

Friends Meeting House, Eccles

13 The Polygon, Wellington Road, Eccles, M30 0DS

National Grid Reference: SJ 78109 98997



Statement of Significance

The 1962 meeting house is a well-designed building which makes the most of the site and offers pleasant flexible areas which are comfortable and well lit. The main building is of essentially traditional character, but the detached block is treated as a simple modern pavilion. Paul Mauger was a highly regarded architect who designed buildings in the Hampstead Garden Suburb and whose Friends' Meeting House in Hitchin of 1957-9 has been listed grade II.

Evidential value

The building itself has low evidential value, but the site keeps some of the elements of the previous building, such as the walls and gate piers. The meeting house has medium evidential significance.

Historical value

The building has medium historical value as a mid twentieth-century meeting house, built in an area of planned nineteenth-century residential development.

Aesthetic value

The building has aesthetic value for the good handling of the spaces, and the careful site management to take advantage of changes in level and integrate the courtyard and garden settings into the composition. Paul Mauger was an architect of some note who designed well-crafted buildings some of which have been listed. The garden pavilion is a good example of simple modernist design. The place has medium aesthetic value.

Communal value

The building is fairly well-used by local groups and has medium communal value

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *Manchester & Warrington*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0015710*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Salford City Council*

1.5 Civil parish: *Eccles*

1.6 Historic England locality: *North West*

1.7 Listed status: *N/A*

1.8 NHLE: *N/A*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *N/A*

1.12 Date(s): *1962*

1.13 Architect (s): *Paul Mauger*

1.14 Date of visit: *9 July 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Clare Hartwell*

1.16 Name of contact made on site: *Alfred Chow*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Attached house and detached community room*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D. M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp. 323–324

Architectural plans and drawings kept on site, including 1962 scheme drawings.

Nick Clifford, *Local Meeting Survey*, June 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

The meeting at Eccles was established in 1876 and a meeting house built in 1877. By 1962 it was in poor repair and inadequate for purpose. A decision was taken to sell the site and build anew. A plot was acquired in a residential area of Eccles known as the Polygon. This had been built as a residential development in 1873, incorporating an older house called Yew Tree Cottage. This cottage was demolished and the site used to build a new meeting house to designs by Paul Mauger, opened in 1962. The building incorporates a warden's house, and a detached block was provided to serve as a classroom as part of the design. The gate piers and exterior walls relating to the cottage were retained and new gardens laid out. The character of the area was changed as a result of a new road layout introduced in the late 1960s or early 1970s which cut across the formerly secluded housing layout of the Polygon.

The main alterations since that time were undertaken in 2007-8 by the Bernard Taylor Partnership when the entrance arrangements were reconfigured and a lift inserted to facilitate access for the less able. Facilities were upgraded at the same time. The classroom block was refurbished in 2015.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

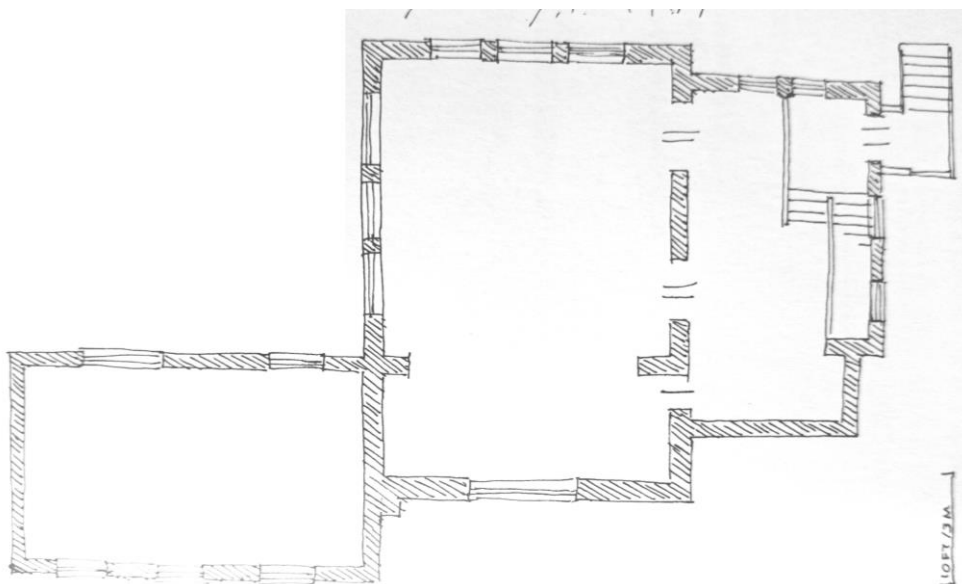


Figure 1: Ground floor plan of the meeting house as reconstructed by Butler (not to scale) (Butler (1999), vol. 1, p.324)

The meeting house was built in 1962 designed by Paul Mauger. It is built of brown brick laid in stretcher bond and forms an irregular L-shape with the attached residential accommodation forming a short arm and one side of a courtyard. The principal entrance, with a simple canopy and double doors, is reached from the main road and the south side. An alternative entrance has now been formed on the west side. The building has a large kitchen, social and service area on the ground floor, which has large windows towards the courtyard and a door into the space. A circulation area with access to toilets and a lift has the original stairs leading up to the upper floor. The upper area is split between a generous

landing and the meeting room proper. This is a very well-lit room with some original fixed bench seating, enjoying views over the gardens.

The detached former classroom block takes the form of a pavilion with a flat roof and generous glazed screens giving views of the gardens.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There is a range of loose furnishings, mostly of twentieth century date.

2.4. Attached burial ground

None.

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

This part of Eccles is a largely residential area with a leafy character. Although the immediate setting of the meeting house is affected by the busy road system, it retains a pleasant atmosphere derived from the attractive garden setting with mature trees.



Figure 2. The Polygon, part of the wider setting of the meeting house

2.6. Listed status

The building is not listed and it is not considered to be a candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential

There could in theory be some archaeological potential as the predecessor building on the site, Yew Tree Cottage, may have been of pre-nineteenth century date, subject to the extent of later site disturbance.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good. A QI was undertaken in 2013 and the only issue requiring attention related to health and safety issues which have now been addressed.
- ii) Attached burial ground: Optimal/generally satisfactory. The grounds are maintained as attractive gardens, with a subsidiary area where a vegetable garden has been started.

3.2. Maintenance

The building is regularly monitored by Friends, to supplement the QI system.

3.3 Sustainability

The meeting does not use the Sustainability Toolkit. There are plans to introduce additional energy-efficient measures and the garden is maintained as a wildlife area.

3.3. Amenities

The meeting house has a range of amenities including a large kitchen and social area, toilets, parking area and the detached garden room, or tea room.

3.4 Access

The building is fully accessible with a drop-off point, on-site parking, level access, lift and disabled toilets. There is also a hearing loop.

3.5. Community Use

The meeting house is used by local groups for around twelve hours per week. Well-lit rooms, on-site parking and good facilities including gardens are attractive qualities to local users. There is a standard lettings policy and users are assessed on a case-by-case basis; no alcohol can be consumed on the premises.

3.5. Heritage Crime

The principal problem in the area is unauthorised parking, but the meeting does not report heritage crime or anti-social behaviour.

Part 4: Impact of Change

4.1. To what extent is the building amenable or vulnerable to change?

- i) As a Meeting House only:* Recent remodelling has answered the immediate needs of the meeting, but there is scope for further change if required, with no heritage constraints.
- ii) For wider community use, additional to local Meeting use:* There is scope for change if required, but the current facilities meet the needs of users.
- iii) As a consequence of being laid down as a Meeting House and passing into secular use:* The premises could offer good flexible premises for possible office or community use, and there are no heritage constraints on redevelopment.

Part 5: Category: 3