

Friends Meeting House, Romford

7 Balgores Crescent, Gidea Park, Romford, London, RM2 6AB

National Grid Reference: TQ 52573 89766



Statement of Significance

A clean early 1960s design by Norman Frith, which seen some alteration but is overall of medium significance.

Evidential value

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

Historical value

The meeting house was built for a mid-twentieth century assembly and is of low historical value.

Aesthetic value

The building is a thoughtful work by Norman Frith with some architectural qualities, though the original form has been altered by the replacement of flat with pitched roofs. It is of medium 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: *0012800*

1.3 Owner: *Six Weeks Meeting*

- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *London Borough of Havering*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *London*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Romford NPA*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Gidea Park*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *1961*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Norman Frith*
- 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: *Resident warden*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *A warden's residence forms part of the building complex*
- 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. 196
- The Friend*, 6 October 1961, p.1298
- Local meeting survey by Laurie Hilton, August 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

Apparently a site for a meeting house to serve Harold Hill and Romford was purchased in the early eighteenth century but nothing was built. The meeting revived in the twentieth century and in 1944 a house was purchased in Victoria Road for use as a meeting room. It was sold in 1958 and the proceeds of sale put towards the cost of a new meeting house on a larger site. The new building was designed by Norman Frith and besides the meeting room with its canted sides it also contained two classrooms and a warden's flat. The original flat roofs of these parts of the building have since been replaced by a pitched roof.

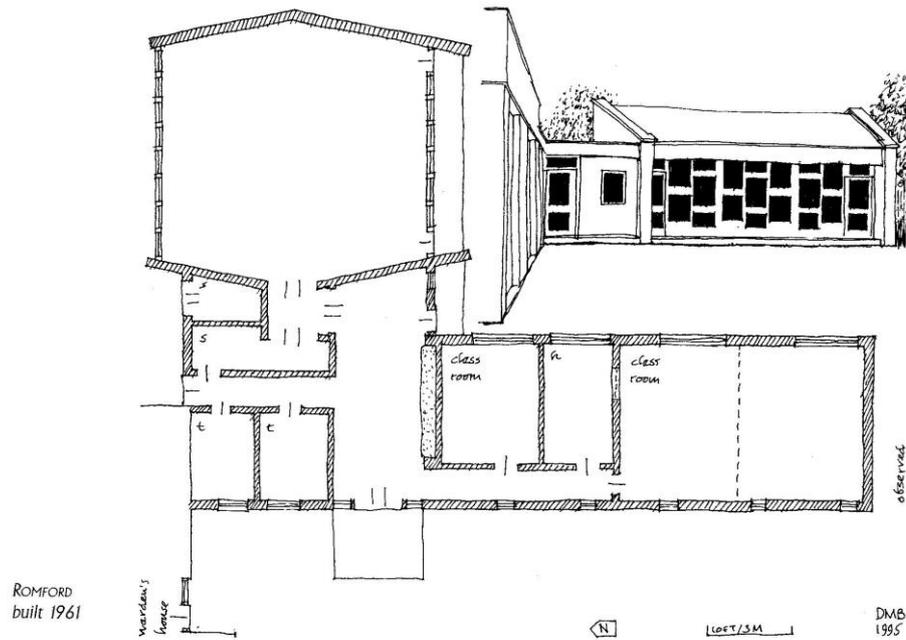


Fig.1 The ground plan and perspective view of the building from *Butler* vol 1 p.196

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The classrooms and warden's accommodation are in two single-storey ranges set at right angles, with walls of yellow brick laid in stretcher bond and simple rectangular timber windows. The original flat roofs have been replaced with shallow-pitched slated roofs. Over the entrance door is a canopy on two thin iron columns, now also with pitched roof. The meeting room is attached to the external angle of the complex. It is broadly rectangular on plan but with canted side walls and has a pitched, felted roof. The main front overlooking the rear lawn is fully-glazed with a timber and glass screen; the rear wall has strip clerestory windows under the eaves. Internally, the meeting room space has plain plastered walls but is given character by its fenestration and by the closely-spaced concrete beams spanning across the pitched ceiling.

2.3 Loose furnishings

The meeting room contains a number of oak benches of traditional form. Their origin is not known.

2.4. Attached burial ground

None

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The building stands in a cul-de-sac off a side road in this prosperous early twentieth-century suburb.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not a candidate for the statutory list. The original modern character of the building has been slightly altered by the addition of pitched roofs to the classroom range and warden's flat.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The building was erected on a greenfield site which 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 was made in 2010. All the recommended works - amounting to a major refit of the building - have been carried out and there are no works outstanding. The work was financed by Six Weeks Meeting. The meeting uses the QI report as a 5-year maintenance and repair plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit and has implemented measures to reduce its environmental impact. There is no EPC certificate for the meeting house (or the warden's flat) but the meeting would consider obtaining one.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs within the meeting house - kitchen, WCs and two meeting rooms in addition to the main meeting room. There is ample on-site and street parking. There is secure parking for bicycles.

3.5. Access

The meeting house is accessible to people with disabilities. There is level access via the main entrance. The meeting house has an accessible toilet, and a hearing loop. There are no facilities for the partially sighted. A Disability Access Audit was carried out in 2010. The meeting is accessible by public transport.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for approximately 2 hours per week. It is theoretically available for lettings for 80 hours per week (2 rooms) and is let for 65 hours per week. There is a published lettings policy which requires uses to be generally in accordance with Quaker values. There are no free lettings. Users are attracted by the good, quiet location, friendly atmosphere and low charges.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been some low-level crime and anti-social behaviour at the site but 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

There are no immediate plans for change

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 is within a conservation area but there have already been some alterations to the building (addition of pitched roofs). It would be difficult to extend the meeting room without some loss of character.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: the building is already in fairly intensive mixed use.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: the building could serve a wholly secular use without much alteration.

Part 5: Category: 3