



LONDON OFFICE

Ms Susan Dubberley
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Direct Dial: 0207 973 3627

Our ref: L10004847

30th September 2026

Dear Ms Dubberley

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015

Marlow House, 107 High Street, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, RH16 2HR
Application No. DM/26/1977

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 (ref: 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 remove the requirement to reinstate the historic 17th-century staircase between the ground and first floors at the grade II listed Marlow House, arguing that its reconstruction would create health and safety issues.

The staircase and its enclosure form an important component of the building's significance, illustrating its historic development and circulation pattern. Their



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removal caused a high level of harm, which the approved retrospective consent sought to reduce through their reinstatement, secured by conditions 2(i) and 2(ii).

We do not consider that the submitted evidence provides sufficient justification for failing to comply with these conditions and omitting the reinstatement of the staircase and enclosure. The health and safety arguments advanced are, in our view, unconvincing, and it is unclear why these purported issues were not identified and raised at the time the retrospective consent was granted.

Accordingly, we recommend refusal of the application, as the proposal would result in unjustified harm to the significance of the listed building.

Historic England Advice

Description of the Proposal

The proposal is to remove the requirement of conditions 2(i) and 2(ii) to submit details for the reinstatement of the historical 17th-century staircase between the ground and first floors and for the dismantling of the newly formed basement access hatch, on grounds that the restoration of the lower staircase would present an unacceptable health and safety risk.

The report prepared by Anthony Birch Health and Safety Services Ltd has been submitted in support of the application. However, this undated document provides a health and safety justification for the removal of the former staircase in order to facilitate the installation of a secure basement hatch. The report therefore relates to circumstances that existed prior to the unauthorised removal of the staircase and predates the grant of retrospective listed building consent DM/25/3132, which specifically required its reinstatement. Consequently, the report does not provide a justification for omitting the reinstatement required by the retrospective listed building consent.

The submitted building contractor's statement, dated 31st July 2026, asserts that the lower staircase cannot be safely reinstated because it would be positioned above the existing cellar hatch. While the hatch would require upgrading to facilitate the safe installation of the staircase, the staircase would then obstruct the operation of the hatch and restrict future access to the cellar, creating what is described as an irresolvable conflict between safety and access.

However, the continued use of the existing access hatch was not approved under the retrospective consent (DM/25/3132). An alternative means of access to the basement was already secured through that consent, via a doorway within the



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reconstructed staircase enclosure, thereby retaining the historic layout and circulation pattern (see approved Studio Kyson drawing ref: 900-25 5007 C).

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.

During the 17th century, when the building was fully floored, an enclosed timber winding staircase extending from the ground floor to the attic was inserted against the rear wall, probably on the site of the former cross-passage. This feature survived as an important piece of evidence illustrating the evolution of the building's circulation and access arrangements following the subdivision of the open hall.

Like many of the properties along the High Street, the building was re-fronted in the 19th century in response to changing architectural fashions, while a two-storey rear wing was added in circa 1830 and the cellar extended with new steps beneath the 17th-century stair enclosure. These additions and alterations reflect a significant phase in the building's development, reflecting its partial adaptation for commercial use, including the construction of a single-storey bakehouse to the rear before 1848.

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, embodying 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.

Impact of the Proposal on Significance

The 17th-century winding staircase serving all levels of the building, together with its enclosure, has been demolished in its entirety, contrary to the originally consented scheme. As a result, the basement, which was historically accessed via the staircase enclosure, is now reached through a newly formed floor hatch.

Although the flight between the ground and first floor appears to have been altered or replaced during the late 20th century, its position remained as original and the enclosure survived. The complete removal of the staircase and enclosure has caused a high level of harm to the significance of the building, extending beyond the loss of historic fabric. The staircase was a key element in understanding the



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building's historic circulation pattern and the evolution of its plan form from an open-hall house to a fully floored structure.

To regularise these unauthorised works, the recently approved scheme proposed the reinstatement of the 17th-century winding staircase from ground to attic level, reconstructed in its original form using salvaged historic fabric, including lath-and-plaster soffits and ground-floor enclosure.

Basement access was also to be restored in accordance with the historic arrangement through the removal of the newly formed floor hatch and reinstatement of the staircase enclosure with a timber basement access door to the cellar.

The proposal to no longer reinstate these key historic features, which are fundamental to understanding the listed building's historic development, would fail to reduce some of the harm arising from their complete loss and would remove significant heritage benefits that underpinned the approval of the retrospective scheme.

Historic England's Position on the Proposal

Historic England does not support the proposal. We consider that non-compliance with conditions 2(i) and 2(ii) for the staircase reinstatement and enclosure between the ground and first floors would result in unjustified harm to the significance of the listed building.

As discussed above, we are not persuaded by the health and safety information submitted, which asserts that the lower staircase cannot be safely reinstated because it would be located above the existing cellar hatch.

This argument is undermined by the fact that consent DM/25/3132 already approved an alternative arrangement for access to the basement through a doorway within the reconstructed staircase enclosure, consistent with the historic layout of the building. The continued use of the existing cellar hatch was not authorised by that consent.

In light of the above, Historic England does not consider that the applicant has provided clear and convincing justification for departing from the approved scheme. The proposal would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of paragraph HE4(2) of the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026).



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Recommendation

Historic England recommends that planning permission should be refused, given the harm that the proposed development would cause to the significance of Marlow House.

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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