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Heritage Statement

[Full Report - 19th July 2016]

Re: Former Friends Meeting House, Sawley, Clitheroe, Lancashire

For: Paul & Diane Atkinson
via IWA Architects, Clitheroe



Sawley former Friends Meeting House

Dr Martin Seddon: 19th July 2016

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GENERAL VIEW OF SAWLEY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE.

Heritage Statement

Purpose

NOTE: This is an enhanced report following grant of an application for change of use from D1 to domestic use.

This report fulfils the requirements of Section 2, para 7 *et seq.*, *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2*¹ published in March 2015. The requirement is made due to the property being listed at Grade II.

The building lies within the Sawley Conservation Area and is mentioned in the appraisal document of 25th October 2005²

There is a standard listing entry regarding this property on the Heritage Gateway but no relevant record has been retrieved from the Lancashire Archives website³. The listing details are included here as appendix one.

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

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa2-managing-significance-in-decision-taking/>

² https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/downloads/file/3703/sawley_conservation_area_appraisal [accessed 29th February 2016]

³ The latter due to the lack of an online database.

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'.⁴



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.

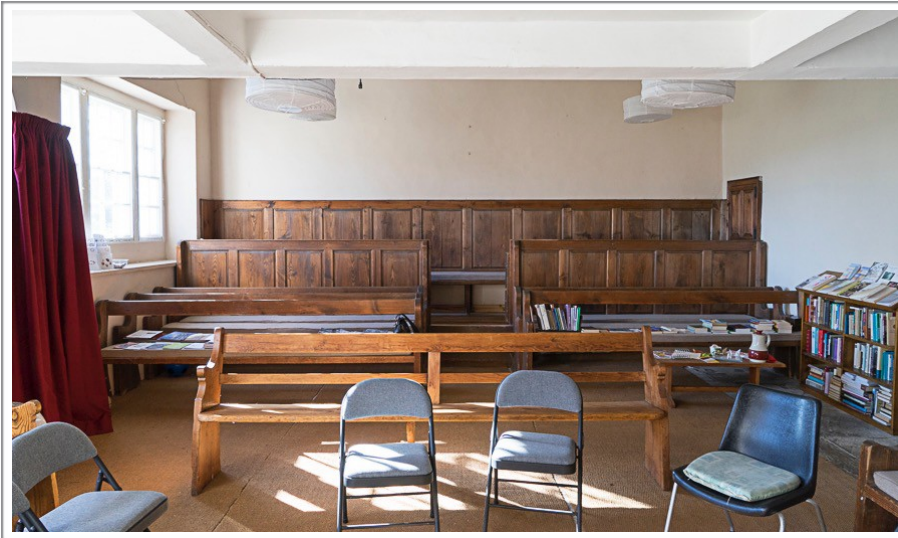
The specialised use of the building is denoted by the fenestration which is not domestic in nature. The two, equally spaced tripartite windows either side of a double opening door with semi-circular fanlight give the appearance of a building in communal use rather than domestic use. As is the case with 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.

⁴ https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/downloads/download/3339/sawley_conservation_area [accessed 29th February 2016]

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.

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.

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 noted that they are retained in the current design proposals.

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. 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. The current proposals do not affect this area.

Potential impact of proposed alterations

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

Specific considerations:

1 HEATING

As is usual with Friends Meeting Houses of this date no provision was made for heating the main building. There is a fireplace on the gallery in the meeting room but this would not affect the main room and the gallery was only used for business meetings. The original part of the cottage would probably have had a cooking range installed. When the 1907-8 extension was added, this was presumably replaced by a standard fireplace and a further fireplace was installed in the living room this created. Until recently there was a coal-fired Rayburn in the kitchen (this is now a gas-fired Aga). Fireplaces were also built in the two new bedrooms in the extension. At a later date electric night-storage heaters have been fitted. These are generally unsightly and any type of new heating system would improve the general appearance of the rooms.

The proposal to install a modern heating system would be entirely consistent with standard improvements to this type of building regardless of the current change to domestic use. The ground

Indeed, this allows for the provision of free movement between the existing worship and domestic areas without any works being required to the original structure. The proposal to make the currently blocked up former window in the older rear extension into a doorway to create a passage would not lead to the loss of any original structure. This seems to be an ideal situation, especially in relation to the following point.



EXISTING EXTENSIONS TO THE REAR OF THE PROPERTY

4 INTERNAL FIXED BENCHES, WALL PANELS & GALLERY

It is noted that there are no proposals to alter the fixed benches and panels on the west internal wall of the former meeting room, nor of the gallery on the eastern wall.

The benches and gallery are important indicators of the original use of the building and are specifically mentioned in the listing (see appendix one). They are of un-treated pitch pine and are presumed to be original. One panel in the raisable shutter to the gallery has been replaced to match the original. The un-treated appearance is significant as many similar features in other meeting houses were painted in the mid-twentieth century as an 'improvement' or modernisation. The loss of these features would represent a significant change to the character of this room although would not be visible externally. However, as this is now a domestic property and will be privately owned it could be argued that any loss would be of no significance as internal access will not be possible for the general public.

A similar situation could be argued for in the case of the gallery. The usual practice in this age and earlier meeting houses with internal galleries was to arrange window openings to suit the internal layout. Thus externally the position of the gallery was indicated through the placing of additional windows at the gallery level. In the case of Sawley Friends Meeting House this is not the case and the presence of the gallery is only very slightly indicated externally, leaving the windows symmetrically arranged either side of the door.

Therefore, while the alteration or even removal of the internal benches, panelling and gallery would significantly alter the internal character of the former meeting room the lack of future public access to this area renders this of less significance. Of more significance would be the implications of this for the external character of the building, and has been shown, this would in no way be affected.

Conclusion

Although this building is of local interest, 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 lose part of the local heritage.

As has been pointed out, the change to domestic use that has been approved now means that public access to the interior of the property will effectively cease. The current proposals for alterations are entirely consistent with the re-use of this building as a domestic property. The external character of the building will be little altered and the original parts not altered at all. The visible presence of this historic building in its original position and largely in its original state, especially from public rights of way, will be maintained and its status in the heritage of the area upheld. This conforms to the principle laid out in Policy 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

A final comment is that the current worshiping group have found for some considerable time that the building no longer meets their requirements and therefore needed 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. This situation is similar to that of most denominations who are seeing their former places of worship sometimes altered beyond recognition and often demolished. This proposal will prevent that from happening in this case and will allow the building to live on in a sympathetic manner. This is entirely consistent with Policy 131 of the NPPF in that it will ensure the 'sustaining' of this heritage asset. By becoming a family home it will also help the viability of the local community, schools, etc.

R Martin Seddon

July 2016

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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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This report has been produced using publicly available information and personal knowledge. This is provided in good faith and no liability is accepted for any loss or damage subsequent to the use of this document. Further use of this document confirms acceptance of this condition.

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