



Simon Dougall

Marlow House

107 High Street, Lindfield

West Sussex RH16 2HR

31st July 2026

Dear Simon

Re: Reinstatement of Lower Ground Floor Staircase - Grade II Listed Building

Following my inspection and consideration of the proposed reinstatement of the lower ground floor staircase within the Grade II listed property, I regret that I am unable to undertake this element of the works. My reasons are set out below.

Health and Safety Considerations

The existing arrangement incorporates an open cellar hatch directly beneath the proposed staircase location. In its current condition, this presents a significant health and safety risk and does not provide a safe working or finished environment.

In order for a staircase to be installed safely, the cellar opening would first require a robust and secure hatch capable of supporting anticipated loading and preventing accidental falls. Without such a hatch in place, I cannot responsibly proceed with the installation.

However, the installation of a permanent staircase would introduce a further issue. Once the staircase is fitted, it would obstruct the operation of the cellar hatch, preventing it from opening fully and thereby restricting or preventing future access to the cellar. This creates an inherent conflict between maintaining safe access to the cellar and installing the proposed staircase.

As a contractor, I am not prepared to carry out work that would either leave an unsafe condition or create a design arrangement that compromises safe future access and maintenance.



Heritage and Conservation Considerations

I have also reviewed the heritage significance of the existing staircase. As recorded by Desbrulais Heritage Specialist, the original historic fabric has been substantially removed and replaced with heavily altered modern timber. Consequently, the staircase no longer retains its original historic construction or material significance.

From a conservation perspective, there is therefore little or no evidential or heritage value remaining within the existing staircase structure. The works would not constitute the repair or conservation of original historic fabric but would instead involve the replacement or reconstruction of largely modern interventions.

Whilst I fully appreciate the objectives of the listed building consent process, I do not believe that reinstating this staircase, in its present circumstances, represents an appropriate conservation exercise, particularly when balanced against the unresolved safety concerns associated with the cellar access.

Professional Position

As a contractor, I have a duty to ensure that any work I undertake is safe, practical, and professionally responsible. In this case, the combination of:

- the unresolved health and safety risks associated with the open cellar hatch;
- the inability to provide a secure, operable cellar hatch once the staircase is installed;
- the conflict between safe cellar access and the proposed staircase arrangement; and
- the absence of significant original historic fabric within the existing staircase, as identified by Desbrulais Heritage Specialist,

means that I do not consider it appropriate to undertake these works.

This decision is made on professional, safety, and conservation grounds and should not be interpreted as a criticism of the wider project. Rather, it reflects my responsibility to avoid carrying out work that I believe cannot be completed in a safe, practical, and technically satisfactory manner.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Quayle

Managing Director Southern Contractors