

ACV application for Friends Mission Hall

48-52 St. Georges's Rd. Pakefield NR33 0JP

As you approach the Friends Mission Hall there are no real clues as to its true historical value. It's rather plain facade, houses the only indication of its age, the foundation stone, clearly stating it was constructed in 1897. It was purpose built by the Society of Friends, which was flourishing around this time, to promote a more active pattern of worship which you would not find in normal Quaker meetings. It was also to provide an adult school to try and tackle high illiteracy found amongst the local fishermen and their families, as well as a Sunday school for the young. The hall provided this very important schooling for almost fifty years until the Education Act was introduced in 1944, changing the face of education for the future. However, the Mission continued to thrive, and it wasn't until recent years that numbers began to dwindle, but it continued to provide a home for local youth and other community groups up until its closure a few years ago. The building however still holds a high heritage significance, as along with only one other survivor in the UK, it makes it a rare example of a purpose built Quaker Mission Hall.

The Pakefield Community Group were only made aware of the sale/resale of the hall in March 2020, and as Chairman, I was very concerned for the future of the hall. Due to the Covid19 outbreak, it was not possible to organise an open meeting to gauge the views of the community, and put forward fears of the hall possibly being demolished for redevelopment, and also looking at ways that may help save the building, including as a Community Hub.

The Mission Hall has so much potential as a Community Hall, and lends itself to be able to accommodate so many activities, events, talks and presentations for Pakefield residents of all ages to enjoy. Some proposals include: Book and jigsaw exchange, local museum, venue for holding local councillor's surgeries, community office running a local helpline and regular coffee mornings etc. There would also be the opportunity to let the space to local groups seeking a home. All of these activities could take place without changing the integrity of the building, which would be lost if converted into dwellings

Sadly, our group has only been able to put these ideas out through social media, which is not accessible to a large proportion of our community, but we are beginning the process of printing and delivering information regarding the present situation to all households in Pakefield, and hopefully we will receive enough replies to gauge the true feelings of the community.

I feel that by submitting this nomination at this time for the Friends Mission Hall to be listed as an Asset of Community Value, it may help prevent the redevelopment, and save this piece of Pakefield's history for future generations.