

## ***Friends Meeting House, Billericay***

*School Road, Billericay, Essex, CM12 9LH*

*National Grid Reference: TQ 67586 93993*



### ***Statement of Significance***

***The meeting house has medium heritage significance as an inter-war suburban house which was converted for use as a meeting house.***

#### ***Evidential value***

***The meeting house and its site have low evidential value as an inter-war suburban house (originally known as the Red House) built in the former grounds of the mid-nineteenth-century South Lodge, and converted to meeting house use in 1957–8.***

#### ***Historical value***

***Little is known about the early history of the Red House, its architect and occupiers. As a typical suburban house which was converted to meeting house use it has low historical value.***

#### ***Aesthetic value***

***The meeting house is a well-designed building, whose elevations combine Arts and Crafts elements with neo-Georgian sash windows. The interiors retain no historic features and the medium aesthetic value resides chiefly in the external elevations.***

**Communal value**

***The building's primary use is as a Quaker meeting house but is also rented out to local community groups. Due to these uses, the building has symbolic, social and spiritual significance, all of which lend it high communal value.***

**Part 1: Core data**

1.1 Area Meeting: *Mid-Essex*

1.2 Property Registration Number: *0032530*

1.3 Owner: *Area Meeting with Friends Trusts Limited who hold the deeds as custodian trustees*

1.4 Local Planning Authority: *Basildon District Council*

1.5 Historic England locality: *East of England*

1.6 Civil parish: *Billericay*

1.7 Listed status: *Not listed, not locally 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): *c.1920s*

1.13 Architect(s): *Not established*

1.14 Date of visit: *18 June 2014*

1.15 Name of report author: *Johanna Roethe*

1.16 Name of contact(s) made on site: *Andrew Watson and Peter Garratt*

1.17 Associated buildings and sites: *None*

1.18 Attached burial ground: *No*

1.19 Information sources:

Butler, D.M., *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 1999, vol. 1, p. 174

Billericay Local Meeting archive, plans and documents

Billericay Local Meeting, typescript of talk to Women's Institute, 6 April 2011

Local Meeting survey by Peter Garratt, Andrew Watson and Rachel Martin, 2014 and 2015

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

### **2.1 Historical background**

A building was first acquired for a meeting house in Billericay by 1698 (according to Butler; the local meeting's own history has 1704 as the date of the acquisition). The size of the meeting declined in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The meeting house closed and was sold (by 1800 according to Butler, in 1848 according to the local meeting's history).

From 1937, groups of Billericay Quakers started to meet again, initially at a private home, then in the Women's Institute Hall. In December 1957, the sale of the old meeting house in Chelmsford also provided funds to buy the so-called Red House in Billericay and convert it for use as a meeting house. According to map evidence the Red House was built between 1922 and 1937 in the grounds of the adjacent South Lodge, but its actual construction date, builder and designer are not known. The meeting house was officially opened on 20 September 1958. Alterations in 1957–8 included the installation of a WC in the former pantry and the removal of a wall between the former Morning Room and the Lounge (which was replaced by a curtain). The upstairs floor was used as a warden's flat.

In 2009, the surveyor Terry Gregson of GH Chartered Surveyors of Billericay surveyed the building and prepared a development appraisal report. The chosen option was to sell part of the plot for development with a detached house which provided the funds for the refurbishment of the meeting house and the flat above (which is rented out). This was undertaken in 2011–12. New separate entrance porches were built for the meeting house and the flat, and a disabled toilet extension built. A new car park was laid out with a shared drive for the meeting house and the new house. A single-storey 'cottage' in the grounds was demolished for the new house. (This appears to have been a linear brick building which pre-dated the Red House and probably associated with the early nineteenth-century South Lodge just to the north, possibly stables or coach house.) In 2013, sound insulation between the ground and first floor was installed.

### **2.2 The building and its principal fittings and furnishings**

The meeting house was built as a private detached house in the 1920s or 1930s. It is an L-plan building of two-storeys, built of orange brick laid in stretcher bond with a tiled roof. The garden elevation faces north-east towards Southend Road; on the ground floor this has a single-storey canted bay window which shares a flat roof with a short loggia over a central hexagonal window (with radial glazing bars) beside a sixteen-pane sash window. On the first floor are three twelve-pane sash windows. The motif of the hexagonal window recurs (without glazing bars) on the south-east elevation, now the main entrance to the meeting house. The gable end has two ground-floor eighteen-pane sash windows, and one centrally placed sash above (above which is the hexagonal window). The brick gabled porch was added in 2012. Above it is a short and wide sixteen-pane sash, while beside it is a small eight-pane sash. Two sash windows are on the southwest gable end (eight and twelve-pane). A single-storey extension containing a disabled toilet and the entrance porch for the upstairs flat was built in the corner of the L-plan, 2012. In this area, the arrangement of the sash windows is less symmetrical than on the street-facing elevations. A back entrance door to the kitchen has been blocked recently. The northeast-facing gable end has the original entrance door with a lattice-pattern fanlight and a semi-circular canopy.

The interiors have been recently refurbished, with new skirtings, dado rails and picture rails. All the fireplaces have been blocked. The main meeting room is in the former lounge with the bay window. This can be connected by a folding screen to the present entrance hall (the

original morning room) to create a larger room; the wall between the two spaces had already been removed in 1957–8 when it was replaced by a curtain. A smaller meeting room is in the former entrance hall.

### 2.3 Loose furnishings

None of particular note.

### 2.4 Attached burial ground (if any)

N/a

### 2.5 The meeting house in its wider setting

The meeting house is located on a corner site between Southend Road (A129) and School Road in an area south of the town centre. Access is via a driveway from School Road. The fence between the meeting house plot and the site of the new house runs close to the former entrance (which is now largely disused). School Road was developed in the inter-war period with local authority housing and the houses there are of a noticeably lower architectural quality than the meeting house, comprising semi-detached houses with pebble-dash elevations. There are also some older houses in the vicinity, such as nearby South Lodge (mid-nineteenth century, grade II) and Locker's Hall (early eighteenth-century and later, grade II), both on Southend Road. Map analysis suggests that the Red House was built in the grounds of South Lodge.

Key views of the meeting house are those from School Road and the car park of the southeast elevation, and from Southend Road of the garden (northeast) elevation. The land to the south of the meeting house is now a car park, while the areas to the north and east are maintained as a garden.

### 2.6 Listed status

The meeting house is not listed. It is a well-designed example of inter-war suburban housing, but is not considered to be a candidate for national designation or the local list.

### 2.7 Archaeological potential of the site

The Red House was built during the inter-war period, in gardens or grounds belonging to the mid-nineteenth-century South Lodge. The archaeological potential is considered to be low.