



LONDON OFFICE

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Our ref: L01595454

23rd October 2025

Dear Ms Dubberley

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015

MARLOW HOUSE, 107 HIGH STREET, LINDFIELD, HAYWARDS HEATH, WEST SUSSEX RH16 2HR
Application No. DM/25/1103

Thank you for your letter of 17th July 2025 regarding the above application for listed building consent. Thank you also for arranging a site visit with your Conservation Officer, the project teams' Planning Consultant, Heritage Adviser and Construction Manager, on 19th September. We received amended proposals and associated documents in late September and early October. On the basis of this updated information, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Background

The current submission follows planning and listed building consent applications for internal and external alterations submitted in December 2022, which were granted consent on 12th May 2023 (planning ref: DM/22/3694, DM/22/3695).

However, a number of the works undertaken were not in accordance with the approved scheme.

To regularise these works, a part-retrospective, part-new scheme has been submitted and, following unsupportive comments from your Council's Conservation Officer on 23rd June, the current revised scheme has been produced to address those concerns.



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Summary

The Grade II listed Marlow House is a fine multi-phase building developed around a medieval timber-framed core. It forms part of a coherent historic group with other properties along the High Street, which make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Lindfield Conservation Area.

The current proposals seek to regularise works carried out either in variation of, or without, listed building consent. The proposed rectification works do not sufficiently reduce the harm caused by the unauthorised works. Consequently, this application fails to avoid or minimise the conflict between the proposal and the heritage asset's conservation, as paragraph 208 of the NPPF requires.

The harm caused by the proposals falls within the 'less than substantial' range under the NPPF, though at a mid to high level of that spectrum for certain items, such as the proposed 'reconstruction' of the unauthorised removal of the 17th-century staircase, and for the enlarged and redesigned first-floor rear extension.

Historic England objects to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 208 and 219. It is for your Authority to assess whether the proposals meet the requirements of paragraphs 213 and 215 of the Framework and thus if any public benefits arising from the implemented works are sufficient to outweigh the harm caused and provide clear and convincing justification.

Historic England Advice

Significance of Marlow House

Marlow House is a good example of a multi-phase building of 15th-century origin. 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 original timber-framed building comprised a four-bay layout that developed from an open-hall structure to a fully floored house with a central masonry chimney stack. It has been suggested that the property may have been of a Wealden type, with a recessed hall, although insufficient evidence prevents confirmation. In particular, the continuous jetty along the frontage may point to a more central open-hall design.

In the 17th century, when the building was fully floored, an enclosed timber winder staircase running from ground to attic floor was introduced against the rear wall, probably in the position of the former cross-passage. This survived as an important



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interpretative element of the evolution of the historic access arrangements following the flooring of the building.

Like many of the properties in the High Street, the building was re-fronted in the 19th century as a response to changing fashions in building styles, 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, illustrating the partial conversion of the house for commercial purposes, which included the construction of a single-storey bakehouse to the rear before 1848.

The property was altered and extended at the rear during the 20th century in a manner that was not entirely sympathetic.

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

Impact of Proposals on Significance

We have concentrated our advice on those aspects of the proposals that have the greatest impact on significance.

Rear Extension

It is proposed to retain the enlarged first floor of the rear extension as implemented, in variance from the approved scheme.

This element reflects the original proposal - save for the glazed balustrade - which was superseded by the granted scheme, as it was considered by your Council's Conservation Officer contentious from a heritage perspective (cf. Proposed drawings by Gould Baxter Associates Nos GH342/PL.06; GH342/PL.06 rev. B).

The built extension, which replaced mediocre, accretive post-war structures, spans the full width of the rear elevation, concealing and masking the 1830s gable bay. This bay relates to a key phase in the house's development and contributes to its architectural and historical significance.

The elevational treatment - comprising a recessed balcony beneath a flat roof and a large expanse of glazing and balustrading - introduces a visually prominent and

starkly contemporary architectural composition to the rear. As such, the extension undermines the ability to understand the heritage asset's different construction phases.

The harm is exacerbated by the reconfiguration of the main en-suite bathroom roof at first floor level as a flat-roofed 'dormer' extension, adding bulk and concealing a section of the historic range in westerly views.

Although the garden setting is not publicly accessible, it affords appreciation of the roofscape on the west side of the High Street. Many of these buildings are designated, including the grade II listed neighbours at Nos 105 and 109. The implemented extension has eroded the visual coherence of this historic group.

To mitigate harm to the listed building's significance, it is proposed to expose internally the west brick wall of the late Georgian gabled wing and its Gothick casement window as a feature within the bedroom. We do not consider this strategy would sufficiently reduce the harm caused and thereby preserve the architectural and evidential interest of this historic element.

Bakehouse

The Design and Access Statement (September 2025, rev. F) states that, during implementation of the consented works in September 2023, the original bakehouse collapsed. However, the rebuilt bakehouse replicates the original form only superficially and incorporates design features inconsistent with its historic character.

In particular, on the west elevation, the previously approved Crittall-style frame has been replaced by a visually prominent full-height glazed element of stark contemporary design, more akin to the character of the implemented rear extension than that of the historic bakehouse. This repeats an element previously deemed inappropriate and thus superseded in the consented scheme (cf. Proposed drawings by Gould Baxter Associates, Nos GH342/PL.06; GH342/PL.06 rev. B).

No mitigations are proposed.

Seventeenth-century Staircase

The 17th-century winder staircase serving all levels, and its enclosure have been demolished in their entirety, contrary to the consented scheme (cf. Proposed drawings by Gould Baxter Associates Nos 342/PI.02 rev. B; DWG 342/PI.03 rev. C).

The basement level, historically accessed via the enclosure, is now reached through a newly formed floor hatch.

The implemented works mirror what was originally proposed in the previous scheme but later superseded on heritage grounds (cf. Proposed drawing by Gould Baxter Associates, Nos GH342/PL.02; GH342/PL.03).

Although the stair flight from ground to first floor appears to have been altered or replaced in the late 20th century, its position remained as original and the enclosure survived. The complete removal of the stair and enclosure has caused a high level of harm to significance beyond the loss of historic fabric as the unit illustrated the historic circulation pattern and evolution of planform, from a hall house to a fully floored structure.

To regularise these works, it is proposed to build a winder staircase from ground to attic level using salvaged treads and carriage pieces where possible, but omitting the enclosure, plastered soffit and timber risers. The resulting permeable structure, supported on a metal post, would not be an accurate reconstruction and would read as a confusing modern insertion. Although the proposal includes reinstating access to the attic via a hatch - previously floored over - we do not consider this sufficient to outweigh the harm caused.

Formation of Ground Floor Lavatory in Southern Bay

A lavatory has been installed without permission in the southern bay of the historic core, removing a portion of timber wall covered by modern blockwork with stone-veneered nogging. Although the southern bay was originally partitioned, as evidenced by mortices in the soffit of the main ceiling beam, the new partition is on a different alignment and its entrance set back from the hallway.

No evidence has been provided about the origin of the removed timber structure, so the degree of harm from potential loss of historic fabric cannot be assessed. Harm has, however, occurred through alteration of the original bay planform.

We note that the original but superseded proposal of the previous consented applications included a lavatory in the same position as that built but accessed from the study.

Works to Ground Floor Northern Bay

Authorised works included replacing a steel post with an oak gunstock post and removing modern infill panelling to a timber-framed partition enclosing a small snug to the north-west corner of the main parlour. Contrary to consent, the partition has

been entirely removed. This has resulted in the loss of historic fabric, including a timber door jamb and attached horizontal member, and has harmed the original or early cellular planform of this part of the building by opening the area into a single large space.

To mitigate harm, it is proposed to reinstate the door jamb to aid legibility of the historic opening. While this would be beneficial, reconstruction of the lost partition's structure would assist in understanding the original configuration of the space.

Removal of Chimney Stack

Although not original to the building's foundation, the presumed early 19th-century chimney stack on the north wall, raising from ground to roof, provided evidence of construction phases. Its unauthorised demolition, reportedly on structural grounds, has harmed significance by removing an important evidential element.

No reinstatement is proposed.

Installation of Modern Fireplace to Ground Floor Living Room and Study

The hearth opening of the 17th-century principal chimney in the living room has been narrowed and a contemporary raised fireplace inserted, with new facing brickwork. A similar modern raised fireplace has been inserted in the hearth of the study's fireplace.

These interventions have changed the historic character of the spaces. The modern design of the fireplaces makes them appear as completely new introductions, as no indication remains of the historic nature of their chimney breasts and hearths.

No mitigation is proposed.

Infilled Window Openings

Window openings in the internalised 15th-century rear wall have been infilled with plaster panels instead of Crittall units, as approved. Without evidence on the openings' original position, the degree of harm cannot be fully assessed, but the change removes interpretive value.

Water Well

A water well discovered in the rear kitchen area during the works has been retained as an internal feature within the rear extension. Its shaft has been relined in brick and left visible through a structural glazed floor.

The exposed well offers new insight into the house's history; however, the brick relining may have impacted historic fabric, which cannot be verified.

Removal of Door and Blocking of Opening Between First-floor Landing and North Bathroom

This unauthorised work has adversely affected the planform by blocking connection between the two ends of the house, undermined legibility of the historical circulation pattern and extent.

To reduce harm, it is beneficially proposed to reinstate the plank-and-batten door within the exposed structural timber framing on both sides of the historic partition wall, fixed shut, as per the approved scheme.

Changes to First-floor North Bedroom

The historic two-bay layout has been altered by inserting a partition to form an en-suite bathroom and by removing modern plasterboard infill from the timber-framed spine wall to create a more open plan. These unauthorised works have caused harm to significance by change of the original room planform.

No mitigation is proposed.

Formation of a Vaulted Ceiling in South-east Bedroom

The attic floor structure above the south-east bedroom has been removed without consent and a new skelining introduced to create a vaulted ceiling. The 17th-century floorboards at attic level have been removed and used to make doors and the cellar hatch within the building.

As we have no evidence for the ceiling or floor structure's origin, we cannot confirm the extent of historic fabric loss. Notwithstanding this, the changes have altered the bedroom's proportions, giving a misleading impression of the historic roof form, and have obscured understanding of the building's development when, in the 17th century, the attic was brought into domestic use.

Proposed reinstatement of matching floorboards in the southern part of attic is welcome but will not fully recover lost significance.

Removal of Existing and Omission of Consented Rooflights to West-facing Historic Roof

This unauthorised works is beneficial in heritage terms, reinstating the coherent appearance of the historical roof profile.

Relevant Policy

In formulating our advice, we have assessed the proposals against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024), which sets out the Government's policies for decision-making on planning proposals.

Para 60 of the NPPF highlights that effective enforcement is important to maintain public confidence in the planning system.

Section 16 specifies how the historic environment should be conserved and enhanced and makes it clear in paragraph 208 that conflicts between conservation of the heritage asset and any aspect of a proposal should be avoided or minimised.

Paragraph 212 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on a heritage asset, local planning authorities should give great weight to preserving the asset's significance, with greater weight for more important assets.

Paragraph 213 requires clear and convincing justification for any harm or loss to a designated heritage asset's significance, whether from alteration, destruction, or development within its setting. Decision-makers must determine whether harm is substantial or less than substantial. Where harm is less than substantial, paragraph 215 requires it to be weighed against the proposal's public benefits.

Relevant is also paragraph 219 which states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

Historic England Position on the Proposals

Most works undertaken in variation of, or without, consent have harmed to a greater and lesser degree the significance of the listed building. The proposed rectification works should seek to restore or recreate lost significance, which we do not think has been achieved.

The harm caused by the proposals falls within the 'less than substantial' range under the NPPF, though at a high level of that spectrum, particularly for the proposed 'reconstruction' of the unauthorised removal of the 17th-century staircase, which would not be an accurate reinstatement but a modern and confusing reinterpretation.

The enlarged and redesigned first-floor rear extension has also harmed understanding of the evolution and phases of the building and the character and appearance of the conservation area, appreciable from the rear. We consider the harm caused to be at a mid-level within the 'less than substantial' range.



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Overall, the unauthorised works have removed or obscured understanding of important historic features that help illustrate the evolution and multi-phased character of the building from its original 15th century origins up until the 19th century.

In our view the proposed rectification works do not adequately reduce the harm caused by the unauthorised works. Consequently, this application fails to avoid or minimise the conflict between the proposal and the heritage asset's conservation, as paragraph 208 of the NPPF requires.

Your authority should carefully consider the situation of unauthorised works having been undertaken and be clear over what is and what is not acceptable. You should then consider taking appropriate enforcement action to address what is not acceptable.

In making this assessment, you will need to carefully consider the extent to which there are public benefits arising from the works, which would weigh against the harm that we have highlighted in our letter, and the extent to which there is clear and convincing justification provided for them.

Recommendation

Historic England objects to the application on heritage grounds.

We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 208 and 219. It is for your Authority to assess whether the proposals meet the requirements of paragraphs 213 and 215 of the NPPF in the manner we have advised above.

In determining this application, you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 16(2) 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.

Relevant is also section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that requires LPAs to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the application. 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.

Please contact me if we can be of further assistance.



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Yours sincerely

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