



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

Marsh Green is set at the end of The Rye to the extreme east of the High Wycombe town centre conservation area. It continues to the east as far as the disused railway that used to run to Bourne End which closed in 1970. This conservation area was originally designated in 1970, although there have been several amendments since then.

Location and population

Like Bassetsbury, this is a small area with a population of a dozen or so households. This location has always been a rural setting and has not been enveloped within the urban sprawl of High Wycombe, although residential development has edged closer from the south and along Bowden Lane.

General character, plan form and landscape context

This group of buildings lies within a rural setting nestled in the valley bottom. There is an incline to the north that slopes up towards the main A40 road which is approximately 200 m away. The group of vernacular buildings has no defined plan form unlike the more urban areas of the High Wycombe conservation area. Its layout has been dictated by the wetland to the east and north and the curving roadway winding past the buildings.

The watercourse through this settlement is the Back Stream which meets up with the Wye at the Happy Union public house at Loudwater. The Back Stream allowed the building of Marsh Green Mill in the 1740's on the reasonably flat section of land at this point. The land



to the north and east of No. 41 used to be watercress beds and is still marshy; it has been turned into a nature reserve to maintain its distinctive character. The slope is much steeper to the south up towards Deangarden Woods, the densely wooded hillside that dominates the view in this direction.

2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Origins and historic development

The mill appears to have been the first building on the site with the land leased from the Earls of Shelburne. The mill seems to have been first used by William Dell in 1742; although a dwelling house was not noted until 1789 and could be what is now Old Mill Cottage. Marsh Cottage, previously called Cobbles, may have been mill offices and Mill Barn was obviously the storage building for the mill originally.

The Marsh Green Mill was attacked in 1830 as part of the uprising against the increasing mechanisation of the mills which was putting the manual workers out of jobs. The armed men wrecked all the machinery not only at Marsh Green but many other mills in the area. The rioters were taken to court after causing £12,000 damage all around the district. Some were transported to Australia and two were sentenced to death. These two, John Sarney and Thomas Blizzard, had their sentences commuted to transportation for life. John Sarney returned to his family after 3 years on board a prison ship following a petition signed by the owner of the mill but Thomas Blizzard set sail for Australia and was never heard of again.

In 1911 Lord Carrington let Marsh Green Cottage to Sydney Mitford, wife of the Honourable David Mitford who was later to become Lord Redesdale. It was subsequently sold to Baroness Redesdale in 1925 along with the water mill, stable loft, other buildings and orchard for £1750. The mill was then rented by George Mason in 1931 until its closure in 1946.

The Mitfords and their children; Nancy, Pamela, Tom, Diana, Unity, Jessica and Deborah came to stay at Old Mill Cottage for holidays and weekends in the country from 1911 to 1949. It was to this cottage that Unity was brought back after she attempted suicide in 1939. Unity spent the war years either in High Wycombe or at Mill Cottage in Swinbrook; she died in May 1948. Ten months later Lady Redesdale sold Old Mill Cottage.

In 1954 these buildings were listed Grade II, acknowledging 200 years of milling history and in May 2008 a plaque was placed at Old Mill Cottage commemorating the Mitford's time at the house. Full details of the Mitford's tenure can be found in David Snoxells article for the High Wycombe Society.



View over Back Stream towards Keep Hill.



Marsh Green House viewed from mill pond.

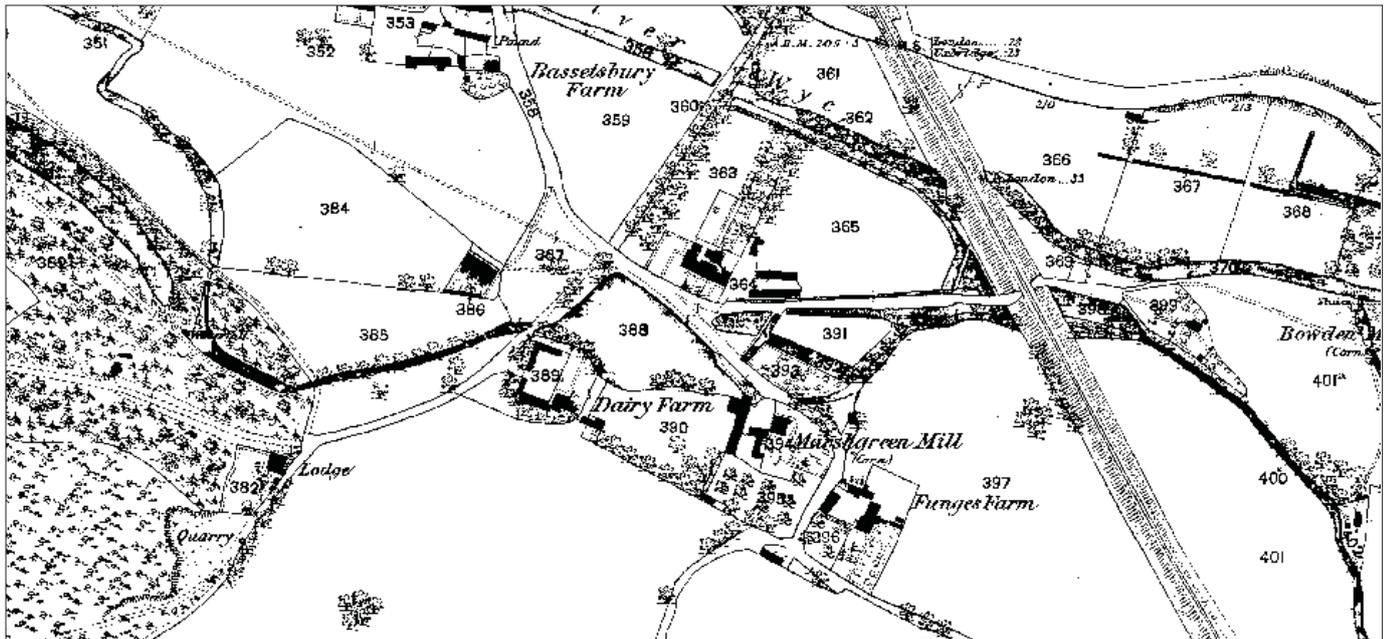


Marsh Green Mill and pond.



Funges Farm.

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



Another group within the conservation area is the building comprising Marsh Green House, Rosedale and Box Tree House on Bassetsbury Lane. Originally Box Tree House and Rosedale were built as the parish workhouse in the 1760's on land donated by the second Earl of Shelburne. In 1777 a parliamentary report showed there to be 80 to 90 inmates. However, due to the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 the Chepping Wycombe Poor House was put up for sale in 1837. Lord Carrington bought the former workhouse for £567 and following his death, his son built Marsh Green House as an attachment to the original building for his stepmother.



Examples of uniformity of design within the area.

Following the death of the dowager all three houses were let to tenants, quite often housing the staff who worked at Wycombe Abbey. Later Box Tree Cottage was lived in by the Line family who established a Windsor chair-making business, Isaac Line and Sons, at the same address. Margo Durman, a granddaughter of the Lines made friends with the Mitford sisters at Old Mill Cottage during the 1920's and 30's.

Old Mill Cottage.

Archaeology

The area is of obvious archaeological interest, and conditions may be attached to any consents requiring further investigation.



Historic maps

1868 and 1895 OS

3 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The character and inter-relationship of spaces within the area

The mill and other buildings in this conservation area are grouped close to the bottom of Keep Hill at the end of the open green space of The Rye. The Rye was the town's common land for cattle and the area around these buildings used to be more open with fewer trees limiting the sight lines over the surrounding countryside. Today the screening of the trees along boundaries provides privacy to the residents. The green linking The Rye to the buildings making up the mill was a mill pond fed by the Back Stream that then flowed on to join the Wye nearer to Loudwater. Although the pond was filled in by the town council in the 20th century, the stream still runs to the south. The dwellings of Marsh Cottage, Old Mill Cottage, Mill Barn and Marsh Green Mill form a group based on the old mill development as a self contained entity. Funges Farm and the group of Marsh Green House, Rosedale and Box Tree Cottage form their own independent groups that sprang from the differing reasons for their construction, one as a farm and the other as the parish workhouse.

Important views and vistas

Due to the abundance of trees in the area there are few long distance views although there are glimpses along the road and of the stream. The main view is south to the wooded hillside of Keep Hill. There is also a view of The Rye from the site of the old mill pond. The views into this area are similarly restricted but still create a pleasant scene of trees and the stream. Due to the elevated position of the site of the allotments, to the south, they allow views into Marsh Green providing glimpses of the rear of the mill group of buildings and to the trees beyond.



View of the wooded Keep Hill.



Marsh Cottage.



Hope House.

Mill Barn.

4 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

Activity and landuse

The history of this area explains the uses these buildings were put to. The group is made up of the original parish workhouse, the mill with ancillary buildings and the farm further down the lane. The buildings have all been converted to residential dwellings over the years which, along with the proximity of The Rye, have



helped to preserve the rural feel to the area. There has been some encroachment of residential development to the north and south, however, this has not had a major impact on the quality of the local environment.

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

Funges Farm has the traditional farm layout with the attractive front aspect facing south and the barns and stables to the rear. The farmhouse is a two storey building with delicate wooden sash windows indicating its late 18th century frontage. It has an attractive hipped roof of red tiles with brick dentil eaves.

In acknowledgement of the special nature of the group Marsh Green Mill, Old Mill Cottage, Mill Barn and Marsh Cottage are all Grade II listed buildings as are Funges Farmhouse and the Marsh Green House group. It is considered that Funges Farm Barns are interesting and unique enough to be included on the list of buildings of local interest.

Key unlisted buildings

41 Bassetsbury Lane was built around 1979 on the site of the old watercress beds to the north of the mill, that were filled in earlier. This house also benefits from the mature trees that have grown up in the area. Two other houses, Edgewood Cottage and Hope House, were built in the mid 1980's on what appears to have been an old orchard which could easily have been the orchard that the Mitfords bought in 1925.

Local details

This group of buildings demonstrate the local tradition of brick building with few embellishments that are particularly local to this area. Marsh Green Mill is built in the same style as Bassetsbury Mill although originally the stores to the south were timber clad construction and have been re-built in brick and converted to residential use.

Prevalent and traditional building materials

The majority of the buildings in this area are built of red brick, but some, principally the mill group, have been painted white. Funges Farm has a flint facade to the front with brick dressings, while no. 41 has a similar style with much more brick in evidence. The terrace of Marsh Green House, Rosewood and Box Tree House are primarily brick, however, Marsh Green House has an almost Gothic feel with additions of turrets



Marsh Green Mill and Barn.



View along Bassetsbury Lane.



Rosedale.



View towards The Rye from Marsh Green.

and other stonework in white creating a striking façade.

The brick is a local material, demonstrating that these were working buildings and, with the exception of Marsh Green House, they were not built for decoration. Flint was originally a local material that would have been rendered over but Funges Farm seems to have always used flint for decorative effect, a trend echoed by no. 41 in the 1970's.

All of the buildings have plain, functional tiled roofs and this again demonstrates the palette of locally sourced materials within Buckinghamshire that have been used to construct these practical buildings.

Contribution made by the natural environment

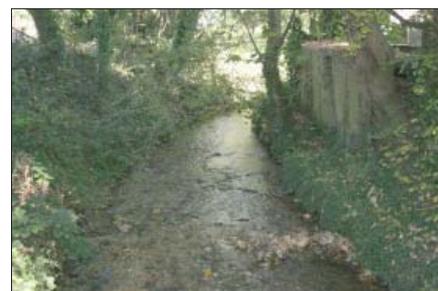
The natural features define this landscape. The back stream meant that the mill could flourish here and the marshy ground through which the stream flowed was ideal to support the watercress beds but formed a barrier to building construction. The stream also provided a suitable environment for the farms of Funges and the nearby former dairy farm to support their cattle and crops.

Marsh Green not only has an abundance of its own trees but also has the borrowed views of the woods to the south and The Rye to the west perpetuating the rural feel to this conservation sub-area.

The extent of loss, problems and pressures

Due to the residential nature of Marsh Green and the influence of the listed buildings within it, pressures on the character of the area are limited. However, the proposed development of the site of the former dairy farm close by into a residential care home will push more intensive development closer to this pretty cluster of historic buildings. Care has been taken with the design of this building to reduce its impact on the conservation area, and to pick up local details, in particular those of Marsh Green House.

Box Tree Cottage.



Back Stream as it curves away past No. 41 Bassetsbury Lane.



No. 41 Bassetsbury Lane.



The site of the mill pond as it is today.



Edgewood Cottage.

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



For illustrative purposes only; not to scale