

A strategic approach to adaptive reuse

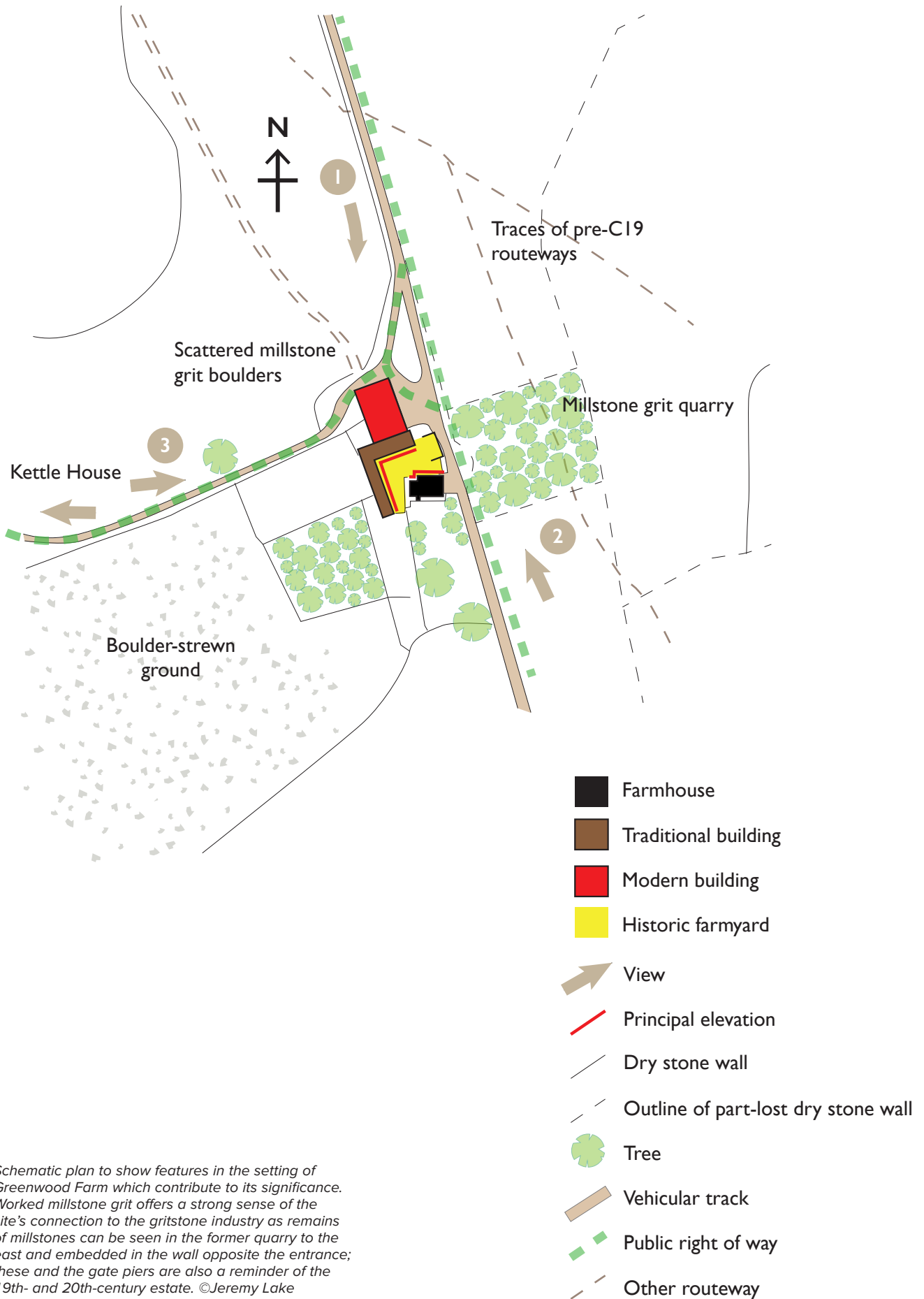
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View of the farmstead from the west, showing the fragments of the early 20th-century shelter shed which has been retained as part of the scheme, and the main L-plan range to the right of the image.
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In addition to preparing illustrated and written records to different levels of specification, accredited buildings archaeologists are also well-placed to deliver high-level and strategic assessments of buildings in their landscape and historic context. In this instance, the National Trust has commissioned a rapid assessment of the historic character, significance and potential for change of its traditional farm buildings in the Peak District to inform options for adaptive reuse following Historic England's advice on this.

The first step, held at a workshop attended by the National Trust and the Peak District National Park Authority, was to identify any key issues and establish common ground including the criteria for assessing significance. There followed a rapid analysis of each site in its landscape setting and to then consider their significance in the context of the whole National Park. The staged approach for assessment follows that set out in *Peak District National Park Farmsteads Assessment Framework* and its accompanying guidance (www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/looking-after/living-and-working/farmers-land-managers/historic-farmsteads-guidance). A high-level approach conducted by an accredited archaeologist was essential in this respect, as it ensured that the different phases of construction could be correctly identified and related to the historic character presented by the patterns of fieldscapes and other heritage assets in the landscapes around them. A second workshop then considered the results of this assessment, the capacity and potential for change of each site and the issues to inform the options for design.



Schematic plan to show features in the setting of Greenwood Farm which contribute to its significance. Worked millstone grit offers a strong sense of the site's connection to the gritstone industry as remains of millstones can be seen in the former quarry to the east and embedded in the wall opposite the entrance; these and the gate piers are also a reminder of the 19th- and 20th-century estate. ©Jeremy Lake



Exterior view
©Jeremy Lake

It is possible to report on one site, due for completion later this year, which was granted planning permission and listed building consent. Greenwood Farm comprises a farmhouse (listed Grade II) dating from the mid-18th-century and an L-shaped combination barn, stables and cattle housing of mid-19th-century date with fragments of earlier fabric. This type of formal courtyard layout comprises 6 per cent of recorded farmsteads in the National Park, regular courtyard farmsteads being most commonly found on estates that were investing in improved agriculture in the 19th-century. This formal layout is echoed in the straight-sided and survey-planned enclosures along the fringes of the moorland and in the routeway, straightened as an estate drive, that continues south past the site; this offers a striking contrast to the looser layouts with 17th-century and earlier recorded buildings set in more ancient landscapes that are characteristic of this part of the Dark Peak and the valley slopes of the Derwent Valley. Similarly the house, which faces away from the group into its own garden, illustrates changing standards of living from a vernacular tradition into more classical-influenced symmetry that reflects the history of the estate and the aspirations of its farming tenants. The land to the east and north of the site is scattered with evidence for the quarrying and manufacture of millstone grit, an industry which often developed in combination with farming; although any historic association between Greenwood Farm and local industry has not yet been proven. There are tentative references to the use of the stables for transporting products to the local railway station.

Understanding the constraints and opportunities offered by the historic buildings has been a critical factor in informing the design and consideration of the site in its context, including the substantial rebuilding of a partially-extant early 20th-century shelter which had been absorbed into modern sheds but commands wonderful views over the Derwent Valley; this has taken pressure off the historic barn space and use of the enabled access around the northern side of the buildings to this part of the site. The assessment of this site and across the Peak District has also highlighted significant opportunities, with reference to the National Park's 'Landscape First' approach and the Statements of Environmental Opportunity for the Dark Peak and other National Character Areas, to realise opportunities for the enhancement of the landscape and habitats around the site, and to interpret Greenwood Farm and its historic landscape context for the benefit of visitors to the property and those using the Public Rights of Way.

The advantage of this approach is that, in delivering a rapid and high-level understanding of sites on a whole estate or across a wide area, it offers a framework for the more detailed consideration of these issues when putting together more detailed plans for planning permission or listed building consent. Besides being far more cost-effective than a piecemeal and 'site-by-site' approach it meets a key concern for the PDNPA, which gives greater weight to the development of Whole Estate Plans which enable proposals to be seen within the context of a whole estate rather than on a 'one-off' basis. This rapid assessment can then be used to prepare Farmstead Assessments, Statements of Significance and Design and Access Statements for sites that are then being put forward for changes of use that require planning permission and listed building consent.