

Friends Meeting House, Sevenoaks

30 Holly Bush Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3TJ

National Grid Reference: TQ 53225 55786



Statement of Significance

A mid-nineteenth-century house, and a meeting house since 1960. The building has been altered but makes a positive contribution to the local conservation area. Overall, it is of medium significance.

Evidential value

The building was built as a residence, and its evidential value as a meeting house is low.

Historical value

The building forms part of the mid-to-late nineteenth-century northern suburban expansion of Sevenoaks, and as such is of medium historical value. Its historical value as a meeting house is low.

Aesthetic value

The building is a pleasing design which retains many original features, especially on the outside, and with its garden setting makes a positive contribution to the local conservation area. However, some of the alterations of the past fifty years have somewhat detracted from its character and appearance. The meeting house is of medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The meeting house is well used by Friends and local community groups. It is of high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *West Kent*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0002190*
- 1.3 Owner: *West Kent Area Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Sevenoaks District Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *South East*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Sevenoaks*
- 1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*
- 1.8 NHLE: *N/a*
- 1.9 Conservation Area: *Hartslands*
- 1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*
- 1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*
- 1.12 Date(s): *c1850 (meeting house from 1960)*
- 1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *30 November 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Duncan Dwinell*
- 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. 268

Sevenoaks District Council, *Hartslands Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan*, 2011

Local Meeting Survey, by Elizabeth Dwinell, June 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

The existence of nearby Quaker's Hall Road points to an early Quaker presence in Sevenoaks. In the early twentieth century Friends met in a Congregational church hall until they bought the present property in 1958. This is a house of apparent mid-nineteenth-century date, formerly known as Knowle Cottage and previously used as a boarding house for the nearby Walthamstow Hall School (an interdenominational girls' school founded in 1838). The building opened as a meeting house in 1960.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

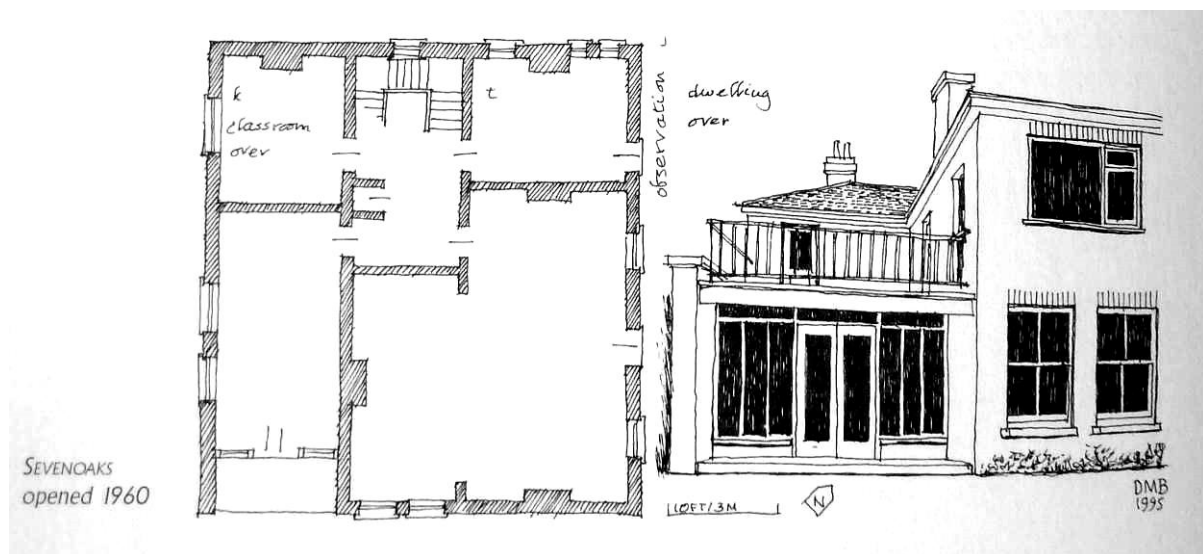


Figure 1: Plan and elevation, from Butler, vol. 1, p.268

The building is square on plan at ground floor, L-shaped at first. It is built of pale brick, with a tile-hung side addition to the north and a hipped slate roof. The main frontage is towards the garden rather than the road (photo upper left). This is of mid-nineteenth-century character, of two storeys and three bays, with painted or plastered gauged brick arches, timber sliding sash windows, each with one vertical glazing bar, and a central door with console bracket (the door a modern, mainly glazed replacement). Rendered chimney stacks are placed on either side of what appears to be the original range, and the flank (south) elevation is plain, with (judging from the straight joint and similarity of detailing) an early single-storey addition with two sash windows. This has a modern first floor addition over, with large picture window. The tile-hanging on the 'cross wing' on the north side gives it a late nineteenth or early twentieth-century character, but a building occupying this footprint is shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1869 (reproduced in the council's conservation area appraisal). In the angle of the L on the street frontage is a single-storey infill structure, added in c1960 to create a lobby for the meeting house; a steel fire escape stair leads from its railed flat roof to the garden. On the street frontage, the picturesque tile-hung element predominates, while the additions (brick, stone-clad and railed) for the meeting house are less sympathetic.

Inside, the large meeting room is also L-shaped, a space created by opening up between three rooms. Each part retains its original chimney breast, and one its original marble chimneypiece (photo bottom right). There are no other visible furnishings or fittings of note at ground floor level (the upper floor is a warden's flat and was not visited).

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings calling out for particular mention.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

None.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house lies in Holly Bush Lane, within a small conservation area consisting largely of late nineteenth-century working class brick and weatherboarded cottages, now highly expensive and sought-after. The meeting house sits in a large plot. Nearby buildings

include a late Victorian nonconformist chapel and an Edwardian church hall now converted to residential use. The conservation area appraisal states:

The rear of the extended Friends Meeting House and surrounding garden can be viewed from Holly Bush Lane. The flat roof extension, high fencing and sign board are all prominent features.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and is not considered to be a candidate for listing. It is one of the older buildings in the conservation area and although much altered it might be considered a candidate for the local list, understood to be under compilation by the Sevenoaks Society (see <http://www.sevenoakssociety.co.uk/the-local-list/>).

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

Low. The area was fields and orchards before its mid-to-late nineteenth-century development.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting house appears to be in good condition and well-maintained. The return states that a QIR has been carried out, but further details are not provided. The Meeting considers that it has enough money to maintain and repair the Meeting House. There is no five-year repair and maintenance plan.

3.3. Sustainability

The Meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. Measures taken to reduce environmental impact include a new boiler, insulated window frames and an electricity supply from Good Energy. Waste is recycled (with food waste fed to the chickens). Members share car journeys to the Meeting where possible.

3.4. Amenities

The Meeting considers that it has the amenities it needs. These include adequate meeting space, kitchen and WCs. A resident warden lives upstairs.

3.5. Access

An access audit has not been carried out, but there is step-free access and circulation around the ground floor, an accessible WC and a hearing loop.

3.6 Community Use

In addition to use for two hours per week by Friends, the building and its facilities are used by third parties for around 20 out of a possible 120 hours per week. There is a lettings policy. Users of the building cite its attractive and spacious qualities.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

The building has been subject to graffiti and a window was broken. Generally however the area is well cared-for, with low levels of crime and social deprivation. Friends have no plans to develop 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: The building has been adapted, and meets the current stated needs of the Meeting. There are no formal heritage constraints governing external change, but external alterations and additions may be subject to conservation area controls.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The building is already well used by the wider community; the constraints governing change in this regard would be as above.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The building makes a positive contribution to the local conservation area, and in the event of being laid down it would be desirable for a suitable alternative use to be found. It could easily revert to residential use. The building is in the corner of a large square plot, but the location in a conservation area might be a brake on development here.

Part 5: Category: 3