

Friends Meeting House, Sutton

10 Cedar Road, Sutton, London, SM2 5DA

National Grid Reference: TQ 26170 63662



Statement of Significance

A functional design of 1970 by H. Martin Lidbetter. Overall, this has low significance.

Evidential value

The frontage building has little about it to denote its function. The building is of low evidential value.

Historical value

The Sutton meeting was established at this location in 1970. The building and site have low historical value.

Aesthetic value

This is a utilitarian design of 1970, although the pyramidal Westmorland slate roof of the meeting room is attractive. The building is of low aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is well used by local groups. It has high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

- 1.1 Area Meeting: *South London*
- 1.2 Property Registration Number: *0008560*
- 1.3 Owner: *Not established*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *London Borough of Sutton*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *London*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Sutton 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): *1970*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *H. Martin Lidbetter*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *14 September 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Andrew Derrick*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Gordon Steel*
- 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. 2, p. 596
Steel, G., *History of Sutton Quaker Meeting 1932-2010*, 2011
Local Meeting survey by Gordon Steel, June 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

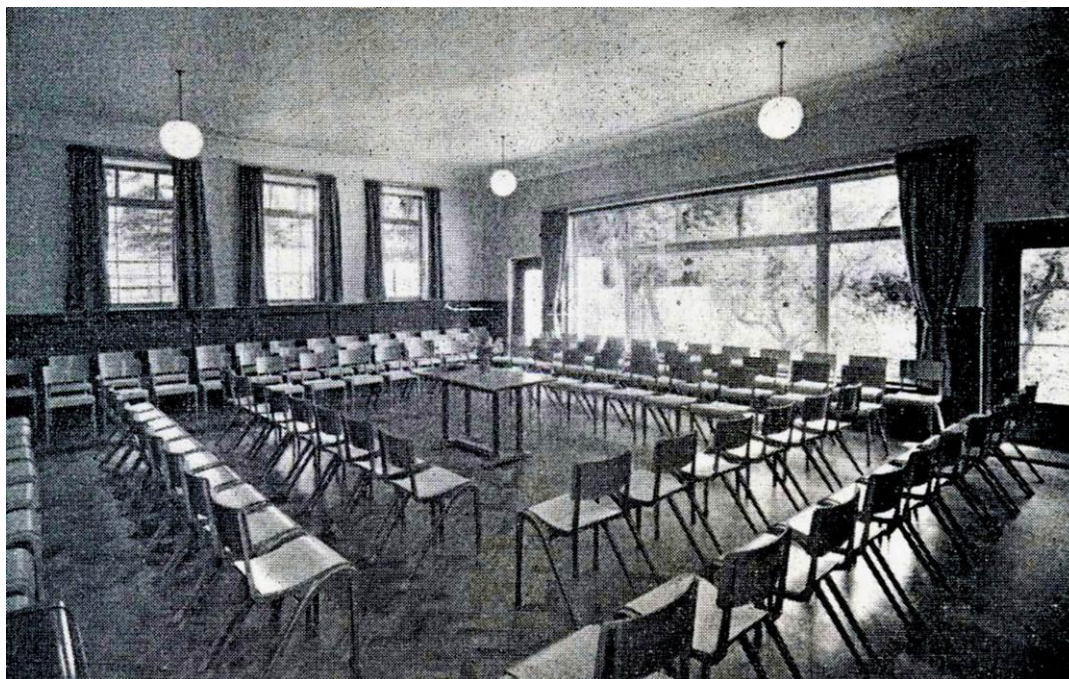


Figure 1: The 1959 meeting room at Worcester Gardens (from *History of Sutton Quaker Meeting 1932-2010*, 2011)

In 1932 local Friends met to consider whether a new meeting should be established in Sutton. In 1938 Hubert Lidbetter, Six Weeks Meeting Surveyor, reported on five potential sites, but none were considered satisfactory. Finally, in 1940 a large house at 7 Worcester Gardens was acquired and adapted, with a meeting space capable of seating eighty. This served until 1958 when a purpose-built meeting house was built behind the house at a cost of £9,800, from designs by Winifred Maddock (opened August 1959, interior view at figure 1).

In 1961 the local authority initiated compulsory purchase proceedings for the property in Worcester Gardens, in order to build a multi-storey car park. They offered the Friends a site nearby in Cedar Road, where designs for a new meeting house were prepared by H. Martin Lidbetter (son and erstwhile partner of Hubert Lidbetter) in 1967. The Preparative Meeting minutes for May 1967 record the meeting's 'anxiety about the plans for the new Meeting House in Cedar Road, in particular the hyperbolic roof'. The architect agreed to change it, though he was 'fearful that the result will now inevitably be a second best.' The result was built in 1969-70, the cost about £31,000. In 1971-2 an additional means of escape from the basement was created.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The building is a functional design of 1970 by H. Martin Lidbetter, with a frontage building housing smaller meeting rooms, kitchen, WCs, with the warden's accommodation above and the meeting room behind. The frontage building is of seven bays and two storeys over a basement, while the meeting room behind is a single storey, double height space. The building is faced with pale bricks laid in stretcher bond, with the concrete ring beams of the floors visibly expressed on the exterior. The windows consist of side- and top-opening metal casements, with a larger landing window over the entrance in the third bay from the left. At the side a projecting flat-roofed porte-cochere is over a side entrance. The main roof has a

shallow pitch clad with concrete tiles. The meeting room behind is square on plan and of similar materials, except for the pyramidal roof, which is clad with Westmorland slates.

Inside the building consists of a series of functional spaces, with no finishes or details of particular note. The meeting room is a square space with a woodblock floor and walls of fair-faced brick, with some areas of plaster or vertical timber boarding. Four timber beams rise from the corners to the central apex of the roof.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are no loose furnishings of particular note.

2.4. Attached burial ground

None.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house lies in a suburban street, consisting largely of substantial nineteenth and early twentieth century houses, some replaced with post-war low-to-medium-rise blocks of flats (such as those on either side). The meeting house is set back from the road behind a low boundary wall, with the front area mainly given over to vehicular circulation and parking, but with some planting and trees. There is further car parking and an outdoor area at the back.

2.6. Listed status

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

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

Low. This was the site of a previous (probably nineteenth century) house, part of whose boundary walls remain at the rear of the meeting house.

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

A quinquennial inspection was carried out in September 2014 and its recommendations are currently being implemented. Internal redecoration of the meeting room has recently been completed.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. The questionnaire does not report any work on sustainability in the five areas of climate change and energy efficiency; resource use; recycling and waste management; building maintenance and refurbishment; wildlife ecology and nature conservation; transport. The building appears to be well maintained, and is close to public transport links (Sutton Railway Station and bus services). There is secure parking for bicycles.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting considers that it has all the facilities it needs. These include additional meeting rooms, a kitchen, WCs and off-street parking. Warden's accommodation is on the first floor.

3.5. Access

The ground floor is accessible to people with disabilities. There is a ramp to the side entrance, a hearing loop and accessible WCs. There is no lift to the upper floor or to the basement (which is used for rehearsals by the Quaker Steel Band). The meeting has not conducted a Disability Access Audit.

3.6 Community Use

Friends use the meeting house for about five hours per week. The three rooms of the meeting house have a maximum potential availability of 120 hours a week, with normal take-up about forty hours. The meeting has a lettings policy, and alcohol and political meetings are not allowed. The facilities are appreciated by users for being modern, well-priced, quiet and in a convenient location, as well as for their 'spiritual atmosphere'.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been an isolated incident of heritage crime (theft of a strip of lead flashing), which was not reported to the police. Generally, this is an area of low crime and social deprivation. Friends have developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

3.8. Plans for change

Changes to the external signs and lettering, and lighting under the porte-cochere are proposed.

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 and its facilities could be altered or extended, subject to normal planning requirements. There are no heritage constraints. Secondary or double glazing might be considered in order to make energy savings.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house has facilities which allow for community use, most of them on the ground floor, which is accessible to all.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The building could be converted to another (probably residential) use, or the site redeveloped (subject to planning).

Part 5: Category: 4