



LONDON OFFICE

Ms Caroline Grist
Mid Sussex District Council
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Direct Dial: 0207 973 3627

Our ref: P01605480; L01605482

26th May 2026

Dear Ms Grist

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015
& T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**WYKEHURST HOUSE, WYKEHURST PARK, COLWOOD LANE, BOLNEY,
HAYWARDS HEATH, WEST SUSSEX RH17 5QQ
Application Nos DM/25/3228; DM/25/3229**

Thank you for your letters of 6th May 2026 regarding further information on the above applications for listed building consent and planning permission. On the basis of this information, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the applications.

Background

Historic England provided advice on 25th March 2026 to the original proposals to remodel the altered central lightwell and add a new staircase to restore the secondary circulation route.

In that advice, we raised concerns as considered that the scheme would introduce overly grand features and remove a large amount of historic fabric and evidential value resulting in harm to significance of this grade II* listed Victorian mansion of exceptional architectural and historic interest.

To reduce harm and meet the requirements of paragraphs 208 and 213 of the NPPF, we recommended revising the design to retain a greater proportion of historic fabric, avoid grand architectural gestures, and ensure the space reads as a subordinate circulation area reflecting the original spatial hierarchy of the house.



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Historic England Position on the Amended Proposals

The amended proposal retains the relocation of the reinstated secondary staircase to the west end of the atrium. However, it reduces the scale and visual prominence of the previously proposed three large arched openings to the north wall at second-floor level, along with a corresponding new archway to the south, which inappropriately echoed the grand architectural language of the principal staircase.

The revised scheme retains the original modest single arched opening on the north wall and introduces new openings that replicate its proportions and detailing. As before, the central openings would connect to a bridgeway providing access to the remodelled northern rooms, arranged as a large open lounge, and to the bedroom corridor.

We note from the newly submitted marked-up existing drawings that a number of the original openings facing the atrium have previously been boarded up, while others were inserted during the conversion of the house into flats in the 1970s. The legibility and consistency of the original opening configuration have therefore already been eroded. In this context, we consider that the reduction in scale of the proposed openings and their simplified design would limit further loss of historic fabric while reflecting the hierarchically subordinate character of this space.

Research undertaken by the applicant indicates that the original secondary staircase provided access to guest accommodation at second-floor level. This suggests that, although subsidiary to the principal staircase, it was nonetheless conceived as a piece of architectural quality and controlled display. Intended to convey a sense of grandeur to visitors, reflecting the status of the Huth family, its design would have aligned with the wider architectural ambition of Wykehurst House.

While reinstating the staircase in its original position at the east end of the atrium would represent a conceptually faithful approach, the available evidence is insufficient to support a precise and robust reinstatement of the historic arrangement of this space. We therefore consider that greater weight should be given to reinstating the overall character, spatial qualities and legibility of the space, rather than attempting to replicate its detailed historic configuration.

In this regard, we appreciate that the current atrium arrangement, which has subsumed and extended the originally adjacent lightwell, presents an opportunity to reconfigure the space into a light-filled hall leading to the secondary staircase, thereby creating a space of architectural quality that remains subordinate within the building's hierarchy.

However, the proposed reconfiguration of the second-floor northern rooms into a single open-plan lounge raises concerns. This approach departs from the historic cellular plan form and risks eroding the evidential and interpretative value of this part



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of the building. The creation of a large, unified space necessitates additional interventions, including the exposure of a vaulted ceiling to rebalance proportions and the insertion of a circular window on the north wall to introduce borrowed light into this volume. These elements further disconnect the space from its historic character.

In addition, the proposal to introduce identical fire surrounds to differently proportioned chimney breasts in order to impose a symmetrical composition results in a contrived and historically unsubstantiated arrangement. Taken together, these changes would result in a space that fails to convey an understanding of its original configuration, function or hierarchy, thereby causing harm to the building's significance.

In conclusion, while the amended proposals have addressed some of our previous concerns and have reduced the overall extent of harm caused by the earlier iterations, the scheme would nevertheless continue to result in some degree of *less than substantial harm*, in NPPF terms, to the significance of the listed building.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the applications on heritage grounds.

We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the applications to meet the requirements of paragraphs 208, 212 and 213 of the NPPF.

In determining these applications, you should bear in mind the statutory duty of sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

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