

Friends Meeting House, Portsmouth

25 Northwood Road, Hilsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO2 9QT

National Grid Reference: SU 65406 03997



Statement of Significance

The building has low heritage value as a suburban inter-war house which has been converted to a meeting house.

Evidential value

As a relatively modern house the meeting house has low evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house is typical of the interwar suburban development of this part of Portsmouth. It has low historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is similar to many other inter-war suburban houses. It has low 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: *Hampshire & Islands*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0004020*
- 1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Portsmouth City Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *City of Portsmouth NPA*
- 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): *1920s*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *15 July 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Sue Taylor*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *25A Northwood Road*
- 1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*
- 1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 236-7
Portsmouth Local Meeting, 'Portsmouth Quaker Meeting. A brief history of Quaker Meetings in Portsmouth from 1794', undated typescript
Portsmouth Local Meeting, drawings for 1995 alterations and extensions
Local Meeting survey by Sue Taylor, June 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

A meeting house existed in Portsmouth by 1694. This was sold after a new, possibly purpose-built, meeting house opened in 1711 (location unknown). This in turn was sold in 1794. The meeting then lapsed and was only re-established in 1905, using rented accommodation. The meeting was again suspended between 1914 and 1916. After 1916, several private houses were used until 1923 when the Railway Mission Hall in Fratton was donated by Emily Hurrell. This was sold in 1955 when the current house, 25 Northwood Road was acquired for £3,250 and converted for £1,000. The latter involved the creation of an upstairs warden's flat. It opened the following year. The house is a detached inter-war suburban house which was built, according to map evidence between 1910 and 1931. Reputedly, this was the house

which the local developer or builder built for himself, which would account for its larger size (being a detached house instead of a semi-detached one) and its different elevational treatment. The small annex (25A Northwood Road) was reputedly originally a garage and workshop which were later converted to a small two-storey maisonette. In 1995, a new kitchen extension and three toilets were added (project manager: R.G. Warwick & Partners Ltd, Wickham). In 2000, the conservatory was demolished and rebuilt.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house is a two-storey detached suburban house of the 1920s built by an unidentified architect or builder. The plan is roughly oblong, with the main street elevation facing northwest. To the rear is a small conservatory beside a lean-to toilet extension of 1995; a further lean-to extension containing a kitchen was added in 1995 in the northeast angle of the house. To the south is the lean-to annex (no. 25A). The materials are brick laid in stretcher bond (red for the front and side elevations, stock brick with red brick dressings to the rear). The tiled roof is half-hipped to the south, while the northern arm has a gable roof. There is a short chimney stack on the south gable, and a taller stack on the gable roof. The front bay window and the first floor level of the rear elevation of the annex are tile hung. The windows are modern aluminium and UPVC units; the lintels are of concrete. The front elevation of three bays has the entrance under a canopy on carved brackets in the centre, beside an oblong full-height bay window under a gabled cross roof to the south.

The entrance hall has the original open string staircase with a large square newel post with recessed panels and a moulded top. The two rooms to the south have been combined to form the present meeting room (photo bottom left). This contains two chimney breasts, one of which still retains its plain pilaster surround and its original tiled insert (blocked). The meeting room also has a clock donated in June 1947 by the Portsmouth Workpeoples [sic] Committee of the NSPCC in gratitude for help 'over many years' and in memory of Arthur G. Pease, the committee's honorary secretary for 19 years and presumably a member of the prominent Quaker family. The smaller room on the ground floor room (labelled 'assembly room' on the 1995 plans) has an original fire surround. The room directly above is now the archive room, holding the area meeting archive. It has a built-in cupboard beside a tall mantelpiece with two shelves. The tiled inset has been painted. The remainder of the first floor is a flat (not inspected).

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of particular historic or aesthetic note.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located in a residential area. Northwood Road was developed probably in the 1920s and the houses are largely identical semi-detached houses with oblong bay windows which in the southern part of the road have gabled cross roofs, while those in the north half have flat roofs. The meeting house shares many of these features but is noticeable larger and of a different plan and roof form. There are playing fields to the rear.

2.6. Listed status

The meeting house is not listed and is not considered to be eligible for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

Prior to the laying out of the road and its development with houses, the area was fields, with only ribbon development along the London Road (now A2047). 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 most recent quinquennial inspection report (2014, by Cranes of Chichester, chartered surveyors) found only minor issues. Since then, all health & safety items and any urgent items have been carried out. Outstanding work includes external painting and further repointing. Internal redecoration was in progress at the time of the visit. The meeting has enough money to maintain the building and can also draw on the area meeting property fund. The meeting uses the QI report as a 5-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and completed the 'meeting check-up' in 2012. There is an Energy Performance Certificate for the upstairs flat (energy efficiency level: 59, energy impact level: 52). The Certificate recommended improving the insulation which has been completed for the loft but the cavity walls proved too narrow for cavity wall insulation.

The meeting has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. These include:

- Climate change & energy efficiency: a new efficient boiler has been installed, energy-efficient lightbulbs are used, the windows are double-glazed with thermal curtains, loft insulation has been improved, gas and electricity from Ecotricity are being used.
- Resource use, recycling & waste management: the meeting has a recycling bin, a water butt for the garden, eco-friendly cleaning products. The meeting tries to limit their consumption of gas and electricity.
- Building maintenance & refurbishment: for the current internal redecoration eco-friendly paints are being used.
- Wildlife, ecology and nature conservation: the garden has a bird box as well as bee- and insect-friendly plants.
- Transport: the site has bike racks and the meeting has completed the climate impact calculator. It encourages car sharing and use of public transport.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs, all of which are in the meeting house. The meeting does not have a resident warden or Friend. (The former warden's flat is now rented to a private tenant.) The meeting is accessible by public transport with two bus routes nearby. There is no on-site parking and limited parking in the street. There are secure bike racks on site.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access via the side entrance to the kitchen. There is no lift to the first floor. The meeting house has an accessible

toilet, and a hearing loop. There are no facilities for the partially sighted. There has been no formal Disability Access Audit but access issues are kept under review by the property committee.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends approximately 5 hours per week. It is available for lettings for 6 hours per week which is fully taken up. Further lettings are currently not actively encouraged as there are insufficient numbers of people to supervise and secure the building. The meeting has a Lettings Policy. Ad hoc applications are decided on a case by case basis. In general no smoking, alcohol or gambling is permitted. Current users consider the meeting house to be well-priced for lettings. However, its location in a suburban residential street is a disadvantage.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There are no signs of crime or anti-social behaviour at the site and there has been no heritage crime or any other crimes or incidents. The locality is generally well cared for, has low crime levels, low deprivation and high community confidence. The meeting has developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8. Plans for change

None.

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: Should the meeting be laid down, the meeting house could easily be re-converted to entirely residential use.

Part 5: Category: 4