

CHRIS AND DENISE MILESON
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Sarah Manston,
Marketing & Licensing Officer,
Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Partnerships,
Kent County Council,
Invicta House,
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ME14 1XX

6 February 2012

By post and email: sarah.manston@kent.gov.uk

Dear Ms Manston

Re: The Lost Village of Dode – renewal of approval of premises for the solemnization of marriages

We understand that you are dealing with the matter of the application by Mr Chapman for the renewal of the licence to hold marriage ceremonies at Dode church, also known as the Lost Village of Dode. We note from past correspondence we had with Clive Bainbridge in respect of the Lost Village of Dode that the licence is due for renewal on 1 April 2012.

We live at Winnats Farm. Our house is about 125 metres away from Dode church. However the boundary of Winnats Farm is less than 10 metres from the edge of the grounds of Dode church.

We understand that Mr Chapman has requested that the restrictions on the number of ceremonies that can be held each year and the days on which they are held be removed.

We are writing to advise that we very strongly oppose any removal of any of the existing conditions and restrictions attached to the licence.

As we have done in previous correspondence to KCC, we would like to make it clear that the use of the Lost Village of Dode for marriage ceremonies does cause nuisance to us and our neighbours. It is therefore very important and perfectly reasonable that provision is made to reduce the effect of the nuisance as much as possible. We do appreciate that KCC has recognised the importance of protecting and respecting the interests of people who live or work in this area by imposing certain conditions and restrictions on the use of Dode church for wedding ceremonies. As the original restrictions and conditions imposed by KCC were deemed by KCC to be a reasonable compromise having regard to the interests of local residents and the wish of Mr Chapman to use the premises as a venue for civil marriage ceremonies there is no good reason to have any relaxation of the controls that are already in place. To do so will only make the position worse for the residents of Wrangling Lane than it is already. It is our view that the Lost Village of Dode is not a suitable place for holding weddings as the surrounding area is a very quiet and peaceful rural residential valley and the peace and tranquillity is destroyed when large parties of people descend on it to attend a

wedding. Noise pollution can be a problem in Wrangling Lane because the acoustics of the area are such that sound is amplified and echoes around the valley. It is inherent in the gathering of people together to celebrate a wedding that they will make a lot of noise. It follows that when this noise is being made in an area that is normally extremely quiet and peaceful it can be very intrusive and annoying. Ironically, it is the usually quiet and peaceful characteristics of the area that Mr Chapman seeks to take advantage of when offering the retreat cottages situated at the Lost Village of Dode for rental as holiday accommodation on the Hideaways.co.uk website, describing the cottages as enjoying "a really peaceful outlook across fields and up to woodland" and "as an ideal place for retreat and quiet reflection". Clearly this is not the case when there are wedding ceremonies taking place at Dode!

We are generally at Winnats Farm seven days a week and so it is very important to us that there is no increase in the number of weddings allowed to take place or the number of days and months during which they are permitted to take place.

Not only is it important to us that there are many months during the year and days of the week throughout the year when we do not have to suffer the nuisance of noise caused by the wedding ceremonies it is equally important that the same applies to not encountering convoys of vehicles travelling to the weddings on the single track roads in this area. There is only one way into Wrangling Lane for the wedding guests to use and it is therefore inevitable that problems will arise from the increase in traffic this will bring causing inconvenience to local residents and also other people who have to use the narrow lanes often for business reasons. We have noticed that very often, small coaches rather than minibuses are used to bring people to the weddings. As these are much larger than minibuses they are a much more difficult obstacle to get round if you are unfortunate enough to meet one coming in the opposite direction in a narrow lane. We have seen the road outside Dode church blocked by coaches and cars as they manoeuvre to get in and out of the venue. In any event it is daunting to encounter a string of vehicles coming at you in the opposite direction and there is more likelihood of vehicles being damaged as paintwork is easily scratched when having to get very close to hedgerows in order to get out of the way of a vehicle coming in the opposite direction. During weekdays it is more likely that large commercial vehicles will be travelling down Buckland Road and Wrangling Lane. If a lorry meets the wedding party coaches there is a real possibility of the road becoming blocked, (especially if they meet on the double bend by Monks Vineyard Farm) as it is very difficult for the lorry to get out of the way to let the coaches go past or vice versa. This could be serious if this prevented access by the emergency services. Obviously the fewer the number of weddings taking place the less likely it is that this will be a problem. In addition there are many people who use Wrangling Lane and the roads leading to it for recreational pursuits such as walking, cycling and horse riding. It is important that there should be times when they can enjoy the countryside round here without having to cope with wedding traffic.

We have in the past expressed our concerns over the noise caused by the use of Dode church for wedding receptions after the ceremony has taken place. This remains a problem and I have had occasion to go to the venue to request the PA to be turned down as the noise from it was booming down the valley. If more wedding ceremonies are held at the venue we will also get a greater number of noisy receptions held there as well. It is vital that this does not occur. We are very pleased that KCC and the local boroughs have taken and are continuing to take effective measures to protect the local environment from nuisances such as off road cars and bikes and it is important that KCC also protects the local environment from nuisances generally in order to have a consistent approach in preserving this area of outstanding natural beauty.

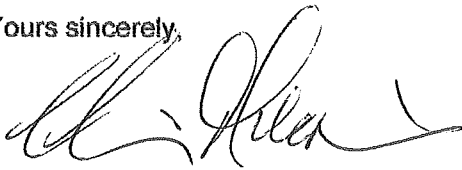
We do appreciate that KCC has acknowledged the nuisance that the holding of wedding ceremonies can cause to residents and other people who enjoy the countryside in this area

of outstanding natural beauty and has taken steps to mitigate this by imposing certain conditions and restrictions on the use of the Lost Village of Dode for wedding ceremonies. We therefore trust that KCC will not do anything that would make the nuisance worse such as relaxing any of the restrictions and conditions presently imposed.

Provided that there is no relaxation of any of the restrictions and conditions currently in force in respect of the use of the Lost Village of Dode for wedding ceremonies we do not object on this occasion to the licence being renewed but we will be monitoring closely the impact that the use is having on the local community to see whether the restrictions and conditions are sufficiently effective.

Thank you for taking our concerns into consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Mileson



Denise Mileson

Cc Clive Bainbridge (KCC)
Adam Holloway MP