

Bickton Conservation Area



This tiny hamlet around its Manor House was closely linked to work in the mills and on the river. The cottage plots are largely unaltered since late medieval times and some 17th century cottages show signs of earlier building. As so often, this century has seen buildings and alterations which have weakened the character of the place and the conservation area was designated in order to allow greater control over future change.

The enormous 18th century mill building had deteriorated and become an eyesore since being largely abandoned for milling. To try and restore the visual impact of the building, permission was given for it to be reconstructed to provide additional housing. Conversion of mill buildings is not easy, the retention of original form and detailing being especially important. Recently listed farm buildings have become redundant and rather than demolish and rebuild them, today's plan is to find new uses for them.

The Domesday Book records the Saxon owner as Chetel but in 1086 the manor passed to Hugh Earl of Chester and was occupied by the Fitz Aucher family. The mill was assessed at seven shillings and there were 30 acres of meadow. As a settlement of 18 families it was bigger than the manor of Fordingbridge at that time which shows how much things can change! In 1303 there was a chapel but there are no later records of it. Most manors had a place of worship built close by but their existence and use is usually recorded to a later date. For over 300 years the overlord was the Earl of Salisbury and during the 16th century there was a connection with the Bulkley family of Burgate. In 1766 the manor was bought for £900 by Sir Eyre Coote of West Park.

Key features of the conservation area are:

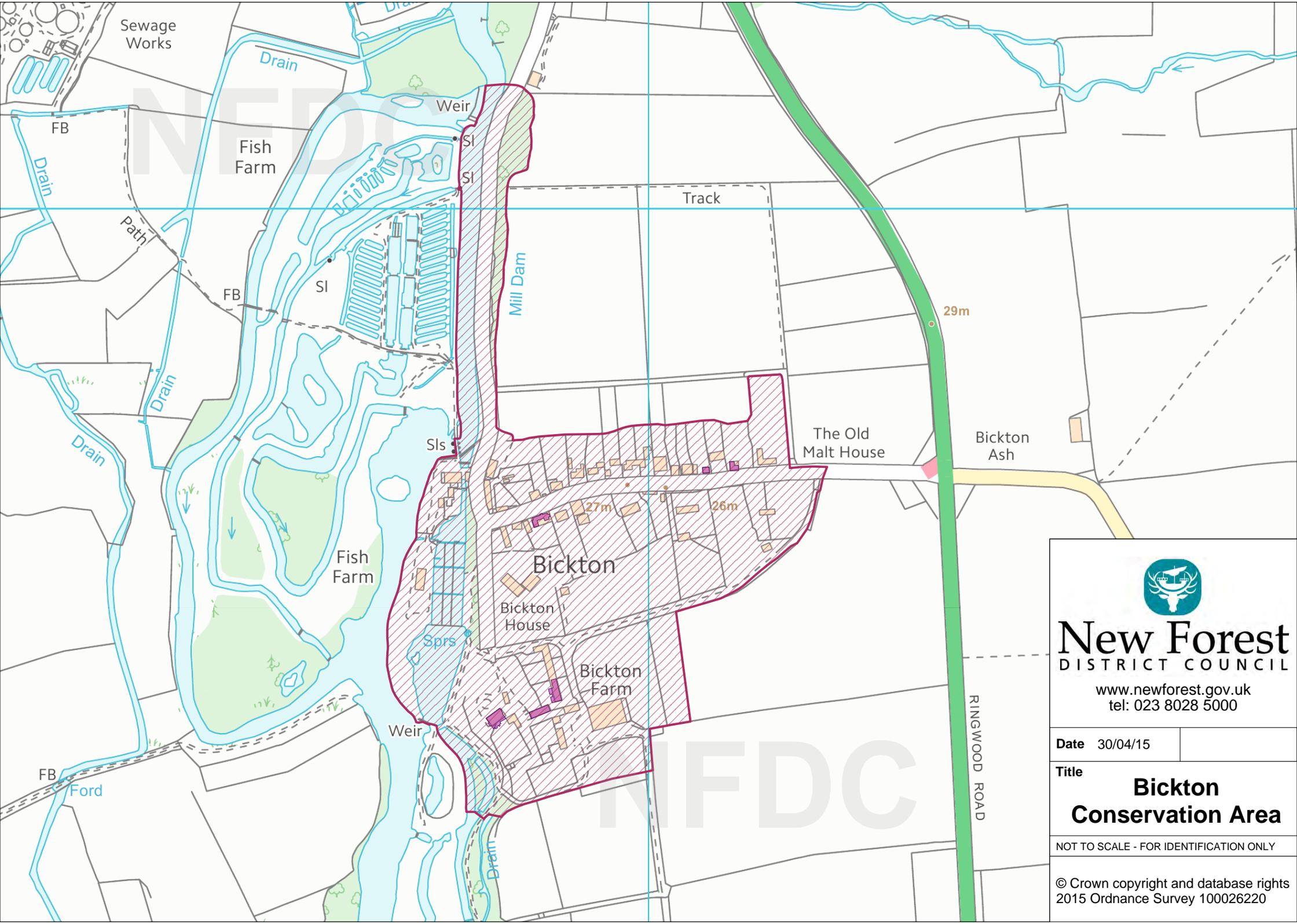
- The **15th century Manor House** (Grade II) is a substantial timber-framed structure with a first-floor jetty. In the 17th century the brick east range was added to make today's main façade. Restoration has been aided by grants from the District and County Councils. The farm complex also contains an 18th century 3-bay barn and an early 19th century timber-framed 5-bay barn on staddle stones.
- The **Mill buildings** are prominent. There has probably been a mill at Bickton from earliest times. In the 19th century Messrs Neave & Co of Fordingbridge employed about 25 people keeping the mill working day and night. This site has recently been redeveloped retaining much of the 19th century granary although the mill

and mill house have been replaced. The result illustrates some of the problems to be confronted when a building can no longer be used for its original purpose. Is it possible to retain its character? How much does the detail of the design, such as windows and doors, affect the success of the result?

- The **unlisted cottages east of the Mill** are important survivals of the typical cottages that made up the whole hamlet in the past.
- The **style of thatch** used is an important characteristic of the New Forest. Longstraw is the traditional material with a plain, flush wrapover ridge. The cottages in Bickton avoid the popular but non-traditional and unnecessarily elaborate block-cut 'fancy' ridges.

These are some of the things that make Bickton special - they need to be looked after:

- **History**
The plot layout which probably dates to the medieval period
- **Buildings**
The brick and timber frame cottages with thatched roofs
The 19th century white painted cottages with slate roofs
The manor farm - grouping of farmhouse, barns, cartsheds and granary
- **Archaeology**
In a long-established settlement there are likely to be the remains of earlier buildings
- **Landscape/Townscape**
The spacious plots with cottages mainly set back from the road
Low level front boundaries of picket fences or hedges
- **Setting**
The mill buildings are a major landmark on the riverside
- **Potential for enhancement**
Removal of overhead cables
Replacement of some front boundaries with more appropriate materials



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Title
Bickton Conservation Area

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