

## ***Friends Meeting House, Leigh-on-Sea***

*18 Dundonald Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, SS9 1NB*

*National Grid Reference: TQ 84994 86173*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***Apparently erected as a modest local school in the early twentieth century, the building has been used as a meeting house since the 1930s. Overall it is of medium significance.***

#### ***Evidential value***

***The building was erected on a greenfield site and is a very simple structure with low evidential value.***

#### ***Historical value***

***Presumably the building was first erected to serve the developing community of Leigh and is of medium historical value.***

#### ***Aesthetic value***

***Although the meeting house is a pleasingly unassuming small building with a vaguely vernacular character, it is of no particular aesthetic value.***

#### ***Communal value***

***As a Quaker meeting house which is in additional community use, the meeting house has high communal value.***

### **Part 1: Core data**

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *North East Thames*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0032930*
- 1.3 Owner: *Six Weeks Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Southend-on-Sea Borough Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Leigh on Sea*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *c1923, additions 1953 and 2007*

1.13 Architect (s): *original architect not known; 1950s additions by Hubert Lidbetter (local meeting says John Fairbanks); 2007 enlargement by Bernard Gooding Associates*

1.14 Date of visit: *14 August 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Unaccompanied*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, p. 199

Gawne, Eleanor, 'Buildings of endearing simplicity; the Friends Meeting Houses of Hubert Lidbetter', *The Twentieth Century Church (Twentieth Century Architecture 3, the journal of the Twentieth Century Society)*, pp.85-92 &117

Local meeting survey by Audrey Regan, August 2015

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

### **2.1. Historical background**

The meeting was settled as the Southend Meeting in 1912. In 1936 Friends bought a small early-twentieth century hall, formerly a school, in Leigh on Sea which they used as a meeting house without alteration. A children's room was added at right angles to the original hall in the mid 1950s and elongated in 2007.

### **2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures**

The building is 'L'-shaped on plan, with a taller range containing the meeting room parallel to the street and a slightly lower rear wing at right angles to the main range. The external walls are divided into bays by red brick piers and the spaces between have plain plaster finish and timber casement windows with leaded lights. The hipped pitched roofs are covered in tiles. The main front has a projecting porch to the left with a pitched roof and vertical studding in the gable.

The interior was not properly inspected but the meeting room appears to be a rectangular space with plain plastered walls and a plastered ceiling rising into the roof-space.

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

Twenty-five wooden chairs were given to the meeting house at Leigh-on-Sea in 1973 from the meeting house in Eastbourne (*qv*).

### 2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

None

### 2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house stands in a residential street lined with 1920s houses, near the centre of Leigh on Sea, an old village which greatly expanded in the early twentieth century.

### 2.6. Listed status

The building is not a candidate for the statutory list or the local list.

### 2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The site has low archaeological potential.

## **Part 3: Current use and management**

*See completed volunteer survey*

### 3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good. The most recent Quinquennial report in 2011 identified a number of minor defects, most of which have been remedied.
- ii) Attached burial ground: None

### 3.2. Maintenance

The meeting does not have a maintenance plan but the building is well-maintained and has been redecorated recently. The meeting has enough funds to cover minor repairs and maintenance and looks to Six Weeks Meeting to help with anything larger that may become necessary

### 3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit and has not implemented specific measures to reduce the environmental impact of the building. The meeting house does not have an EPC but would consider obtaining one. Garden waste is composted; other waste is recycled.

### 3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs in the main building.

### 3.5. Access

The building is easily accessible, with short ramps to front and rear entrances and level floors within the building. One toilet has disabled and baby-changing facilities. The building has a hearing loop.

### 3.6 Community Use

The building is used for community purposes for about 24 out of a theoretically possible 76 hours per week. Friends use the building for meetings for about 3 1/2 hours per week. Acceptable users are those in accord with Quaker values. There is written guidance for users. The meeting house is a popular venue because it is well-maintained and has good facilities.

### 3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There is no evidence of general crime or anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of the meeting house. This is an area of high community confidence with low crime levels.

### 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:* There are currently no heritage constraints on the building. It could be altered or extended if required.

*ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use:* Community use of the meeting house is currently limited and users have all the amenities they need. If required, changes could be made.

*iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House:* Should the meeting be laid down, the meeting house could doubtless find another community or commercial use.

## **Part 5: Category: 3**