

Friends Meeting House, Harlow

1 Church Leys, Harlow, Essex, CM18 6BX

National Grid Reference: TL 45588 09092



Statement of Significance

A simple functional modern meeting house of the early 1960s. Overall it is of medium significance.

Evidential value

The building was erected on a new site in the 1960s, has been little altered, and is of low evidential value.

Historical value

The meeting house was erected as part of the development of Harlow New town and is of medium historical value

Aesthetic value

The building is characteristic of the 1960s and for that reason 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: *0032910*
- 1.3 Owner: *Six Weeks Meeting*
- 1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Harlow Council*
- 1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*
- 1.6 Civil parish: *Harlow 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): *1962*
- 1.13 Architect (s): *Norman Frith*
- 1.14 Date of visit: *11 August 2015*
- 1.15 Name of report author: *Neil Burton*
- 1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Valerie Caldwell*
- 1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *none*
- 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. 189-90

Local meeting survey by Valerie Caldwell, August 2015

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

2.1. Historical background

In 1955 the monthly meeting asked that a site for a meeting house be allocated in Harlow New Town. A small meeting gathered from 1959 and it was decided to erect a meeting house on the half-acre site allocated by the New Town council. A design was prepared by the architect Norman Frith for a building with a timber shell roof, but it was rejected in favour of the present simpler flat-roofed design by the same architect. A council house adjoining the meeting-house plot was allocated by the Council for use by warden.

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

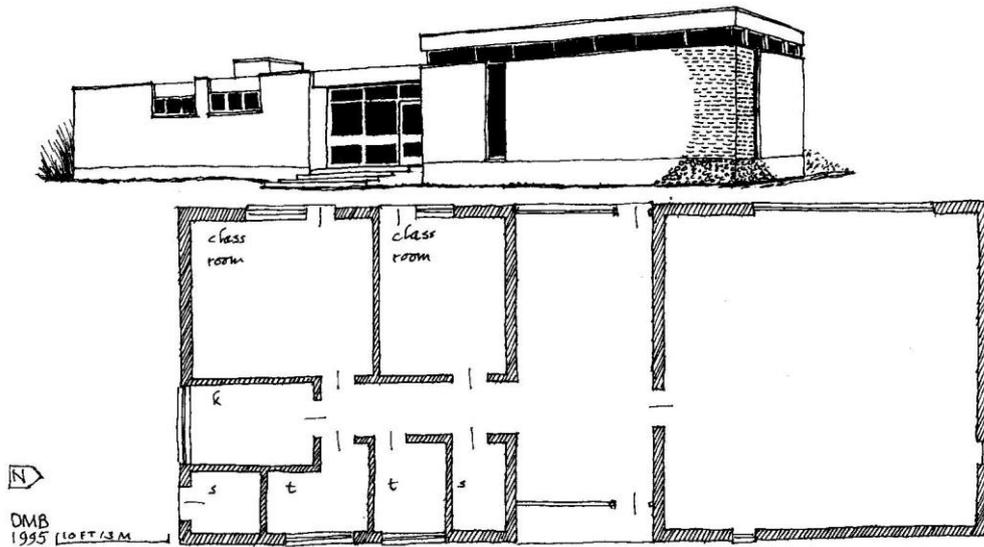


Fig.1 The ground plan and perspective view of the original building from *Butler* vol 1 p.189

The building is single storeyed with a flat roof. The walls are faced with brown brick laid in stretcher bond; the roof is covered with mineral felt. The plan is a rectangle, with the meeting room at one end, separated from the other spaces by a wide internal lobby. The meeting room is raised slightly above the rest of the building with a strip clerestorey on all four sides. The rear elevation facing the substantial garden has large windows with French doors, now mostly replaced in uPVC. The interior of the meeting room is simply fitted, with cork-tiled floors, plain plastered walls and the concrete ceiling beams exposed.

2.3 Loose furnishings

There are at least two old oak benches of traditional form within the building. Their origin is not known.

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

None

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house stands in a substantial half-acre plot with several fruit trees. The outer parts of the plot are now considerably overgrown. The meeting house fronts onto a small green enclosed by modern two storey houses. At the rear of the plot is a cycle route.

2.6. Listed status

The building is not a candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The meeting house was built on a greenfield site with low archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

i) Meeting House: Good. The flat roof has been replaced within the last 20 years. The most recent Quinquennial survey was made in July 2008. A number of minor issues were identified, in particular the leaking door-cills, and these remain to be dealt with.

ii) Attached burial ground (if any): N/A

3.2. Maintenance

There is a five-year maintenance and repair plan for the building under the Six Weeks Meeting schedule

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting uses the Sustainability Toolkit. A new efficient boiler has been installed recently.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting has all the amenities it needs.

3.5. Access

A ramp has been installed to the rear entrance near the car parking area and the interior of the building is all on the level. There is a WC suitable for wheelchair-users.

There is on-site car parking and regular buses from the bus and railway station.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is available for lettings for a theoretical 144 hours per week (four rooms of varying sizes) and is regularly let for between 54 and 60 hours per week. Acceptable users are those in line with Quaker values and testimonies. The meeting house has the advantage of a quiet location with a pleasant enclosed garden, good parking facilities and reasonable charges.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There has been some low-level crime on the nearby housing estates but none at the meeting house. Generally this is an area of low deprivation and high community confidence.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no 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 meeting house has all the facilities it currently needs.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house is already used for other purposes besides worship.

iii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The building would probably find a compatible new use if laid down.

Part 5: Category: 3