

Friends Meeting House, Basingstoke

14 Fairfields Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 3DR

National Grid Reference: SU 63802 51512



Statement of Significance

The meeting house has medium heritage significance as a Victorian semi-detached house of the 1880s or 1890s which was converted in 1989-91 for use as a meeting house.

Evidential value

The meeting house has low evidential value as a Victorian house built on a site with no known archaeological significance.

Historical value

Little is known about the early history of the house, its architect and occupiers. As a typical Victorian suburban house which was converted to meeting house use it has medium historical value.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house has a highly decorative street elevation with brick patterns and bargeboards. The interior retains some historic features but the medium aesthetic value resides chiefly in the main elevation.

Communal value

The building's main use is as a Quaker meeting house with the upstairs flat rented out. It is part of a highly visible series of semi-detached houses which represent a local landmark in the conservation area for local residents. Its use and prominence in a local streetscape lend it medium communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *Hampshire & Islands*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0015870*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Basingstoke NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Fairfields*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *c.1870s-1890s*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *13 July 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Pam Slade*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *n/a*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Basingstoke Local Meeting, plan of c.1989, original sales advertisement
Basingstoke and Deane Council, *Fairfields Conservation Area Appraisal*, 2004
Butler, D.M. *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, p. 229
Local Meeting survey by Sheila Peacock, June 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

In 1681, local Quakers unsuccessfully tried to acquire a meeting house. In 1696, they acquired a burial ground in Reading Road, and an adjoining cottage two years later (sold between 1868 and 1933). In 1800, a new meeting house was acquired in Wote Street, which was rebuilt in c.1828 and enlarged in 1849 (sold 1955, demolished). In 1867, a small burial plot was bought in the public cemetery (now known as Holy Ghost Cemetery), replacing a ground in Frog Street and North Brook Street (possibly identical with the seventeenth-century burial ground). In 1947, the meeting was discontinued. It was revived in 1966 and in 1979, a Victorian house (22 Cromwell Road) was bought. This was sold in 1989, when the

present meeting house was bought. The architect Mervyn Newin converted the house in Fairfields Road into a meeting house on the ground floor (with a children's room in the former kitchen and a new kitchen/toilet extension) and a self-contained first floor flat. This was completed in 1991. The house was built between c.1873 and c.1896 (according to map evidence).

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

Number 14 Fairfields Road is a two-storey, semi-detached house dating from the late nineteenth century. The original architect is not known. The street elevation which faces south has a decorative pattern and banding of white and red brick (laid in Flemish bond), while the side (west) and rear elevations are of red brick. The pitched roofs are of slate. The plan of the pair of houses is T-shaped, with the crossbar to the street and a full-height rear wing; 14 Fairfields Road also has an additional single-storey extension (clad in brick in stretcher bond). The front elevation of 14 Fairfields Road is of two bays: one window above the entrance door (recessed behind a brick arch) to the east, while the wider west bay under a cross roof with decorative bargeboard has two first-floor windows above a canted bay window. The west gable has a single attic window (inserted 1989-91) as well as two chimney stacks on either side of the roof ridge. The front elevation has plate glass sashes, while the rear elevation has two-over-two sashes.

The interior conforms to the standard or Summerson plan, with the staircase (with a fine turned newel post) against the party wall and originally two rooms ranged alongside. The meeting room occupies the two former rooms on the ground floor which had been combined into one before 1989. The southern chimneybreast has a plain, possibly original mantelpiece; the other fireplace is boarded up. In the rear wing, the former kitchen is now the children's room, with another plain chimneypiece beside built-in cupboards. Some of the internal (four-panelled) doors have fingerplates. The first-floor flat was not inspected.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of particular note.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is part of seven identical semi-detached houses (nos. 1–18) on the north side of Fairfields Road, just outside the centre of Basingstoke. The conservation area appraisal describes them as 'a particular strong and uniform row', 'providing a strong impact of uniformity'. To the southwest is a small recreation ground with a bowling green and tennis courts; to the west is May's Bounty cricket ground. Overall, the area has a leafy residential character, other notable buildings include a nearby Board School of 1888 in Jubilee Road, and Temple Moore's All Saints church of 1915 (listed grade II).

There is a Quaker corner in the municipal Holy Ghost cemetery (NGR: SU 63647 52653). The cemetery closed in c.1912 and the Quaker plot is no longer in Quaker ownership.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and is not considered a candidate for listing. The group of seven semi-detached houses might be eligible for inclusion in Basingstoke's local list.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

According to the HER and the conservation area appraisal, there are no known major archaeological sites in the Fairfields Road area. Prior to development, the site was in agricultural use. The site has low archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): *N/a*

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting does not have a five-year maintenance and repair plan (other than the quinquennial inspection report). Maintenance is generally done as required. The Area Meeting has a sufficiently large property fund. The most recent QIR dates from 2012 and was prepared by the surveyor Paul Bailey, of Frank Bailey & Partners. Most of the recommendations of the QIR have been carried out. Among works not carried out is the installation of emergency lighting.

3.3. Sustainability

There is no EPC for the upstairs flat as legislation just came in after the current tenant moved in. The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: secondary glazing in the upstairs flat and cavity wall insulation, removal of gas fire, using a renewable energy provider.
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: the meeting subscribes to the Council's garden waste scheme
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: the only piece of asbestos has been removed
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the garden contains some wild flowers and bird habitat
- Transport: Friends walk, cycle or take the bus to the meeting house, there is also a car share scheme

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs. These are all located in the meeting house. There is no resident warden or Friend. (The upstairs flat is let to a private tenant.)

The meeting house is accessible by public transport. There is limited on-site car parking. Bikes can be parked in the garden.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is no level access but a ramp is available. There is no accessible WC, hearing loop or facilities for partially sighted people. The meeting has not conducted an Access Audit.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is only used by Friends (2-4 hours per week) due to a restrictive covenant imposed by the Council at the time of the building's conversion and change of use application.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There is no sign of general crime, or anti-social behaviour at the site. There has been no heritage crime. No crimes of incidents have been reported to the local police. The only unreported incident was a rough sleeper in the back garden a few years ago which was solved by fitting a padlocked gate. The locality is generally well-cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. The meeting has not developed a liaison with the local neighbourhood policing team as there is no reason to do so.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no planned changes.

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 meeting house could be altered internally if required, although any major external changes would need planning permission as the conservation area is covered by an Article 4 (2) Direction.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: A restrictive covenant in the change of use permission issued by the Council prevents wider community use. The only additional use to local Meeting use is the self-contained flat rented to a private tenant. Should the legal situation change, only relatively small community groups could be accommodated.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting: The meeting is relatively small. While the income from the tenant covers most expenses, there is a possibility that the meeting might close due to lack of members. In that case, the house could easily be re-converted to fully residential use.

Part 5: Category: 3