

National Trust Guidance Note:

Whole Farm Plans and the Historic Environment

Guidelines for the inclusion of Archaeology, Vernacular Buildings and Historic Landscapes within Whole Farm Plans

Guidance notes are practical interpretations of National Trust policy.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this guidance note is to advise those undertaking Whole Farm Plans of the significance of the historic environment and its inclusion within the planning process. The historic environment is a term used to describe all historic and archaeological aspects of the existing landscape. This includes both buried and extant archaeological remains, historic and vernacular buildings, industrial features and historic parks and gardens. It also includes the historic landscape – field boundaries, historic woodland and other semi-natural habitats that have been developed and used by people in the past.
- 1.2 The primary point of contact for the historic environment is the **Archaeologist** (either the Regional Archaeologist or the relevant Archaeological Adviser for regions without archaeological staff – see Appendix). The Archaeologist is responsible for managing the existing historic environment resource and holds considerable knowledge of local farming landscapes. He or she should be able to advise on the historic environment potential of a property, even where a full archaeological assessment is yet to be undertaken. They can also advise on Government planning guidance, statutory constraints and other relevant designation. A farm visit should be undertaken with the Archaeologist at the outset of the Whole Farm Planning process.
- 1.3 It is widely recognised that management must be based on understanding. The Archaeologist will be able to advise on the extent to which a farm has been surveyed, whether all the information with which to make appropriate decisions is available, and whether further archaeological investigation might be required. The Archaeologist should be given the opportunity to comment on the draft Whole Farm Plan. This is to ensure that any specific issues not considered in the initial consultation can be included. It will also help the Archaeologist understand the perimeters of future farm management.

2 Farming the Historic Environment

- 2.1 Every farm is an historic environment – they are each the product of generations of farmers working on the land, influenced by geology, topography and climate on one hand, and by social, economic and political influences on the other. Everything in the landscape is therefore something historic – however, this does not mean it is all of equal significance. Some landscapes and features will be more significant than others, either because of their age or rarity, or because of their role in shaping the local character of the landscape. Their management and conservation has to be

based on an understanding of their significance through archaeological recording and analysis.

2.2 The historic environment is always vulnerable to damage and loss; the lack of awareness of the existence of archaeological sites can lead to their destruction, or the failure to understand the significance of a standing building and its setting can lead to the loss of its historic fabric and interest. Ill considered development can lead to the erosion of local character, and even seemingly small changes in land management, such as increasing stocking levels or changes in drainage, can have an impact. Cultivation can be particularly damaging to buried archaeological remains. The conservation of the historic environment should therefore be regarded as a vital component of sustainable countryside management.

2.3 Modern day farming can be as damaging to the historic environment as it is to wildlife and biodiversity, and therefore needs to be considered on an equal footing. Sustainable farming methods are probably more intrinsically sensitive to the historic environment. The impact of farming on the historic environment includes;

- **Arable** - Many important archaeological sites lie beneath the plough and are often only visible from the air. Whilst they have often been ploughed over the years, modern cultivation techniques, such as deep ploughing, sub-soiling and pan-busting disturb the soil to a greater depth, causing damage or loss of archaeological deposits. Soil erosion and drainage can also make buried remains more vulnerable to damage or loss. Eutrophication of soils from nitrates, phosphates or biocides may also have an impact on metallic objects brought up into the plough soil by cultivation.
- **Pasture** - Grazing is by far the best way to manage vegetation on archaeological sites; overgrazing can increase erosion, however, whilst undergrazing can encourage scrub invasion. It is also best to avoid placing feeding stations on archaeological remains.
- **Field boundaries** - Dry stone walls, hedges and field banks are a crucial element of the historic landscape. Many may be of considerable archaeological or historic significance. Their removal or lack of repair causes not only soil erosion and habitat loss, but also the degradation of the historic character of the landscape.
- **Historic Farm Buildings** – Historic buildings can be vulnerable from inappropriate repair, alteration and change of use. Finding appropriate uses for old buildings requires careful consideration to ensure the historic fabric is not damaged nor the character irreversibly altered.
- **Steading areas** – Due to a long history of use, steadings are likely to be the most archaeologically sensitive areas of the farm. This has particular relevance to the siting of new agricultural buildings and services, particularly in relation to older structures.
- **Water courses** – Many water courses reflect long-standing management of water resources and are often themselves of historic interest and part of the wider historic environment. Changes to their management – particularly their

banks and course of channels – may have implications for the historic character of the landscape.

- **Drainage and services** – Field drainage and services can have a negative impact on archaeological remains and their location should be carefully considered. Agricultural services such as slurry pits and cess pits also need to be sensitively located.
- **Tree planting & woodland management** – The disposition of trees in the landscape is part of the pattern of the historic landscape. New planting should be undertaken in the knowledge of the past development of the landscape. Planting trees and grubbing up roots can also cause damage to buried archaeological deposits.
- **Habitat enhancement** - Many habitats are in fact not natural in origin – ponds, for example, are largely man-made, and are therefore of archaeological interest. Others have become favoured by wildlife because their use has been abandoned by people, e.g. quarries or areas of woodland. Enhancement must consider the potential impact on archaeological remains and historic landscape patterns.
- **Access** – Many access routes found on a farm may have been in use for hundreds of years. The maintenance of traditional routeways or the creation of new ones will have implications for historic character of the local landscape.

3 Inclusion

3.1 Whole Farm Plans need to recognise the value of the whole historic environment. This means not just simply including a list of specimen sites, but regarding the physical fabric of the whole farm as being in some ways historic and of archaeological interest. A Whole Farm Plan should therefore include;

- Full understanding of all aspects of the historic environment, from buried archaeological remains to farm buildings and the wider historic landscape.
- Management regimes that minimise their impact on the historic environment, i.e. sustainable grazing and appropriate stock management, avoiding damaging cultivation practices, sensitive location of farm services and new farm buildings.
- Consideration of the local significance of groups of historic farm buildings and their historic fabric in farm building adaptation and diversification.
- Positive management recommendations, for example, the potential for taking fields out of cultivation to protect buried remains, or improved field boundary management.
- Identification of opportunities for grant aid, Countryside Stewardship, Tir Gofal and ESA payments, for the conservation of archaeological sites and the wider historic landscape.

4 Information

4.1 Every National Trust property has been – or will be – subject to an *Historic Landscape Survey* (otherwise known as an *Archaeological Property Survey*). These surveys trace the historic development of the landscape and its component features, highlighting recommendations for management. Information on individual features is held in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) database, available from the Archaeologist in paper or digital format. Most farm buildings will have been covered by the Vernacular Building Survey (VBS), records of which have also been integrated within the SMR. This provides a short history and written description of each building, together with historic documents, plans and photographs. Advice on farm buildings should be sought from the Archaeologist and the Historic Buildings Representative (HBR).

4.2 The following records held by the Archaeologist should be considered when drafting a Whole Farm Plan;

- National Trust Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- Historic Landscape Survey/Archaeological Property Survey
- Vernacular Building Survey
- Scheduled Monument designation
- Listed Building and Conservation Area designation
- Local Authority designations

5 Checklist

- Talk to your Archaeologist at the earliest given opportunity. Combine with a field visit.
- Consult the relevant survey material and archaeological records.
- Allow the Archaeologist to comment on draft Whole Farm Plan.