



LONDON OFFICE

Ms Susan Dubberley
Mid Sussex District Council
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Direct Dial: 0207 973 3627

Our ref: L10004768

2nd October 2026

Dear Ms Dubberley

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015

Marlow House, 107 High Street, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, RH16 2HR
Application No. DM/26/1979

Thank you for your letter of 16th September 2026 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Introduction

The current application seeks to vary conditions attached to the retrospective listed building consent granted on 31st July 2026 (DM/25/3132).

That consent, together with the associated planning permission, was intended to regularise a substantial number of works carried out in deviation from the scheme originally approved on 12th May 2023 (refs: DM/22/3694 and DM/22/3695), following the refusal on 8th December 2025 of earlier part-retrospective, part-proposed planning and listed building consent applications (refs: DM/25/1103 and DM/25/1104).

Summary

The application seeks to retain the unauthorised lime plaster coating on the west basement wall at Marlow House which was required to be removed by conditions 1 and 2(viii) of application DM/25/3132.

While lime plaster may assist with damp management, we consider that its unauthorised application to all basement walls has unsympathetically concealed the historic masonry, causing harm to the significance of the grade II listed building by eroding the evidential value, character and appearance of this part of the asset.



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Given that more substantial damp-control measures addressing the underlying causes of moisture are already in place, the retention of the plaster on the west wall is not considered justified and does not provide sufficient benefit to outweigh the harm caused. We therefore recommend the application is refused.

Historic England Advice

Description of the Proposal

The proposal seeks to vary conditions 1 and 2(viii) attached to listed building consent DM/25/3132, which require the removal of the lime plaster from the west wall of the basement to expose the original masonry finish beneath.

Instead, the applicant proposes to retain this on the grounds that the use of breathable lime plaster represents best practice for managing damp in cellar environments.

Significance of Marlow House

Marlow House is a good example of a multi-phase building of 15th-century origin. Situated within Lindfield Conservation Area, it forms part of an important sequence of historic buildings in the village's historic core which, as a group, make a strong contribution to a very fine and attractive streetscape.

The basement contains fabric dating from the earliest phase of the house, originally extending only beneath the northern bay, and retains substantial areas of dressed stonework. It was subsequently enlarged in the 18th or early 19th century through the creation of additional cellar accommodation, the construction of brick retaining walls, and the insertion of a new staircase beneath the 17th-century stair enclosure.

These works, together with further 19th-century alterations, including the re-fronting of the building and the addition of a two-storey rear wing, represent important phases in the evolution of the property, reflecting its partial adaptation for commercial use and contributing significantly to an understanding of its historic development, character and significance.

Surviving historic fabric and planform from the earliest phase, complemented by a range of architectural styles and construction techniques implemented over time, contribute to the building's distinctive multi-phase character, illustrating the evolution of historic vernacular traditions. This evidential and historical interest, enhanced by the well-preserved street frontage and the building's group value within Lindfield High Street, underpins the heritage significance of Marlow House. These values are reflected in the building's statutory grade II listing.



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Impact of the Proposal on Significance

The revised Design and Access Statement (March 2026 rev. J) presents the unauthorised lime plaster coating applied to the basement walls as a heritage benefit, on the grounds that lime plaster is a traditional and compatible material that contributes to the long-term management and preservation of historic building fabric.

We acknowledge that lime plaster is generally recognised as an appropriate breathable material for use in historic solid-wall construction as it allows moisture to evaporate through its surface, facilitating the movement of moisture away from the building fabric through capillary action.

However, in this case, the principal causes of damp within the basement were the presence of a long-standing concrete slab and ineffective perimeter drainage, which contributed to elevated humidity and moisture-related deterioration of the masonry. To address these issues, appropriate damp-management measures were implemented, including a French drain and mechanical ventilation system, to improve drainage and promote drying.

The application of lime plaster was intended only as a supplementary measure to support the controlled drying of the walls; it was not intended to serve as the primary means of damp management (see SHDR Report appended to the DAS, p.184).

In any event, the principal issue is not the suitability of lime plaster as a material in itself, but the impact arising from its application to all the historically exposed masonry walls within the basement. This extensive plastering has concealed historic masonry surfaces that contribute to the evidential and historic interest of this part of the listed building. As a consequence, it has reduced the legibility of the historic fabric and diminished the ability to understand and appreciate the basement's construction, character and appearance, causing harm to its significance.

Historic England's Position on the Proposal

Historic England does not support the proposal. We consider that non-compliance with conditions 1 and 2(viii) attached to consent DM/25/3132 would result in unjustified harm to the significance of the listed building. In particular, the proposal would result in the total concealment of historic masonry that contributes to the listed building's evidential and historic value.

The approved retrospective consent acknowledged this harm and sought to secure an appropriate balance through conditions requiring the removal of plaster from the west wall only, thus ensuring that a representative section of historic masonry remained exposed and available for interpretation, understanding and appreciation.



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Although lime plaster may offer benefits as a breathable and traditionally appropriate material, it has not been demonstrated that retaining the plaster on the west wall is necessary to manage moisture within the cellar or conserve the building fabric, given that more effective damp-management measures addressing the underlying causes are already in place.

On the contrary, the proposal would remove an important mitigation measure secured through the retrospective consent and would therefore fail to preserve the significance of the designated heritage asset.

For these reasons, we consider that the proposal would result in unjustified harm to the significance of the listed building and would fail to satisfy the requirements of paragraph HE4(2) of the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026).

Recommendation

Historic England recommends that listed building consent for the variation of conditions 1 and 2(viii) attached to consent DM/25/3132 should be refused, as the proposal would result in unjustified harm to the significance of Marlow House. We also do not consider that the presumed benefit arising from the retention of plaster on a single wall would outweigh the harm caused.

If you propose to determine the application in its current form, please inform us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Luciana Gallo

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