

HIGH WYCOMBE CONSERVATION AREA

Bassetsbury

Area Study 8

This document forms part of a larger conservation appraisal for High Wycombe and should be read in conjunction with the master document which gives development control guidelines.

1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

Bassetsbury is on the north east side of The Rye sub area, to the south of the London Road. The boundaries of this sub area enclose Bassetsbury Manor and bowling green to the west, Bassetsbury Mill to the north and east and the Tythe Barn and tennis courts to the south. None of the later development from the 1920's along Bassetsbury Lane is included.

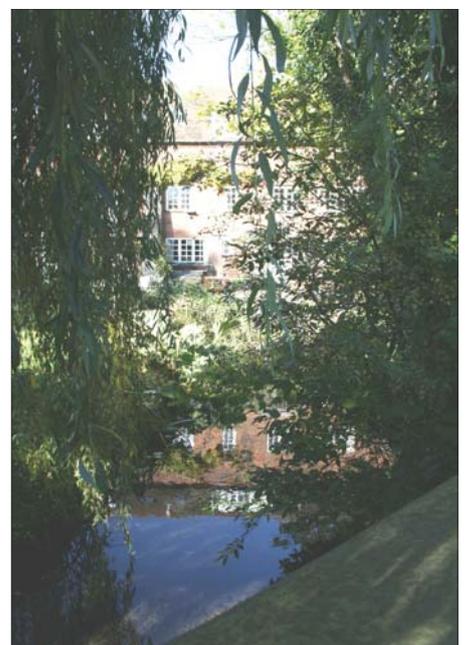
Location and population

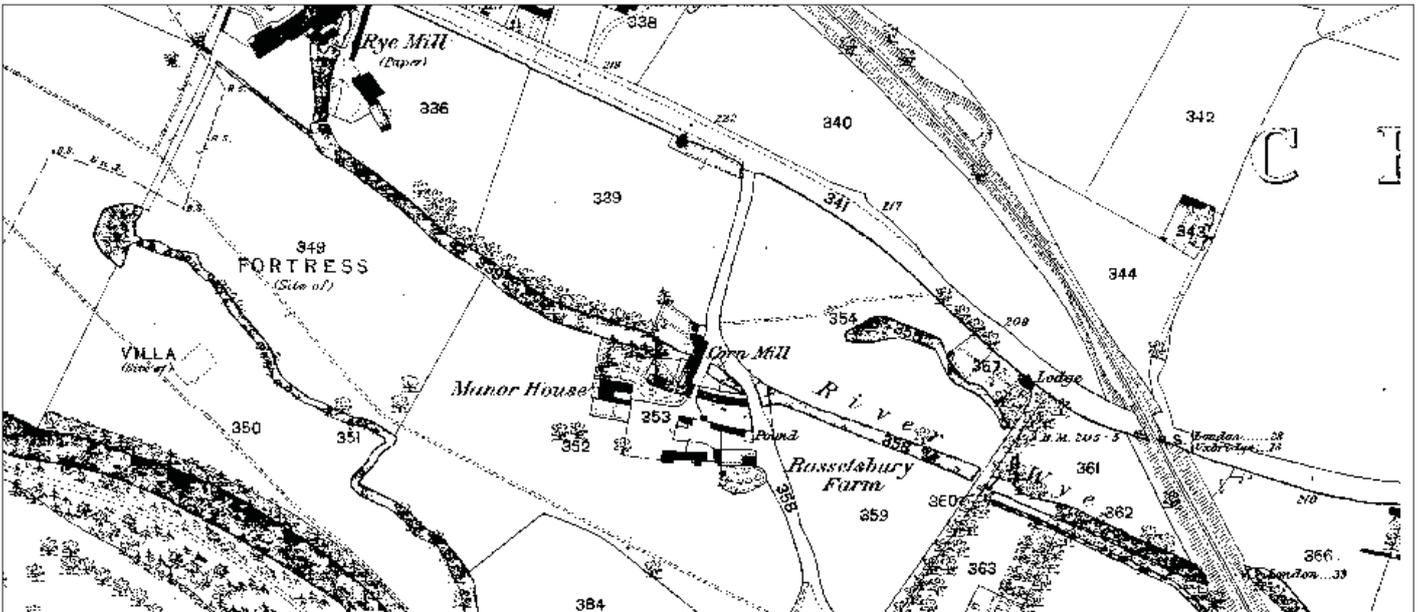
This sub-area of the High Wycombe Conservation Area lies well outside the old town boundaries, which lie approximately 830 metres to the north west, on the line of the River Wye as it flows towards the Thames. The river was key to the development of the area as it powered the mills at both Bassetsbury and Marsh Green. The area is now part of the larger, Victorian and later expansion of town that has developed since the 19th century.

General character, plan form and landscape context

The Bassetsbury sub-area encompasses a mainly flat area to the east of The Rye, which has a slight incline to the north towards the main London Road (A40). The incline was used to help generate the necessary flow of water for the mill which is close by the Manor House. The only other historic building within the sub-area is the Tythe Barn that belonged to the home farm that was also on the site. Due to the sub-area comprising of only these three historic buildings there is no plan form, unlike most other parts of the conservation area.

The River Wye runs through this valley bottom grouping, with the land rising gently to the north, towards the London Road and across The Rye open space towards the wooded hillside to the south.





2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Origins and historic development

The Manor of Bassets Bury was granted originally to Alan Basset in 1203, when it appears to have been divided from Wycombe itself. The settlement originally consisted of the Manor House, the mill and a farm. The only remaining evidence of the farm is the Tythe Barn. The immediate area changed little until the 20th century when the Manor was restored and altered, having fallen derelict, adding an extension to the south together with a portico. This was carried out by Fred Skull who was the eldest son of Charles Edwin Skull, a local furniture manufacturer. Fred Skull left the family firm to follow his interest in antiques, becoming a well known antique dealer in the area. The mill continued, first possibly as a fulling mill, then, until the 1930's, grinding corn. The mill was then acquired by Fred Skull who turned it into an antiques warehouse and restoration workshop. The mill and the barn have since been redeveloped, the mill into residential in the early 1960's and the barn into commercial use.

When the Skulls died the Manor was offered to the local council who bought it and have since turned it into a conference and wedding centre. It has recently been put on the open market and its future use is uncertain at the time of writing.

Archaeology

The area is of obvious archaeological interest, and conditions requiring recording may be imposed on any consents granted in the area.

Historic maps

1895 OS, 1883 OS

3 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The character and inter-relationship of spaces within the area

The Manor is set in its own small open space consisting of a bowling green, tennis court and lawns; it was until recently used for functions and conferences. Historically, however, the curtilages were smaller; the bowling green has been acquired from The Rye in more recent years.



Bassetsbury Manor in 1925 prior to its extension.



The interior of Bassetsbury Manor when owned by Fred Skull.



A view of Bassetsbury Mill in 1895.

All historic photographs courtesy of SWOP, Bucks County Council and the Bucks Free Press

Beyond the Manor's own grounds is The Rye, a large park that includes an open air swimming pool, boating pond and children's playground. The Rye was once the common for the townsfolk and their cattle, it has continued to be an important green space close to the town centre. To the north of the Bassetsbury sub-area is the cricket club which provides another open space, this, however, is screened from the Manor by a line of trees neatly delineating the edge of the conservation area. All the buildings within this wedge shaped sub-area of the wider conservation area have a relationship with the river which has always been their reason for having been placed in this setting.



The mill buildings as they are today, converted into houses.

The line of 20th century houses on both sides of Bassetsbury Lane are not within the conservation area and bear very little visual relationship to the Manor and mill.

Important views and vistas

The key view of the area is from The Rye towards the Manor. The trees and housing obscure the view of the buildings within this sub-area from Bassetsbury Lane. There are also views from the Manor across The Rye towards the forested hillside of Keep Hill Woods. There is also a glimpse of the listed buildings from the direction of London Road where the road deviates around the mill buildings.



A view of the Manor from The Rye.

4 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

Activity and landuse

This area has always been a rural setting containing a farm and a mill as well as the Manor, although in the last century residential development has spread along Bassetsbury Lane giving the area a more suburban feel. The proximity of The Rye helps to maintain the character of the area and the open, relaxed environment making it an attractive part of the town to live.



The view from Bassetsbury Manor towards Keep Hill Woods.

Architectural and historical quality of buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area

Although the Manor was created in the 13th century, Bassetsbury Manor House itself dates from the 16th century and is Grade II*. It is a timber framed house, later clad in brick. It was extensively altered in the 1930's, having an extension added to the south and various architectural items such as a circular Queen Anne window and lead figures brought from other buildings around the district.

Bassetsbury Mill was converted to residential use as three houses in the early 1960's. They are now Grade II listed buildings along with Bassetsbury Mill Cottage which is attached to the mill.



The view from London Road towards the mill buildings.

The other listed building in this sub-area is the Tythe Barn which is

Grade II, previously used as an antiques workshop and now in use for business and worship.

Key unlisted buildings

There are only two other buildings in the sub-area grouping: Bassetsbury Barn and garages; both buildings previously formed part of the farm that used to be on the site and are still historically significant.

Local details

The local details are encapsulated in the unusual architectural features that Fred Skull added to Bassetsbury Manor during his ownership in the 1930's. The wooden loggia added to the south end, the carved wooden reliefs to the first floor level on the south, the round window also on the south elevation are all worthy of note although not indicative or architecturally typical of the area.

Prevalent and traditional building materials

The buildings in this sub-area are predominantly brick, both the Manor and the mill are brick built, however, it is possible that the Manor encases parts of an older, timber framed building. The Tythe Barn, being an agricultural building, is weatherboarded with a tiled roof.

Contribution made by the natural environment

The natural environment is a dominant feature of this area. The river is the reason the mill, farm and Manor were located here and it still makes a valuable contribution to the character. The proximity of The Rye and the green areas of the cricket ground and what used to be the Marsh Green watercress beds all contribute to the pleasant rural feel of the surroundings.

The extent of loss, problems and pressures

The high percentage of listed buildings within a very small area has limited the pressures upon character. However there remains uncertainty about the use of The Manor, and in particular alterations to its curtilage use will need to be carefully controlled so as to retain the building's setting.



The mill wheel preserved at the rear of the building.



Bassetsbury Barn and Tythe Barn garages.



The wooden loggia on the south side of Bassetsbury Manor.

A view of the rear of the mill buildings.



Bassetsbury and Marsh Green

Areas 8 and 9 Study Appraisal



KEY



- Listed Buildings
- Buildings of interest/ designed or civic buildings
- Local List
- Green Space
- River
- Railings
- Views
- Sub area Boundary
- Trees and tree groups
- Hedges
- Conservation Area boundary

