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Heritage Statement

Re: Friends Meeting House, Sawley, Clitheroe, Lancashire

For: IWA Architects, Clitheroe



Sawley Friends Meeting House

Dr Martin Seddon: 26th February 2016

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GENERAL VIEW OF SAWLEY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE.

Heritage Statement

Purpose

NOTE: This is a preliminary report intended to be used only for the application for change of use from D1 and associated ground works and only contains information relevant for that purpose.

This report fulfils the requirements of Policy HE6 of the Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5 - Planning for the Historic Environment - introduced in 2010. The requirement is made due to the property in question being listed at Grade II (see Appendix 1).

There is a standard listing entry regarding this property on the Heritage Gateway but no relevant record has been retrieved from the Lancashire Archives website¹.

This report follows an internal and external inspection on Thursday 25th February 2016.

Heritage Assets

The building lies within the Sawley Conservation Area and is marked on the plan as a Listed Building. However, It is not identified as a significant structure nor is the view of it from the main Sawley to Grindleton Road identified as an 'important view'.²

¹ The latter due to the lack of an online database.

² https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/downloads/download/3339/sawley_conservation_area [accessed 29th February 2016]



FIRST EDITION 'COUNTY SERIES' 1: 10000 OS MAP

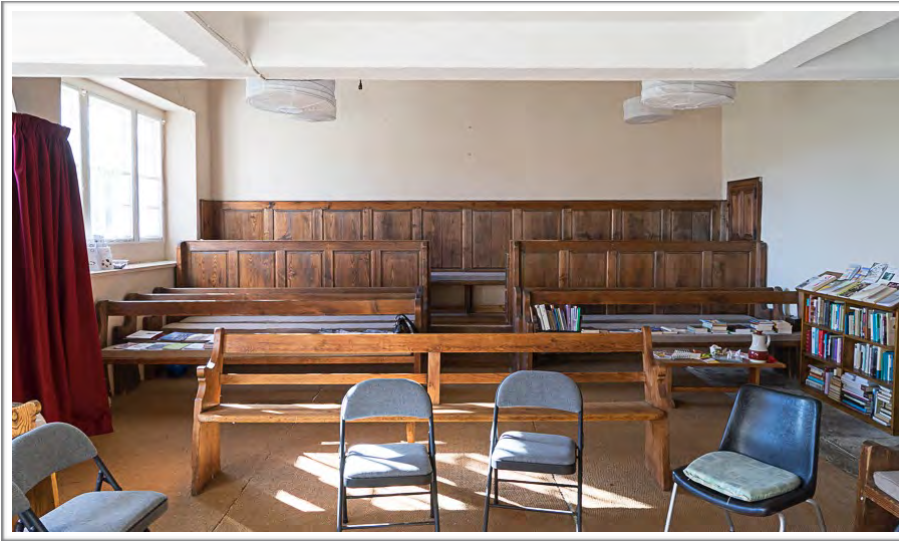
The original, purpose built, part of this building was constructed in 1777 and replaced a previous structure that had existed on the site prior to its use for its current purpose. The architect is not known and the construction is in a vernacular style in that the front and east elevations are of coursed, watershot limestone blocks, the rear of un-coursed rubble and the roof is of sandstone slabs. This is similar to other buildings in the wider locality including both domestic and agricultural buildings. A later extension to the attached cottage was added in 1907-8 and designed by a local architect, Herbert W. Asman, ARIBA, Clitheroe, and covers what is presumably a pre-existing watershot limestone gable. This is constructed from brick with a pebble-dashed render. The roof is similar to the main building.

The specialised use of the building is denoted by the fenestration which is not domestic in nature. The two, equally spaced tripartite windows either side of a double opening door with semi-circular fanlight give the appearance of a building in communal use rather than domestic use. As is the case with many non-conformist chapels and meeting houses this building is set well back from the main thoroughfare. However, in this instance it is not due to the desire to maintain a low profile within the community but rather because this was the part of the land owned by a local Quaker farmer in Grindleton (who gave the land specifically for this use) that was nearest to the geographical location of the worshipping community prior to the establishment of a fixed location.

Internally the attached cottage, intended for a resident caretaker or warden, is unremarkable in its design and construction. There are interesting details due to the layout of the original cottage that makes the relationship to the later extension quirky but these are not of any particular heritage value.

Internal to the Meeting Room part of the building there are fixed, raised benches on the wall adjacent to the cottage [see photo below]. These, along with other original woodwork in this part of the building are of unpainted pitch pine. Some small repairs have been carried out to the floor of the raised benches.

This room has a gallery [see photo below]. The front of this is formed of two horizontal rows of three pitch pine panels sitting on a bressumer. The lower row of panels is fixed while the upper row is designed to be raised so that the occupants of the gallery area can see the room below. This is a



RAISED BENCHES IN THE MEETING ROOM



RAISED PANEL ON THE GALLERY IN THE MEETING ROOM

common arrangement in early Friends Meeting Houses to facilitate specific forms of worship and business meetings. Some recent alterations now restrict the ability of one panel to fully open and one of the ceiling hooks intended to retain them in their raised position is missing. Repairs have been carried out to the central panel and lower frame of the central rising screen.

The building has a garden area in front with the lawned part having formerly been used as an unconsecrated burial ground. It is understood that, at this time, there is no intention to propose any works in this area.

The rear of the building is set into the hillside with an excavated walkway around the rear bordered by a raised level area leading to the natural hillside. No burials are registered in this area.

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Significance of the Assets

Prior to the Toleration Act 1688 (amended in 1799) it was illegal for non-conformist religious groups to own their own buildings. While Friends Meeting Houses do exist from prior to this date the majority of older buildings appear very quickly after it. This building is somewhat later than this initial rush to build.

As noted above, the external appearance indicates a particular usage and it would be preferable to retain this following any change of use. This is not to say that any alteration should be refused but that sufficient features are retained to maintain this indicated heritage. At this point however, there is nothing that would require the refusal of a change of use application.

Internally, the timber fixtures of the meeting room, while not uncommon, are in generally good repair considering their age and are unusual in that they have not been painted. They indicate the specific usage of the room and it is hoped that they would be retained in any future design proposals. However, in terms of a change of use application they do not represent an obstacle.

The use of the area (in this case the garden) in front of a meeting house of any age as a burial ground is common practise as Quakers were not allowed to be, nor would they want to be, buried in consecrated ground. As noted above, there is no indication that this area would be altered. There are many instances of former burial grounds being used as domestic gardens following changes of use, as well as remains being exhumed and re-buried elsewhere. This, therefore, should not represent an issue for a change of use.

Potential Impact of Change of Use from Religious use to Domestic use

As has been outlined above, it is not felt that the change of use as proposed will have any material impact on the external appearance of either the building or its setting. It is understood that the current worshipping group are fully supportive of an application for change of use to domestic classification.

Although of a particular appearance, the building sits within a domestic setting with an dwelling of possibly contemporaneous origin to the east and a relatively modern house to the west.

Internally, again a change to domestic use should not have any effect and it is for the subsequent applications for permission to determine the extent of any changes allowed.

Other Considerations

It is understood that the applicant would wish to further excavate the rear of the eastern part of the building to form a parking area. This has been previously excavated at various times during the life of the building and owing to its relatively isolated location should not have any visible impact on the appearance of the setting from the main road. Indeed, as vehicles are currently parked adjacent to the building this may represent an improvement. [See photo below]



VIEW UP THE APPROACH LANE

Further, it is assumed that the applicant would need some form of access between cottage part of the building and the meeting room. Fortunately, earlier extensions of differing dates to the rear of the building will allow that to be provided with no impact on the heritage aspects of the building.



EXISTING EXTENSIONS TO THE REAR OF THE PROPERTY

Conclusion

Although this building has some importance locally, when viewed in the context of the styles of Friends Meeting Houses nationally it is not remarkable. However, as has been outlined above, there are design aspects, both externally and internally, that it would be desirable to retain in order not to damage the local heritage.

With this in mind it should be possible for the change of use from religious to domestic classes to be carried out without any detrimental effects.

A final comment is that the current worshipping group have found for some considerable time that the building no longer meets their requirements and therefore need to find alternative premises. Although there will some sadness that the building will no longer be a Friends Meeting House they are fully supportive of its conversion to a dwelling.

R Martin Seddon

February 2016

R. Martin Seddon holds a BSc (Hons) Environmental Management and MSc Building Heritage and Conservation from the University of Central Lancashire and a PhD in Ruskin Studies from Lancaster University. He has extensive experience of recording buildings photographically and has lectured on Town and Country Planning to post-graduate level.

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Appendix ONE

SD 772 466 GRINDLETON

SD 74 NE

7/107 Friends' Meeting House and house adjoining to south-west 16.11.1954 GV II

Quaker meeting house, late C18th. Squared watershot limestone with sandstone dressings and stone slate roof. Meeting house, to the right, of one storey with gallery. House of 2 storeys. Meeting house has a tripartite sashed window with glazing bars, plain stone surround and square mullions on each side of the door. The double door has raised and fielded panels and a plain stone surround with a semi-circular head with keystone, rising above a lintel. The fanlight has radiating glazing bars. The house has a bay to the left of its door having sashed windows with glazing bars and plain stone surrounds. To its left are projecting quoins, matching those at the right of the meeting house. To the left is a C19th extension having chamfered quoins of imitation stone. On the 1st floor is a 2-light window with plain stone surround and square mullion. On the ground floor is a French window with plain stone surround. The left-hand gable has a brick chimney cap. The right-hand gable wall of the meeting house has 2 2-light windows on the 1st floor with plain stone surrounds and square mullions. Below is a door with plain stone surround. Interior. The meeting room has fixed pine benches of raised and fielded panels at its left-hand side. At the right is a wide gallery, formerly used by women and children, having a front of raised and fielded panels, some of which open as shutters.

Listing NGR: SD7726846688