



LONDON OFFICE

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Our ref: P01605480; L01605482

25th March 2026

Dear Ms Grist

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2015
& T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**WYKEHURST HOUSE, WYKEHURST PARK, COLWOOD LANE, BOLNEY,
HAYWARDS HEATH, WEST SUSSEX RH17 5QQ
Application Nos DM/25/3228; DM/25/3229**

Thank you for your letters of 5th March 2026 regarding the above applications for planning permission and listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the applications.

Summary

Wykehurst House is a grade II* listed Victorian château-style mansion of exceptional architectural and historic interest, though mid-20th-century alterations and subdivisions have compromised some aspects of its original design.

The proposal to remodel the altered central lightwell and add a new staircase would restore a secondary circulation but would introduce overly grand features and remove a large amount of historic fabric and evidential value.

To reduce harm and meet the requirements of paragraphs 208 and 213 of the NPPF, the design should be revised to retain more historic fabric, avoid grand architectural gestures, and ensure the area reads as a subordinate circulation space reflecting the original spatial hierarchy of the house.



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Historic England Advice

Significance of Wykehurst House

Wykehurst House is a dramatically composed example of High Victorian revivalist architecture, drawing strong stylistic inspiration from the French châteaux of the Loire Valley. The surrounding designed landscape, including formal gardens, terraces, and carefully composed approach routes framed by entrance lodges, forms an essential component of the original conception. This interplay between building and landscape reinforces the intended effect of a continental château translated into an English context.

Designed by Edward Middleton Barry, a member of the distinguished Barry architectural family, and commissioned by Henry Huth, the prominent bibliophile and art collector, the house embodies the cultural ambition and material prosperity of the Victorian elite. Its exuberant architectural language, comprising turrets, pointed arches, conical roofs, ashlar masonry, and rich ornamentation, creates a striking, almost storybook silhouette, characteristic of the high Victorian taste for flamboyant eclecticism and taste for theatrical revivalist grandeur.

The architectural and historic interest of Wykehurst House is further enriched by its incorporation of advanced and forward-looking Victorian building technologies. These include cavity wall construction, iron-and-concrete fireproof floors, a warm-air heating system, and principal bedrooms equipped with en-suite bathrooms: features that were highly innovative at the time of construction. Their presence illustrates the scale of investment in the property and the progressive, technologically informed design thinking characteristic of Huth's era.

During the Second World War, Wykehurst House served as accommodation for Canadian soldiers, placing the property within the wider national wartime narrative. Its subsequent history includes significant mid-20th-century alterations which, while instrumental in preventing demolition, compromised aspects of the original design.

More recently, Wykehurst House was home to the Iranian filmmaker and writer Ebrahim Golestan from 1984 until his death in 2023, adding a further layer of associational significance to the property.

The building's grade II* designation formally acknowledges its architectural and historic importance, exceptional design quality, and rich cultural associations.

Impact of the Proposals on the Significance of Wykehurst House

The current proposal forms part of a broader programme of repair, reconfiguration, and reinstatement intended to return Wykehurst House to its original use as a single-family residence.

This application specifically addresses the remodelling of the centrally positioned lightwell between the first and second floors, a space substantially altered during the 1970s under the ownership of the antique dealer James Doyle.

In that period, the original staircase linking the first and second floors was removed, and the lightwell was enlarged to supply natural light to newly created apartments following subdivision of the house. Additional access routes and gantries were also introduced to provide circulation to the individual flats. In the 1980s, the formerly open internal courtyard was further altered by the installation of a mono-pitch polycarbonate roof, which remains in place today.

Although the general form of the original plan for this area has been established with reasonable confidence, the surviving evidence is insufficient to support an accurate or fully informed reconstruction of the historic arrangement. Accordingly, the proposal does not attempt to recreate a highly conjectural earlier configuration but instead seeks to re-establish the area's functional role as a circulation route, providing access to the proposed second-floor guest suite

The scheme would create an atrium-style space with a reinstated staircase - relocated from the established original position - linking the two floors within a double-height volume. At second-floor level, three large arched openings are proposed on the north wall, together with a bridge leading to a new archway on the south side, forming access to the bedroom corridor. Three pyramid-shaped rooflights, aligned with the rhythm of the proposed arches, would provide natural light, while the existing polycarbonate roof would be removed.

The northern rooms at second-floor level would be remodelled as a large open lounge, involving the installation of new joists, a new ceiling, and the fitting of decorative stone surrounds into the two surviving fireplace openings.

The reinstatement of the staircase is welcome; however, it would be more appropriate for it to be returned to its original position within this space, as this location has already been clearly established. The majority of the other elements of the proposals would result in some harm to the listed building's significance. This derives from the loss of surviving historic fabric through introduction of new large openings, and the creation of a grand space whose architectural scale and rich detailing would not reflect the originally more intimate and enclosed character of the circulation spaces serving the family bedrooms.

Relevant Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) sets out the Government's policies for planning decisions. Section 16 specifies how the historic environment should be conserved and enhanced and paragraph 208 emphasises that conflicts between the conservation of the heritage asset and any aspects 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.

Historic England Position on the Proposals

We support the principle of reinstating a secondary staircase within the historic core of the house. However, we have concerns regarding the proposed design approach.

While an accurate reconstruction of the original arrangement is not achievable - apart from the staircase's location within the space - due to insufficient surviving evidence, the design should nonetheless reflect the historically intimate and secondary character of this part of the building, which originally served the family bedrooms.

The introduction of grand architectural gestures - such as large arched openings and rich decorative detailing - would be incongruous with the established spatial hierarchy of the historic plan and risks creating an impression more appropriate to primary reception spaces than to a private circulation route.

As currently conceived, the scheme would result in the loss of surviving historic fabric and the alteration of original openings, thereby diminishing the evidential value of the space.

On this basis, the scheme, as proposed, would result in harm to the significance of the listed building. In NPPF terms, this would constitute *less than substantial harm*, falling within the lower end of that spectrum.

To reduce this harm and comply with paragraph 208 of the NPPF, we recommend revising the proposals to better reflect the original enclosed nature of the space and to adopt a design approach that reinstates its historically secondary character. This should include retaining as much surviving historic fabric as possible, minimising



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intervention in original openings, and ensuring that the design of this space remains recessive, thereby supporting the original spatial hierarchy of the upper floors.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the applications on heritage grounds.

We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the applications to meet the requirements of paragraphs 208, 212 and 213 of the NPPF.

In determining these applications, you should bear in mind the statutory duty of sections 16(2) and 66(1) 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.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

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