- L-plan (house attached)
- Parallel
- Row

These classifications were used to record the principal attribute of the plan. Secondary attributes were also recorded allowing, for example, the distinction between a U-plan regular courtyard and an E-plan regular courtyard. This approach follows a similar methodology to that taken by Wiliam in recording Welsh farmsteads (Wiliam 1982, 37). Other secondary attributes included, for example, where a loose courtyard plan was the principal plan form but there were some detached or dispersed building elements whilst some farmsteads clearly have two yards. The plan form attribute list is presented in Appendix 1. Also refer to 2008 'Historic Farmsteads; a manual for mapping' for further details on plan form.

In some farmsteads there are additional elements (beyond the primary ands secondary attributes) that also warrant recording, for example, covered yards or particular courtyard arrangements such as a regular L-plan within a multi-yard farmstead. Such additional features were recorded within a Tertiary Element field.

The position of the farmhouse in relation to the yard or whether it was attached to one of the working buildings was also recorded.

Farmstead Date

Dating information derived from a historic building point data set generated from the [NAME] Historic Environment Record (HER) was added where relevant. The date information was recorded by century except from pre-1600 buildings, which were recorded as 'MED'. Whilst some listed buildings have date ranges that appear to be more accurate, for example, 'early 18th century', in some areas many listed buildings will only be dated to a century. Additionally, the dating of agricultural buildings, particularly those earlier than the 19th century, is often imprecise. Farmsteads identified only from the

OS 2nd Edition 25" mapping were assigned a 19th century date which indicates a latest possible date of creation.

Farmstead Location
The location of the farmstead in relation to other settlement was recorded. This allows the opportunity to examine the distribution of, for example, farmsteads in villages, hamlets, loose farmstead groups and those that are in isolated positions and compare these distributions against other attributes and landscape character.

Farmstead Survival
By comparing the c.1895 OS maps and the modern OS Mastermap the degree of survival of the late 19th century farmstead plan was assessed.

Modern Sheds
The presence of modern sheds was also recorded, noting where sheds were either in the site of the historic farmstead or to the side. In either case, the presence of large sheds is a useful indicator that the farmstead may remain in agricultural use.

4.0 FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

4.1 Landscape and Settlement

The size and density in the landscape of farmsteads and their fields results from the type of farming – ranging from the largest corn-producing farms to the smallest dairying or stock rearing farms – and historical patterns of settlement and land use that can reach back into the medieval period and even earlier. In areas of nucleated settlement communities have worked the land from villages and most or all isolated farmsteads were established after the enclosure of open fields or common land. At the other extreme are areas of dispersed settlement of scattered dwellings and farmsteads with few or no villages. Other areas may have a mix of settlement patterns. As a result farmsteads can be found:

- Within or on the edge of villages
- Located in isolated clusters or in hamlets
- Isolated

The fields and the patterns of roads, tracks and woodland around farmsteads reflect centuries of change. The predominant pattern is piecemeal enclosure, where successive change has removed or retained patterns of land use extending into the medieval period and beyond. Regular planned enclosure, often with straight roads and planned woodland, is found in patches, and concentrated in areas affected by later 18th and 19th century improvement – on the uplands and in lowland heaths and mosses. Also found are areas of irregular, small-scale enclosure of woodland, much of which was complete by the 14th century.

For further information on landscape character in Shropshire and across the West Midlands, refer to the Regional Character Statements (http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.19598).

4.2 Farmsteads

A farmstead is the homestead of a farm where the farmhouse and some or all of the working farm buildings are located, some farms having field barns or outfarms sited away from the main steading. A farmer's income has historically been derived from working the land, although some small farms in particular combined farming with other occupations – see Smallholdings 4.4. The scale, range and

form of working buildings reflects their functional requirements for internal space, lighting and fittings. Some can be easy to identify because they are highly specialised in function (such as dovecotes, pigsties and threshing barns) whilst the functions of other buildings or ranges of buildings may be more difficult to unravel because they are multi-functional. They all display significant variation both over time and regionally, and are closely related to the overall plan of the farmstead and the way that it functioned and developed over time. Farmsteads and buildings developed to serve the following functions up to the 20th century, which all required:

- access to and the siting of the house and its garden;
- different types and size of building and open space, and different flows of movement within and around working buildings;
- access to routes and tracks;
- the subdivision and different use of spaces within and around the farmstead – cattle yards and areas for stacking corn, hay etc, gardens, orchards, ponds, small field enclosures for milking or sorting livestock.

Historic farmsteads all contain two or more of the following components:

Housing

- The farmhouse is either attached or detached from the working buildings. It may face into or away from the main yard, and will face into or be sited to one side of its garden.
- Separate cottages may be provided for farm workers.

Barns

- Barns are the dominant building on most farmsteads.
- A barn for storing and processing the harvested corn crop over the winter months was the basic requirement of most farms, and corn could also be stacked in yards adjacent to the barn. In all cases the grain was beaten (threshed) from the harvested corn crop on an open threshing floor. Grain was stored in the barn or more usually the farmhouse.
- Barns may also be multi-functional buildings that were sub-divided with partitions and floors to allow the housing of cattle as well as the corn crop and other produce.

Cattle Yards

- Straw was taken from the barn to cattle yards and stables to be used as bedding for livestock. The resulting manure was then forked into carts and returned to fertilise the surrounding farmland.
- Ancillary buildings developed within or around cattle yards, most commonly open-fronted shelter sheds and cow houses. Internal cattle yards typically face south and east to capture sun and light, the openings being concentrated on the yard sides of the buildings.

Yards and related buildings

- Other yards – especially those with more direct access to routes and tracks - were also used to store timber and often farm vehicles and implements.
- Smaller and ancillary buildings set away from the yard are common.
- Cartsheds, sometimes stables and other ancillary buildings can be placed facing towards routes and tracks.

The historic character of farmsteads has thus been shaped by their development as centres for the production of food from and the return of manure to the surrounding farmland. Buildings served to

house the farming family and any workers, store and process harvested crops and dairy products, and shelter livestock, carts and implements. Farmsteads required access to routes and tracks, and working buildings were placed in relationship to yards and other areas for stacking crops and managing livestock. Variations in farmstead form, scale and dates reflect agricultural and local traditions, landownership, farm size and a variety of historic functions. Houses faced towards or away from the yard, and may be attached or detached from the working buildings. Most traditional farmstead buildings date from the 19th century, survivals of earlier periods being increasingly rare. Over the 20th century – and especially since the 1950's – farmstead functions have been met in all areas by standardised sheds.

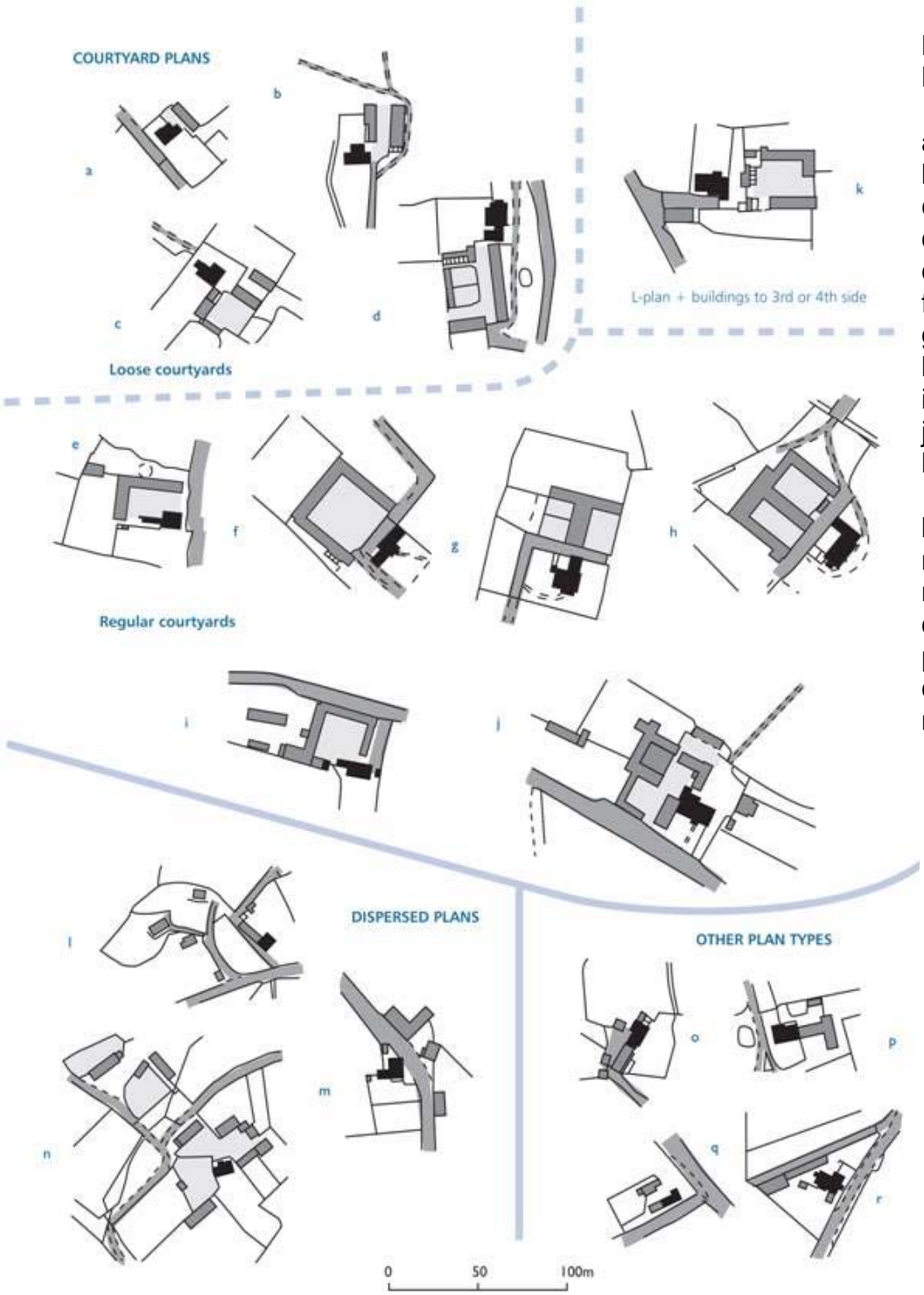

Figure 2:
Farmstead Plan Types

a Loose courtyard 1 side
b Loose courtyard 2 sides
c Loose courtyard 3 sides
d Loose courtyard 4 sides
e Regular Courtyard L-plan
f Regular Courtyard U-plan
g Regular Courtyard H-plan
h Regular Courtyard E-plan
i Full Regular Courtyard plan
j Regular Multi-yard plan
k Courtyard with L-range and buildings to other sides
l Dispersed Cluster plan
m Dispersed Driftway plan
n Dispersed Multi-yard plan
o Linear plan
p L-plan with house attached
q Parallel plan
r Row plan

The variety of farmstead plan types - the way the buildings of the farmstead are arranged within the group - reflects their past requirements for storing and processing crops, managing and housing livestock and easy access to routes and tracks. Farmsteads vary enormously in their scale and the extent to which – as a result of change over time – they incorporate elements of more than one plan type. The principal farmstead types are:

- **Linear** and **L-shaped plans** where the house and working buildings are attached and in-line, which are concentrated in the upland areas of northern and western England including of smallholdings whose occupiers were employed in local industries. These are consistently small-scale family farms, mostly of under 50 acres in size.
- **Row plans**, where the main range of working buildings are attached in-line and form a long row.
- **Dispersed plans**, where the buildings and yards are set within an open area with no clear focal yard. These display a wide range of scales, the key sub-categories being:
  Dispersed Cluster, which includes two or more clusters of buildings within the boundary of the site, which may face working yards.
  Dispersed Driftway, where buildings and yards are sited along a routeway.
  Dispersed Multi-Yard, where buildings relate to a number of yards that are usually irregularly arranged and detached from one another.
- **Loose Courtyard plans**, A farmstead where mostly detached buildings have developed in piecemeal fashion around one or more sides of an open cattle yard. They can range from small farmsteads with a single building on one side of the yard and the farmhouse to a yard defined by working buildings to all four sides. The farmsteads with buildings to 3 or 4 sides of the yard usually display more coherent (and sometimes quite regular) layouts. The yards served various purposes – general movement and access to the working buildings and sometimes the house, the storage and collection of their manure and sometimes other products such as timber. Some yards served purely as areas for cattle, and are bordered by barns (which supplied straw which was trodden into manure), enclosed and open-fronted cattle housing.
- **Regular Courtyard plans**, where the buildings are carefully planned as linked ranges, and are focused around one or more working yards. Farmsteads can be arranged as a full courtyard enclosing four sides of the yard, as L- or U-shaped arrangements or on the largest farms as multi-yard complexes including E-plan arrangements. Regular Courtyard plans often conform to national ideals in efficient farmstead design, as developed in farming literature from the later 18th century and promoted by land agents, engineers and architects by the mid 19th century.

4.3 Outfarms and Field Barns

Outfarms and field barns allowed certain functions normally carried out in the farmstead to be undertaken at locations remote from the main steading.

A field barn is a building set within the fields away from the main farmstead, typically in areas where farmsteads and fields were sited at a long distance from each other. Field barns could be:

- Shelters for sheep, typically with low doors and floor-to-ceiling heights.
- Shelters for cattle and their fodder (hay), with or without a yard.
- Threshing barns with yards.
- Combination barns with a threshing bay and storage for the crop, and housing for cattle.

An outfarm is a complex of buildings set within the fields away from the main farmstead, typically in areas where farmsteads and fields were sited at a long distance from each other. A cottage for a farm worker could also be sited nearby.

The plan form of outfarms and field barns followed that of farmsteads, having a primary attribute, for example, Loose Courtyard or Regular Courtyard, and a secondary attribute recording the form. Where a field barn stands within a field with no yard it was recorded as Single building.

4.4 Smallholdings

In contrast to farmers, who derived their primary income from the pursuit of agriculture, smallholders combined small-scale subsistence farming to supplement the income derived from other (usually industrial) activities such as woodland management, quarrying, coal or lead mining or metal working. Smallholders often relied upon access to common land and woodland and typically had little or no enclosed land.

Individual smallholdings may be difficult to identify with certainty from historic mapping, and their survival or loss recorded in broad terms. Smallholdings will often be identified by their location in areas of small fields close to areas of common land and dispersed small-scale industry, whereas cottages, which may be of a similar size, will usually be set on roadsides without a clear association with fields. Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) can also assist in the identification of smallholdings, as these distinctive landscapes are often identified as areas of squatter enclosure.

There is clearly a degree of overlap in these areas with sites that can be mapped as farmsteads, in particular the smallest farmsteads that can be identified as linear, loose courtyard (the smallest ones in this category with a building to only one side of a yard) and dispersed cluster plans. Their size and association with smallholdings may however imply a similar small-scale subsistence farming practice coupled with other activities.

Once identified, smallholdings have been individually mapped, noting their location and survival. It has also been possible to map key areas of smallholdings, with related summary text that describes their character and degree of observable change.

5.0 FARMSTEADS AND LANDSCAPES IN SHROPSHIRE

5.1 Source Material

Some – but by no means a majority - of the results of local recorders have been entered on the National Monuments Record's AMIE database and county-based Sites and Monuments Records (now known as Historic Environment Records) (Newman 2006, 209-10). The most comprehensive data set available is the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, which has grown since 1947 into an archive of nearly half a million entries, including 30,000 farmhouses and an equivalent number of detached farm buildings and ranges. The great bulk of these were subject to survey and revision during the Accelerated Resurvey of Listed Buildings that took place during the 1980s. Any analysis of the statutory lists must of course be subject to a long list of caveats, prime amongst these being the resourcing, date and reliability of survey, and whether or not the investigator was able to examine the interior of buildings and check for evidence of phasing (Gaskell and Owen 2005, 42-51). Subsequent research on individual buildings has shown that many list descriptions place too late a date on them, largely because evidence was missed (for instance, if an internal inspection was not made) or concealed. This is particularly the case in landscapes

characterised by isolated farmsteads and hamlets, which were far more time-consuming to survey than areas of nucleated settlement.

Landscape-scale studies of buildings have generally viewed them within the context of geology, topography and administrative boundaries rather than as part of deeply-rooted patterns of land use and settlement. Most vernacular building studies operate at the level of individual buildings, parishes or counties, and archaeological research agendas that deal with the post-medieval period are predominantly urban and industrial in tone (Newman 2005). In the case of farmsteads, we know far less *at a landscape scale* about the working than the domestic buildings, which recent research has revealed are subject to very different processes of change, and far more about the nature and processes of change affecting hedgerows, boundary walls and woodland (Gaskell and Owen 2005, 37-8, 85-9). Moreover, the results of recording are not systematically fed into county Historic Environment Records (the former Sites and Monuments Records), a situation made worse by the fact that there is little appreciation amongst owners and local authorities of the broader value of recording and archiving (Edwards 2001; Orr 2006; Gould 2005). The consequences are ill-informed approaches to managing change of the whole building stock and directing grant aid. Unless informed by broader contextual issues, moreover, buildings may require re-evaluation after fieldwork has been completed.

5.2 Landscape and Settlement

Geology and Topography

Shropshire naturally divides in two halves. To the south and west of the River Severn is a landscape of Palaeozoic hills and ridges separated by dales and the plateau of the River Clun. By contrast to the north and east, the hills give way to a gently rolling plain of drift deposits punctuated by the exposure of the underlying sandstones, which extends into mid-Staffordshire and Cheshire. In north-west Shropshire the plain runs up to the foot hills of the Berwyn Mountains formed by Ordovician and Carboniferous limestone and milestone grit, and transforms into a distinctly Welsh upland landscape. (Victoria County History IV 5-20)

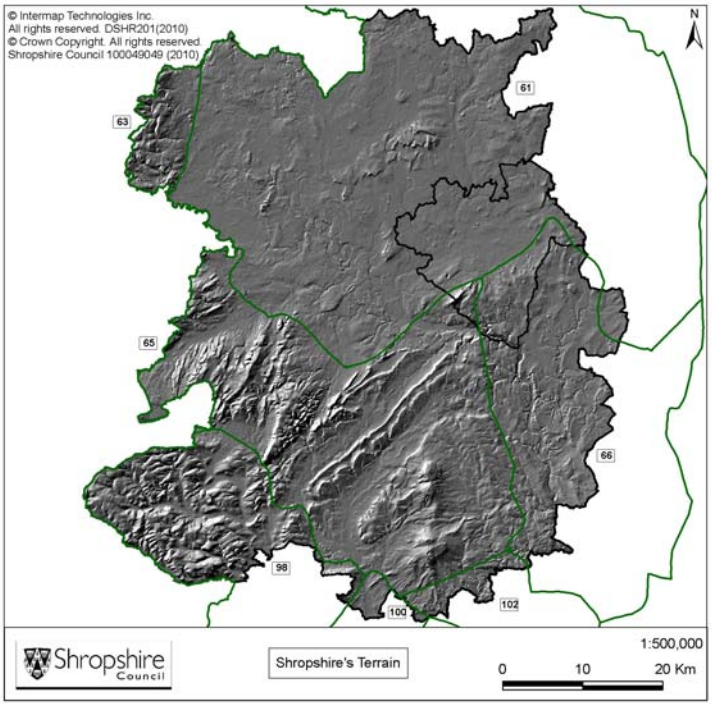

Figure 3: Shropshire Digital terrain model

Settlement

The historic county of Shropshire lies within Roberts and Wrathmell's Northern and Western Province where dispersed settlement is predominant. The county can be divided into several sub-regions on account of settlement pattern established by the mid-19th century.

Much of Shropshire is covered by the *Shropshire Hills and Severn Plain Sub-Province (WSHSP).* The Shropshire Plain is characterised by a medium to high dispersal of small hamlets and isolated farmsteads and dwellings, inter-mixed with large numbers of very small nucleated settlements. To the west in the Oswestry Uplands, settlement density becomes very low. Moated sites are found in limited numbers across much of the Shropshire Plain increasing in the north, but are largely absent around Oswestry. The north eastern extent of the Shropshire Plain falls within the *Cheshire Plain Sub-Province (WCHPL)*. Here the density of nucleated settlements is lower than in the rest of the Shropshire Plain, whilst the density of small dispersed hamlets and scattered farmsteads increases, along with the incidence of moated sites and 'green' names in common-edge locations, indicative of continuing woodland clearance and subsidiary settlement. The area is dominated by large numbers of hamlets surrounded by ancient enclosure of woodland and common. Small areas of open fields did exist with the majority enclosed by the mid 19th century. The south-east of the county is covered by the *Wye-Teme Sub Province (WWYTE)* and is characterised by low concentrations of nucleation, with high to very high levels of dispersal of small hamlets, isolated farmstead and dwellings set in intricate, anciently enclosed landscapes which still carry much timber. Where nucleated settlements do exist they tend to be fewer in number and larger than those of the Shropshire Plain and Shropshire Hills. There are also a considerable numbers of moated sites and earthwork castles. Across Shropshire, the largest settlements tend to be the market centres such as Oswestry, Whitchurch, Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Clun.

5.3 Historical Farming Development

Shropshire's population has been predominantly rural throughout history, based on a tradition of mixed husbandry. It has been widely accepted that arable farming based within the medieval open field system was undertaken on a limited basis within Shropshire. The Domesday survey revealed that only 22% of the county was under arable cultivation, compared to over 50% in much of the Midlands and East Anglia (Victoria County History IV, 48). Beyond the open fields extensive areas of woodland and open common were subject to small-scale irregular enclosure during the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries associated with the establishment of isolated farmsteads.

In the late 14th and 15th centuries there was a large-scale decline in arable cultivation, leading to the abandonment and shrinkage of settlements, the enclosure of the open field systems, and the amalgamation and growth of isolated holdings (Dyer 1991, pp. 84-5, 89-92). The majority of open fields were enclosed by the 17th century, and more importantly thousands of acres of surrounding woods, waste and common land were improved, forming the basis for the mainly pastoral economy (Victoria County History IV, 119). In the 18th and 19th centuries, rationalisation and reorganisation of the existing field pattern was undertaken in many parts of the county, with significant investments made in the drainage and enclosure of the peats and mosses, and later the less fertile and more easily tackled heathlands. During the rest of the 19th century enclosure was mainly confined to unenclosed upland.

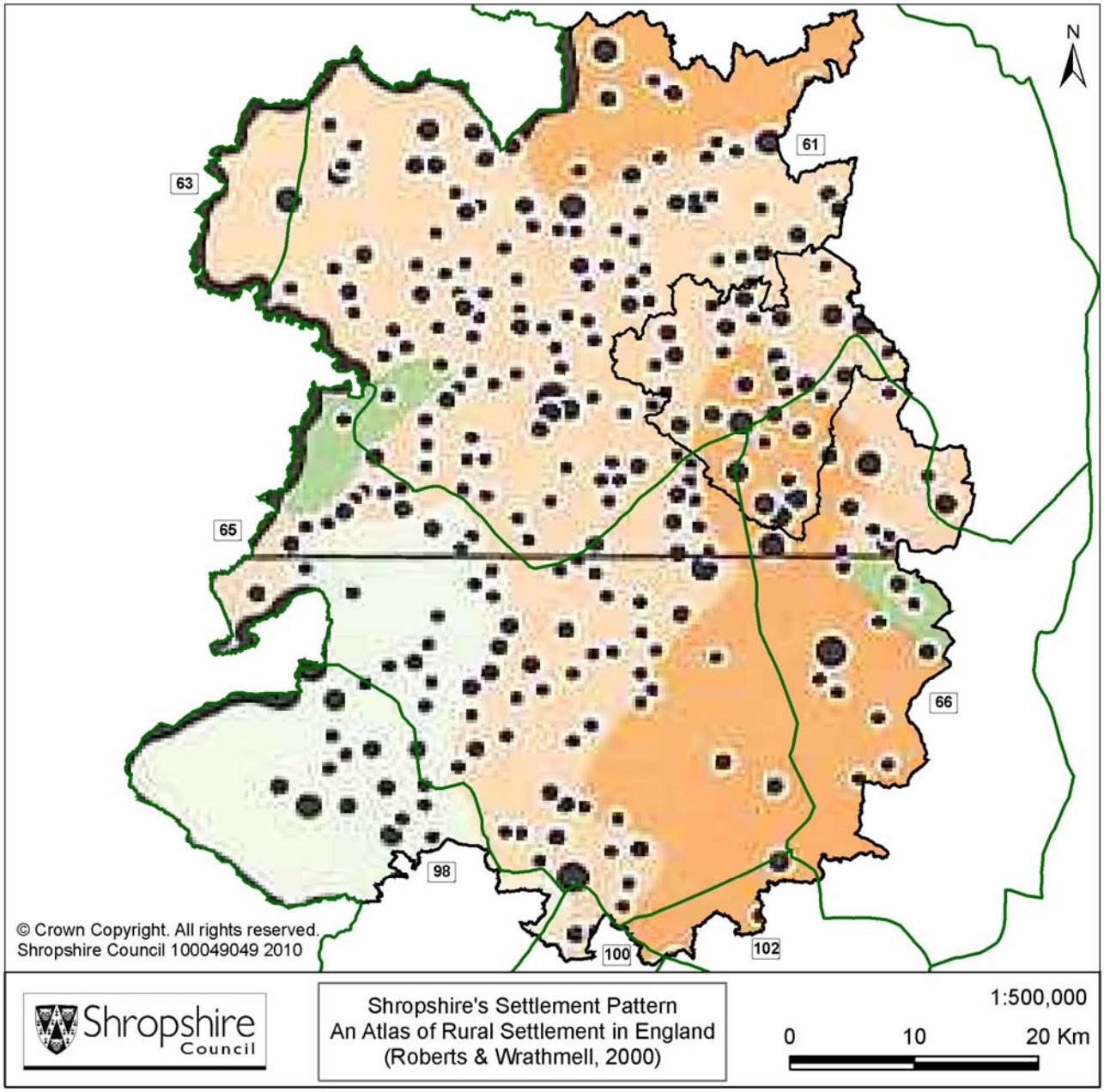

Figure 4: Shropshire Settlement pattern taken from An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England by Brian K Roberts & Stuart Wrathmell

The black circles relate to settlement nuclei, with the larger circles indicating the larger settlements and the greater degree of nucleation. Behind this the colours indicate the densities of dispersal, with the orange showing very high density of dispersal, the lighter orange indicating medium to high densities of dispersal, the green indicating medium densities of dispersal, light green low density.

So across the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau, for example, the number of villages and hamlets is limited, although a few large nucleated settlements do exist. The density of dispersal is however high indicating increased numbers of isolated farmsteads and cottages in the area, in comparison to the south of the Shropshire Plain where the density of isolated farms and cottages decrease slightly (i.e. there are greater distances between them), and where there is a greater numbers of small hamlets and villages.

The new evidence provided by the West Midlands Historic Farmsteads Project alongside the Shropshire HLC and LCA reveal a highly varied history and pattern of enclosure. For example, the extent of the open field systems identified by the HLC is extremely varied across the county with some areas having very extensive fields and others having very few, suggesting that the overall percentage of 22% masks the great importance that arable cultivation could have in some areas of the county (e.g. the Lower Tern valley and Corve Dale). Landscapes across Shropshire can vary enormously over very short distances, reflected by the varied mix of farmsteads and fieldscapes seen across the county.

5.4 National Character Areas

Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain (NCA 61)

This large cross-county area comprises an extensive, gently rolling pastoral plain interrupted by sandstone ridges. Within Shropshire, mixed arable-based husbandry was concentrated in the fertile vales and flood plains of the Shropshire Plain, with the growing of corn and the fattening of yard-based cattle concentrated in the Severn and Tern valleys with access to the grain markets of Shrewsbury. During the 16th and 17th centuries arable production increased on the Severn floodplain, including the growing of barley for malting (Victoria County History IV, 144-6). It is in these areas that large-scale multi-functional pre-1750 working buildings survive, sizeable enough to survive the reorganisation and improvements of the ensuing centuries. By the early 19th century, lowland areas were frequently subject to 4 or 5 course rotations using root crops (Victoria County History IV, 182-3). The period of high farming in the mid-19th century resulted in an enthusiasm for new buildings and a massive increase in cattle numbers and after 1875 arable farming was largely confined to the centre and east of Shropshire (Victoria County History IV, 237 & 241). Small but extensive areas of open fields existed leaving a predominant pattern of piecemeal enclosure, intermixed with later boundary removal and reorganisation in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Parklands and estate landscapes developed with regular fields and planned farms, the latter resulting from the activities of improving landlords such as the Leveson-Gowers (Dukes of Sutherland). For example, the extensive valley mire systems to the north of Telford (e.g. the Weald Moors) and east of Oswestry (e.g. Baggy /Tetchill Moor) were subject to successive phases of improvement from the late 16th century onwards, culminating in the large-scale drainage and enclosure in the late 18th – early 19th century, together with the construction of new steadings. Elsewhere, land was added to existing farms with new buildings being erected on these established sites. Gradually patches of former common land, including heathland on sandier soil and mosses, were subject to piecemeal enclosure by small-scale farmers and – especially in the late 18th and 19th century – regular planned enclosure by estates. Across much of this area estates were interspersed with individual holdings of all sizes. To the north, the generally wet but mild climate favoured grass above corn and so stock and dairying were always the major elements of farming: ploughed land was often given over to the supply of feed for cattle, and there is evidence for enclosure from the 14th century being linked to the emerging dairying industry (Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, p. 99). The dairying industry was important for smaller farms under severalty, but with the increased production of feed for the growing cattle population, larger dairy farms emerged in the 17th century, along with farm amalgamation and boundary loss.

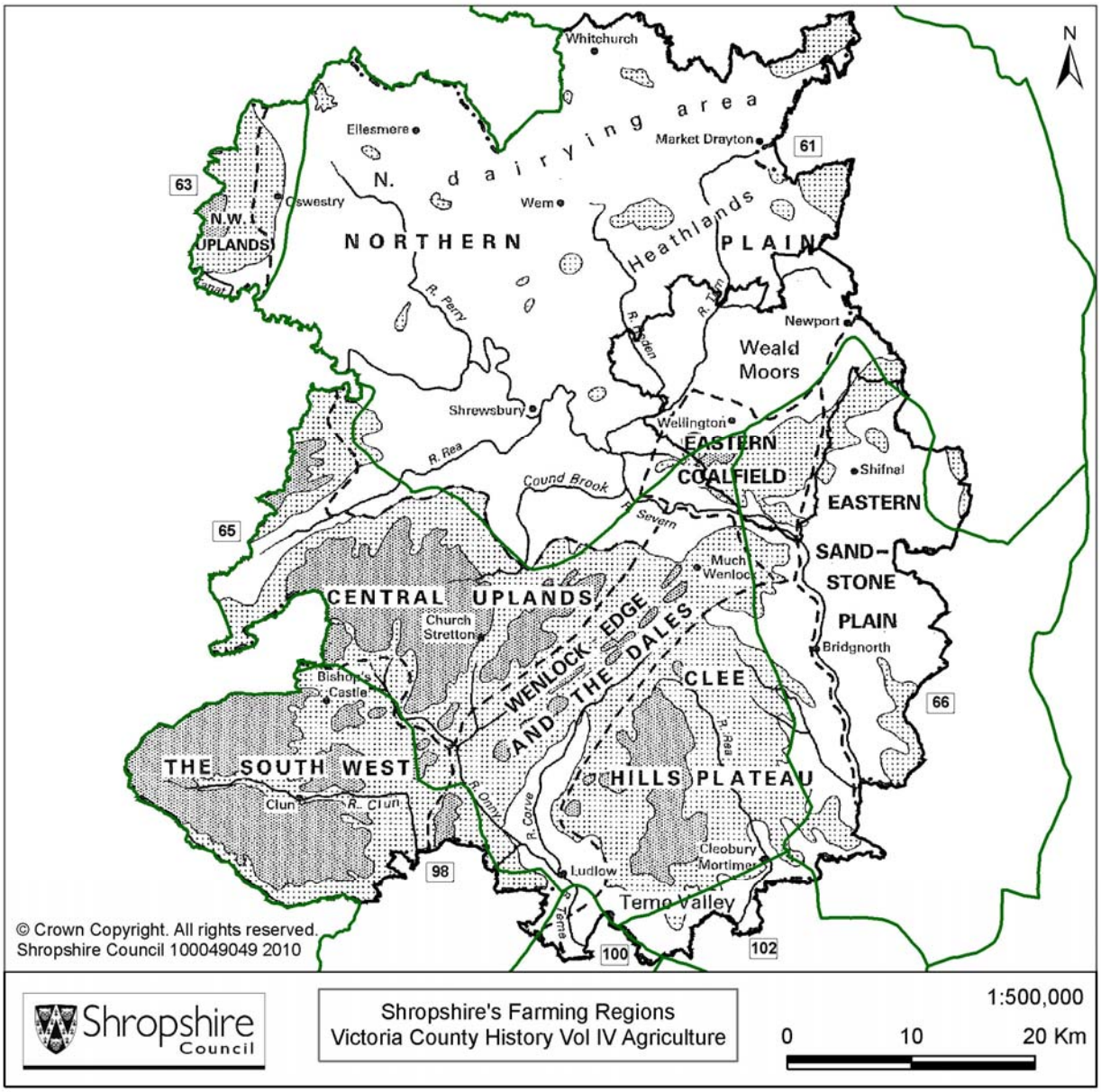

Figure 5: Shropshire Farming Regions taken from the Victoria History of Shropshire: Agriculture Vol IV

The landscape and farming regions broadly correspond to the National Character Areas, with the upland zones of the Oswestry Uplands and Shropshire Hills distinct from the gentle rolling hills of the Shropshire Plain and the plateau of the Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau. Sub regions within the NCAs are also apparent, for example the Clee Hills Plateau is distinctive from the Wenlock Edge and the dales, not only in landscape character but farmstead types as well.

The increasing supply of liquid milk to the urban areas was also linked to the development of the railway system from the mid 19th century, which accelerated the development of large dairy farms in the extreme north of Shropshire; the rest of Shropshire was not so accessible. Small areas of open fields existed with some very late survival, but the area is dominated by ancient enclosure of woodland and common. Fields were enlarged between the 17th and 20th centuries, as dairy farms grew in size, developing an overall framework of irregular enclosure inherited from the medieval period.

Oswestry Uplands (NCA 63)

This small area of steep-sided, flat-topped hills is bounded by the Shropshire Plain to the east and Wales to the west. The upland area has a high density, strongly dispersed pattern of settlement with a mixture of isolated farmsteads associated with ancient patterns of enclosure. This pattern was generally established by the 14th century with the isolated farmsteads and small hamlets, connected by deep and winding tracks. In the valleys of the uplands small irregular enclosure, generally of medieval date, still remains along with areas of the ancient woodland. These hill farms specialised in cattle rearing, with extensive sheep grazing from the late 18th century. Large-scale planned enclosure is found on the higher ground particularly on the Selattyn Hills associated with late 18th and 19th century farmsteads. In the uplands lead and copper were being mined during the Iron Age/Romano-British period and extensive quarrying of limestone and some lead mining commenced on a large-scale in 18th century in the south. As a result squatter settlements and concentrations of smallholdings developed in association with the mining and quarrying industries in the Treflach Hills. In the lowland area to the east, Oswestry forms the main settlement focus, with the growth of the market centre focussed around the Norman Castle in the medieval period. Extensive parks and designed landscapes, such as Brogyntyn, were clustered to the west of Oswestry, reflecting the increased estate influence in this area. The predominant pattern of piecemeal and ancient enclosure is intermixed with reorganised fields created through boundary removal. Arable-based mixed agriculture developed in this area, with larger farms developing away from the villages in association with reorganised piecemeal enclosure and reflecting the growth of farm holdings by the 19th century.

Shropshire Hills (NCA 65)

This area, which lies between the Welsh border to the west and the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau to the east, exhibits great diversity. A wide range of farm size and farmstead types are apparent across the area. Large farms are concentrated on the estate farmlands of the broad river valleys, principally the Corve Dale towards Morville, and the northern area which merges into the Shropshire Plain. Here settlement was village-based, and isolated farms mostly developed in association with the enclosure of open fields. Some isolated farmsteads relate to moated sites with 12th-14th century origins and others to shrunken medieval settlements. Parkland and designed landscapes were also established, some including fine 18th century houses such as Morville.

Cattle and corn farming predominated in the valleys, particularly the Ape Dale, the Rea Valley and the Corve Dale on the loamy soils and valley meadows. The Corve Dale was historically the richest in terms of arable cropping, with a particularly intense period during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars of 1793-1815 (Victoria County History IV, 7). The development of railways which focused on the markets at Ludlow and Craven Arms, boosted corn production and stock fattening in the lower Corve Dale and the Clee Hills: underdrainage also boosted corn production and stock fattening from the 1830s (Victoria County History IV, 9). On the higher ground, farms were historically smaller and their

number has been greatly reduced through amalgamation especially over the later 18th and 19th centuries. Fewer villages are found on the higher ground, with higher densities of isolated farmsteads and hamlets associated with smaller-scale fields; the result of generally pre-17th century enclosure of common fields intermixed with the clearance of woodland in the medieval period, and later boundary removal and reorganisation. Sheep and cattle rearing formed the mainstay of the hill farms into the 20th century, much of its rough moorland being enclosed and transformed into pasture from the late 18th century. To south-east on the Clee Hills Plateau, farming was mostly small to medium-scale and pastoral, along with some corn. Where the Clee Hills Plateau blends into the Teme Valley, it is characterised by mixed farming, with fruit growing and hopyards (Victoria County History IV, 7).

In parts of the Shropshire Hills rising population from 16th century was closely linked to the increase in lead and coal mining and quarrying, particularly around the Clee Hills and on the western flanks of the Stiperstones. Chains or clusters of smallholdings and small farms, with small-scale regular and irregular fields developed on the moorland fringe particularly around the Clee Hills and the Western Uplands. Encroachments onto the moorland provided common grazing, whilst the small fields were cropped for corn and mostly hay. Larger-scale planned enclosure of the moorland was undertaken during the 18th and 19th centuries, driven by estates intending to improve pasture for cattle and secure mineral rights. In these areas smallholdings and squatter's cottages could be found fringing and Sizable tracts of heathland and rough grassland on acid soils have persisted on the higher ground, most notably on the Stiperstones, Long Mynd and Clee Hills.

Clun and North West Herefordshire Hills (NCA 98)

This area lies within the counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire, and is bounded to the north and west by the Welsh border. The hilltops are sparsely populated, becoming more domesticated and settled on the hill sides and in the valleys. The predominant pattern is a mix of small-scale and irregular enclosures on the hill sides around farmsteads and hamlets and larger communal open fields around nucleated settlements in the lower valleys. In the hills sheep and cattle rearing formed the mainstay of agriculture into the 20th century, and where crops were grown on a subsistence basis only (Thirsk 1984, p.193; Whetham 1979, p.32). The settlement pattern here is predominantly formed of a low density isolated farmsteads and wayside cottages with a small scatter of hamlets, increasing in density around the southern and eastern fringes. On the higher ground regular enclosure of the 19th century was restricted to areas of open heath where, in some cases, small planned farmsteads were created. For example in the early 19th century 12,000 acres of Clun Forest was reclaimed (Plymley 1813, p.144). To the south west the large areas of planned enclosure date to the mid-late 19th century, where significant areas of heathland, rough pasture and blocks of ancient and later woodland still remain. In the lower valleys of the Clun Hills, planned late 11th-13th century settlements were often strategically sited at river crossings and ranged from planted boroughs such as Bishop's Castle and Clun to linear-plan villages. Low densities of isolated farmsteads are found in the valleys which are dominated by estate farmlands and village-based settlement. They are sited within landscapes of piecemeal and regular enclosure from open fields and common land.

Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau (NCA 66)

The area is an intensively farmed, rolling estate landscape, together with wooded landscapes in the Severn Gorge and Wyre Forest and the post-industrial landscapes of the eastern coalfields. The sandstone plateau has always been dominated by arable farming with the fine, dry, sandy soil suitable for growing rye and barley within medieval open fields (Hey 1984, p.156) surrounding the

mainly village-based settlements. Arable farming continued after widespread settlement desertion in the 14th/15th centuries, with isolated farms developing in association with the enclosure of the open fields and extensive commons. In the 16th and 17th centuries arable production increased, including the growing of corn and barley for malting (Victoria County History IV, 144-6). After 1875 arable farming was largely confined to the east and the centre of Shropshire (Victoria County History IV, 237 & 241). The development of larger-scale farms in this area is reflected in areas of large-scale planned and reorganised piecemeal enclosure, often intermixed with pockets of irregular fields reclaimed from woodland. The thin soils of the high ground were influenced by the activities of improving estates from the later 18th century, with some heath and common remaining amongst the predominant pattern of regular and large-scale enclosure. To the west of the Severn gorge the scale of farming was generally smaller than east of the Severn and focused on stock rearing and fattening, within a landscape that retained large blocks of woodland and common within a varied hilly topography.

The east Shropshire coalfield to the north-west is an industrialised area, where coal mining, iron working and other industries developed from the 17th century from an early medieval wood-pasture landscape. Here the development of smallholdings around commons and small-scale dairy farming was associated with a wide range of industrial activity that exploited the woodland for charcoal production. These have been mostly absorbed into the post-1960s development of Telford. Across the rest of the Mid-Severn Sandstone Plateau, industry had a different role to play. The area was well-suited to the export of produce along the River Severn, especially to the rising industrial populations in the Black Country and Birmingham.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Lowlands and Valleys

This area includes the Herefordshire Lowlands (NCA 100) and the Teme Valley (NCA 102) which both stretch into small areas of south Shropshire. The area has a complex landscape of mostly ancient enclosure with larger nucleated settlements, the extensive open field systems being largely enclosed by the 18th century. Extensive orchards grown for cider making developed from at least the 14th century, and together with the hop industry developed on an increasingly intensive scale from the late 17th century. Orchards and hops were typically planted on the valley floor and intermixed with arable, with mixed farming and pasture on the slopes.