

Friends Meeting House, Aylsham

Peggs Yard, Red Lion St, Aylsham, Norwich, Norfolk, NR11 6ER

National Grid Reference: TG 19378 26933



Statement of Significance

The meeting house has medium heritage significance as a modest mid-eighteenth-century brick-built barn, which was converted in the early 1990s to provide a first-floor meeting room, with a kitchen and other facilities on the ground floor.

Evidential value

The building was originally intended for storage or a similar use and some features of the building (like the door openings) may be related to specific earlier uses. The building has medium evidential value.

Historical value

The building was originally one of a row of modest outbuildings, presumably related to a principal building in Red Lion Street. For its surviving eighteenth century fabric it is of medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is part of an attractive group of modest brick structures and for that reason may be considered as being of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building has been used for worship and community purposes since 1994 and is of medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Norfolk and Waveney*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0015770*
- 1.3 Owner: *Friends Trusts Ltd*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Broadland District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Aylsham*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed, not locally listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Aylsham*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *N/a*
- 1.12 Date(s): *probably eighteenth century*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not known*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *26 June 2014*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Sue Sharpe*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *none*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *no*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, p. 438
Norfolk HER ref. MNF 13473
Local Meeting survey by Ian McGilvray, 2014 and 2015

Part 2: The Meeting House & Burial Ground: history, contents, use, setting and designation

2.1 Historical background

The building was purchased by the Quakers in 1993. It was originally built as a barn, forming part of a line of outbuildings behind 20 & 22 Red Lion Street, and had previously been converted into an architect's office. After some minor modifications it was opened as a meeting house in 1994.

2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings

The building is rectangular on plan with a large lean-to entrance porch on the north side. The external walls are of red brick laid in Flemish bond with a pitched roof covered in modern red pantiles. The entrance front is dominated by the modern full-height lean-to pantiled porch with its full-width skylight. To either side are wide segmental-headed door

openings. The rear (south) elevation is blind, with extensive signs of alteration and repair and small-lean-to additions which are not in Quaker ownership. Inside the building, the ground floor including the large porch space houses a modern kitchen, toilets and other spaces. A modern stair and lift lead to the meeting room, which occupies the full length of the upper floor and rises into the roof space, with the tie-beams and collars of the roof exposed.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of heritage interest.

2.4 Attached burial ground

None

2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

Aylsham is an attractive small town with an open central square. Red Lion Street is one of the old thoroughfares immediately east of the square, and is lined with old houses, mostly of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The meeting house is part of a row of outbuildings behind 20 & 22 Red Lion Street, which probably date from the early eighteenth century. The buildings are now in a variety of ownerships and uses. The north (entrance) side fronts onto Pegg's Yard, a wide backland space which has been landscaped and includes some car parking space with a gravel surface. The south side faces onto a narrow service lane.

2.6 Listed status

The present meeting house was originally a modest brick-built barn and probably dates from the mid-eighteenth century. The walls and main timber roof structure survive but there have been extensive alterations and the building is probably not a candidate for the statutory list. The alterations to the exterior, principally the addition of the large porch, have probably made the building ineligible for inclusion in any local list, although it is within a Conservation Area.

2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The site of the building is a part of a long thin burgage plot extending east from Red Lion Street and there may be mediaeval below-ground archaeological deposits; depending on the degree of disturbance, the site has medium to high archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1 Condition

- i) Meeting house: Good.
- ii) Attached burial ground: N/A

3.2 Maintenance

The last Quinquennial Inspection was made in 2010 and most of the recommendations have been carried out. The meeting has at present (2015) enough money to maintain and repair the building. It has a five-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has established a Building Development Group to make recommendations how to reduce environmental impact. In regard to building maintenance and development, the meeting has a regular appraisal and implementation programme. There is no Energy Performance Certificate but the meeting would consider obtaining one when an appropriate stage in the refurbishment has been reached.

3.4 Amenities

The meeting house has all the required amenities. There is no resident Friend. The meeting house is accessible by public transport. There is on-site parking for cars and bicycles.

3.5 Access

The meeting house is accessible for all. There is level access and a lift to the first floor. The meeting house has an accessible WC and a hearing loop. There are no facilities for the partially sighted. In 2012, the meeting conducted a Disability Access Audit; the recommendation of minor changes to the emergency exit is being implemented.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about 4 hours per week. The building is theoretically available for community lettings for a maximum number of 80 hours per week. It is used for an average of about 25 hours per week. The meeting has a lettings policy. Users value the meeting house for its central location, competitive price, availability of some parking, suitability for smaller groups, and its atmosphere.

3.7 Vulnerability to crime

The area has low crime levels and there has been no heritage crime at the site. There is no established liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8 Plans for change

The meeting is planning a major refurbishment but details are not finalised at present (2015).

Part 4: Impact of Change

4.1 To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

i) As a Meeting House used only by the local Meeting: the building could be adapted to create a differently arranged space for worship without loss of character

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the building is already in use for a variety of uses and has the amenities it needs for these, but there is scope for remodelling if needed.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: The building was converted to serve a modern secular (office) use before it became a meeting house and could easily revert to a variety of alternative uses if required.

Part 5: Category: 4