

The Lost Village of Dode

Statement on Behalf of the Owners Douglas & Mary Chapman

The Lost Village of Dode is a small family run wedding venue situated in a rural location in North West Kent.

It comprises a former Norman Church which was deserted at the time of the Black Death in the Mid 14th Century.

It was rescued by us from dereliction some 20 years ago at which time it was a haunt of vandals and drug users as the attached photographs and press cuttings show.

It is small in scale and can only accommodate 45 people in total.

For the past 13 years approximately it has been used as a venue for Civil Weddings under the authority and supervision of the Kent County Council. During this time I understand that your Authority, (whilst receiving objections at the time of re-application or review,) has received no valid complaints as a direct result of the Ceremonies which have in the past been carried out. It is understood from previous enquiry of Officers that Dode is considered to be one of the best run venues in the County.

Solely as a result of local representations at the time renewal and review weddings are currently limited to 42 ceremonies per year held between the months of April & October (inclusive) and the first 3 weeks of December and ceremonies are only permitted on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Our request is that these two conditions (which are among a number of other conditions applied to the venue) are relaxed in order to allow us to perform ceremonies on any day of the week during the months of April to October (inclusive) and the 1st – 23rd December (inclusive).

It is important to realise that The Lost Village of Dode is not a large establishment with inhouse catering and other facilities and that the restrictions currently in place mean that due to the economic climate we are unable to compete with other venues which have additional income streams from catering, provision of accommodation etc.

In a small way we make a valued contribution to the economic life of the area in respect of local Hotels, Bed & Breakfast accommodation, Taxi & Mini Bus services, Caterers etc., etc. We believe without the lifting of the current restrictions requested then the long term viability as a dedicated wedding venue of this unique place is in question.

To deal briefly with the objections from the KCC Sitting Member, one immediate neighbour and the Parish Council particularly regarding noise, we would say that adequate safeguards have always existed in terms of environmental legislation monitored and enforced by the Local Authority the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. At no time has that Authority taken any action against The Lost Village of Dode in respect of noise, traffic nuisance etc., since we have held our Civil Wedding Licence.

Panel Members are respectfully requested to grant our application.

6th June 2012.

D Chapman