

Friends Meeting House, Stockport

Cooper Street, Stockport, SK1 3DW

National Grid Reference: SJ 89841 89434



Statement of Significance

As a modern building, the meeting house itself has low heritage significance. The sustainable architecture used for the meeting house gives a unique identity to the building and helps to minimise the environmental impact of the buildings efficiency.

Evidential value

The building is a recent building constructed on the site of a former post-war meeting house. It is of low evidential value.

Historical value

As a relatively recent build this building has low historical value. The site can provide local context into the modern history of Quakerism in Stockport.

Aesthetic value

The meeting house has a unique and honest design which demonstrates the advancing technologies used to create a sustainable building.

Communal value

The meeting house was built for Quaker use. However, it is also a community resource. The building is used by a number of local groups and visitors and has a high communal value.

Part 1: Core data

1.1 Area Meeting: *East Cheshire*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0008150*

1.3 Owner: *Friends Trust*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *North West*

1.6 Civil parish: *Stockport*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed*

1.8 NHLE: *No applicable*

1.9 Conservation Area: *No*

1.10 Scheduled Ancient Monument: *No*

1.11 Heritage at Risk: *No*

1.12 Date(s): *2015*

1.13 Architect (s): *Vicky Saunders (Bernard Taylor Partnership)*

1.14 Date of visit: *17th June 2015*

1.15 Name of report author: *Emma Neil*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Joan Armstrong*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *Not applicable*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Bibliographic references:

David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1999), vol. 1, pp.54-55.

Ian Hamilton, *Local Meeting Survey*, February 2015

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Planning Application Archive – DC/052269

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

2.1. Historical background

In the year 1647, George Fox the founder of the Quakers spoke in Dukinfield a parish north-east of Stockport. It was soon after this that Quakers began to be active in Stockport; the earliest record of Meetings taking place is dated from minutes of 1694. At this time the Friends did not have a meeting house and Meetings were held in each other's homes. Around 1700, land was purchased at the junction of Lower and Middle Hillgate on the south side of the town centre, for a meeting house and burial ground.

There is a complicated history of meeting houses in Stockport; the first meeting house on Hillgate opened in 1706, but by 1787, the building was in a deteriorating condition and additional adjacent land was purchased for a new building. The membership of Friends had steadily increased in Stockport by the end of the nineteenth century and proposals to extend and enlarge the meeting house were considered. However, due to the number of repairs needed the 1787 meeting house was demolished and a new meeting house opened in 1901 (Fig.1). This had been sold by 1959.



Figure 1: Meeting House of 1901 on Lower Hillgate (Stockport Meeting House archive)

In 1960, Friends purchased a property at 240 Wellington Road South and alterations were undertaken to convert the property into a meeting house. The property was subsequently sold in 1977.

By the late 1970's the Friends wanted a purpose built meeting house and a plot of land was purchased on Cooper Street for £8,300; in 1979 the meeting house was built at a cost of £40,000. As the running and maintenance costs of this meeting house had become too costly, a decision was made to demolish the meeting house and build a new one on the same site. The Friends approached Bernard Taylor Partnership in 2012 and worked closely with the architects on the design and layout of the new meeting house. The meeting house opened in April 2015 and the first Meeting for worship was held on 26th April 2015. The building cost in the region of £450,000, funds for which were raised by the Friends over a two year period.



Figure 2: Meeting House of 1979 (Stockport Meeting House archive)

2.2. The building and its principal fittings and fixtures

The meeting house was designed by Bernard Taylor Partnership and opened in April 2015. It is built of red brick laid in stretcher bond, the roof is covered in Redland Cambrian grey

slates, windows are grey aluminium Velfac, and there are uPVC fascias and rainwater goods. The L-plan building is divided into two components: the main meeting room and store to the south and lobby area, ancillary facilities and further smaller meeting rooms to the north.

The single-storey building has been designed with a skillion and lean-to roof. The west front elevation has a central glazed and aluminium-framed porch, to the left two top-hung casement windows and to the right a 5-light window with top-hung openings, all with segmental brick heads. The south side has a 9-light horizontal window with a segmental brick head and sill with an emergency exit doorway to the right. The roof to the south has two rows of photovoltaic panels. The north side has two vertical windows and five smaller rectangular windows below the eaves and two rooflights. The east elevation has two pairs of 3-light windows and two pairs of 2-light windows.

The main meeting room, smaller meeting rooms and ancillary facilities are accessed via a pleasant light and spacious lobby area. The lobby is plastered and walls painted white, with pine flooring and is lit by two roof lights. The interior of the main meeting room is rectangular in shape. The room has a suspended tiled ceiling, pine flooring and plastered walls painted white. The room is well-lit by windows to the south and west. A mixture of modern loose chairs and benches are arranged in a square around a central circular table. Doors to the east lead into a storage area for the meeting room.

2.3. Loose furnishings

Throughout the meeting house there are a number of historic pine benches which are likely to be from one of the former meeting houses.



Figure 3: Historic benches in meeting room

2.4. Attached burial ground (if any)

Not applicable

2.5. The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house has a central location just south of Stockport centre and is on a corner site at the junction of Higher Hillgate and Longshut Lane. The building adjacent to Cooper Street is the locally listed Royal Oak Brewery which dates from the nineteenth century. The latter building has recently (2011) been restored and redeveloped with two new contemporary wings now serving as residential use. To the west is the main A6 road and Longshut Lane to the south which is lined with a mixture of commercial properties.

The immediate setting of the meeting house is defined by hedges with two metal fenced entrances to the north and south. A modest sized car park with bicycle shelter is located to the west, along with an attractive landscaped garden. Planting has just begun on the land to the east of the meeting house.

2.6. Listed status

Not listed and not considered to be a future candidate for listing.

2.7. Archaeological potential of the site

The Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record was consulted and no records have been identified for the site which is outside the medieval/post-medieval core of Stockport. A former meeting house was located on site previously, however as this was a post-war meeting house and the site is likely to be of low archaeological potential.

Part 3: Current use and management

See completed volunteer survey

3.1. Condition

- i) Meeting House: Good. The meeting house recently opened in April 2015. The design and materials that have been used will ensure a long building life with minimum maintenance costs.
- ii) Attached burial ground (if any): Not applicable.

3.2. Maintenance

The meeting house does not have a five year maintenance and repair plan. This is a new meeting house and at the moment there isn't a need for major repair. However, members will monitor the meeting house, undertake required maintenance and repairs as necessary.

3.3. Sustainability

The meeting house was built with sustainability at the forefront of the plans. The Friends worked closely with Bernard Taylor Partnership to incorporate the Quakers' vision into the building by constructing a meeting house that is not only a welcoming place for worship but available for community use and designed to be sustainable. The following steps have been taken to create a sustainable meeting house:

- Climate change and energy efficiency: The building uses LED technology that reduces energy consumption, hot water return valve reduces water consumption, and there is triple glazing and insulation in the walls, floor and roof. The photovoltaic panels on the south-facing roof generate electricity during the day (revenue-earning potential) and trees on the site have been thinned out to ensure maximum solar gain to the panels.
- Resource use, recycling and waste management: the meeting house uses the local authority recycling scheme.

- Building maintenance and refurbishment: The building was built using materials constructed with high U-values to ensure a sustainable approach.
- Wildlife, ecology and conservation: the Friends are currently introducing new planting and landscaping to provide wildlife habitats.
- Transport: Friends car-share where possible and bicycle racks are provided on-site.

The meeting house has an energy performance certificate and as a result of implementing the above measures the meeting house has an A+ energy performance asset rating.

3.4. Amenities

The meeting house has all the amenities it needs. These include a kitchen area, three female and male WCs, a separate fully accessible toilet which also includes baby changing facilities and a shower, two meeting rooms and a Friends room/library.

3.5. Access

The Friends were keen for a building to be designed so no one is disadvantaged using the meeting house. During the design and planning of the building a Disability Access Audit was undertaken. The meeting house car park contains two disabled car parking spaces near to the entrance. Level access is provided throughout the meeting house and there is a hearing loop within the main meeting room.

The meeting is accessible by public transport and is close to the town centre. Bus and train services run seven days a week. There is car parking on site for fourteen cars and the meeting house has secure facilities for bicycles.

3.6 Community Use

The meeting house is used by Friends for six hours each week and is currently in community use for 12 hours each week. The meeting house has two rooms which are available for lettings for 76 hours each week. The meeting house has only been opened for a short period of time and Friends are currently encouraging and increasing the number of groups who use the meeting house. In May 2015 an open house was arranged for local groups and residents to see the facilities available for let. There is a lettings policy being prepared; the rooms are not available for purely commercial purposes or party political nature. The Friends provide reduced rates for charities and is available for free to the peace forum.

3.7. Vulnerability to crime

There have been no incidents of crime since the new meeting house has been built. The previous meeting house on site had been subject to window damage and two break-ins in 2011 and 2012. The Friends have developed a liaison with the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team and the architect liaised with the police in terms of designing security measures into the new meeting house.

3.8. Plans for change

There are no future 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 been designed by the architects with input from Friends to ensure the building caters for the needs of the Meeting.

ii) For wider community use, in addition to local Meeting use: The meeting house has been designed with a strong community focus providing accessible meeting rooms for hire with the associated ancillary facilities.

ii) Being laid down as a Meeting House: The friends are currently increasing the number of community groups that utilise the building. In the unfortunate event of the meeting house being laid down the meeting house could best serve as a community venue.

Part 5: Category: 4