

From: Emily Wade <Emily.Wade@midsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: 27 August 2026 16:08:06 UTC+01:00
To: "Caroline Grist" <Caroline.Grist@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: DM/26/1440 and 1455 Wykehurst House - driveway

Hi Caroline

Comments on the above planning and listed building consent applications.

Firstly I would note that as no listed or curtilage listed structures are directly impacted by the current proposal, listed building consent is not required. This application can be withdrawn.

Wykehurst House is a II* listed building located in a rural position outside Bolney. It is a substantial and extravagantly detailed country house in the Victorian revivalist style, which has been strongly influenced by the French chateaux of the Loire valley. The house was constructed in 1871-1874 to designs by E M Barry. It has been subject to extensive alterations and reconstruction following periods of use as a hotel during the early 20th century, requisitioning and then abandonment during and after WWII, and conversion to flats during the 1970s.

Although the surrounding formal gardens and wider parkland are not registered in their own right, they include separately listed (Grade II) walls to the northern forecourt of the house, and to the west and south further sections of walling (some of which is retaining), stone 'bastions' and steps, which would be regarded as curtilage listed. There is also a surviving stone fountain within the lower terrace which appears on historic mapping from the late 19th/early 20th century and would be regarded as curtilage listed. The formal gardens around the house, which are quite compact, and the wider parkland, add to the illusion of the building as a fantastical French chateau, and make a strong positive contribution to its special interest and the manner in which this is appreciated.

To the east of the house, the parkland extends as far as London Road, approximately 700m away. The formal entrance to the house from this road is marked at the roadside by a Grade II listed lodge house, which was also designed by E M Barry in a similar style to the mansion. The entrance driveway winds westwards from this to the main house forecourt, providing a lengthy and attractive approach through the park. Historical mapping shows that the line of this driveway has not substantially altered since the late 19th century, and must be considered a designed part of the parkland setting of the house.

At a point close to the house, the driveway branches to provide access also to the former coach house and stables, which survive as a separate residential property to the northeast of the mansion. Given the screening by trees between the two buildings, this surviving relationship of driveways is the principal way in which the presence of these

ancillary buildings can continue to be appreciated from the immediate context of the house.

The current proposal relates to the closer approach to the house from the east and is for the realignment of the entrance driveway to separate this from the driveway to the former coach house at a point further east than at present, so that it would run onwards towards the house on a line set further south into the parkland. At the new point of division, a formal gateway would be introduced across the new house approach, with masonry piers and tall, ornate iron double gates. The retained line of historic approach to the west of this would be separated and screened from the new house approach by post and rail fencing and hedging.

In my opinion, the proposal raises a number of concerns in terms of the impact on the setting of Wykehurst House:

- The realignment of the entrance driveway adversely affects an element of the original, designed parkland setting of the house, and the intended approach to it from London Road, without any convincing justification for this work.
- The realignment also reduces the legibility of the historic relationship between the house and the coach house and stables, by removing the historic relationship of the approaches to the two, and by introducing screening of the coach house driveway.
- The proposed new gates and piers to the realigned house approach are of an inappropriate design for this position at the centre of the historic parkland around the house and introduce a false impression of separation or hierarchy between the park to the east and the park immediately adjacent to the building. The piers and gates would also have an incongruous appearance stranded in the middle of the open space of the parkland in isolation of other similar boundary treatments.

I have also read, and would agree with, the comments made by Historic England regarding the proposal, and an alternative scheme which may be more acceptable, which retains and enhances the historic road layout, while introducing a new gate of a more appropriate location and design. From our discussion on site, it may be that reinstating the third side of the historic triangle of roadways between the house and stables may not be practical, given the landownerships involved, however I would recommend that the other suggestions made are adopted and that where they cannot be a robust justification is offered.

As it stands, I consider that the proposal is harmful, through impact on setting, to the special interests of Wykehurst House and of the associated Grade II listed garden structures. It is therefore contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34. In terms of the NPPF, the proposal results in harm (not amounting to substantial harm) at around the low-mid range of that scale, such that paragraph HE6.4 will apply, including the balancing exercise which this sets out. In carrying out that exercise, we must be mindful of the substantial weight that must be given to an asset's conservation under HE6.1 (bearing in mind the II* listing of the house), the considerable importance and

weight which must be given to harm to a heritage asset (HE6.3), and the lack of a clear and convincing justification for the harm arising as required by HE4.2.

Thanks,

Emily

Please note that this advice is given at Officer level only and is without prejudice to the formal decision of the District Council.

Submit your planning application online.

<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk>

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