

5 June 2012

Mr A Tait
Governance & Law
Kent County Council
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent
ME14 1XQ

Dear Mr Tait

The Lost Village of Dode

We are writing with regard to the forthcoming meeting of the Regulation Committee Member Panel on 15 June 2012 to consider the application for a renewed registration of The Lost Village of Dode as a premises for the solemnization of marriages. As well as our letter to Sarah Manston of 6 February 2012, we would also like this letter and its enclosures to be presented to the Panel for consideration.

In our letter to Sarah Manston we set out our objections to any relaxation of the conditions attached to the granting of a licence for the use of The Lost Village of Dode for holding wedding ceremonies. There are some additional points that we would like to make which are as follows:

1. We refer to Regulation 6 of The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 where Regulation 6(1)(b) states that "*Upon grant of an approval the authority may attach to the approval such further conditions as it considers reasonable in order to ensure that the facilities at the premises are suitable and that proceedings on the premises do not give rise to a nuisance of any kind.*" The special conditions imposed in the past have been effective in reducing the nuisance caused to people in Great Buckland of traffic and noise but they have not eliminated the nuisance altogether. As the intention of this provision is to give the licensing authority the power to eliminate nuisance caused by the wedding ceremonies and Kent County Council has imposed conditions to this end it is not logical for any of the conditions to be relaxed as this will not be compliant with the intent of the provision of making sure that proceedings on the premises do not give rise to a nuisance of any kind. We experience a lot of noise nuisance from weddings taking place at Dode whether it be before the ceremony when guests are in the grounds, during the ceremony with music being played, after the ceremony when photos are being taken in the grounds and a large group of people are talking loudly or refreshments are being served and music is being played in the grounds and then continuing with the holding of a reception at the premises where guests become very noisy having a party both in the grounds and in the building and loud music is played. All these disturbances are occurring as a direct result of the premises being licensed to conduct wedding ceremonies. We have taken legal advice on the ambit of Regulation 6(1)(b). The advice we have received is that the regulation is drafted to provide that the licensing authority must consider whether the grant of a licence will cause any nuisance of any kind to arise and that when enacting this provision, Parliament intended the licensing authority to take a wide and circumspect view. Therefore it is relevant to consider any kind of nuisance that may be

suffered as a result of the use of The Lost Village of Dode for holding wedding ceremonies by neighbouring properties and by other people in the area such as tourists who are attracted to the area in search of peace and tranquility. It is the case that all the examples of noise nuisance that we refer to above arise in connection with wedding ceremonies being held at this venue. All the post ceremony events occur at Dode because the ceremony is held there in the first place.

We have prepared a list of weddings that we have observed during the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 and this is included with this letter (Annex A). In this list we refer to examples of nuisance that we have experienced. In addition there are two other examples of nuisance we wish to mention. The first arose from a wedding held on 22 July 2006. After the ceremony the guests remained at Dode until at least midnight. Many of the guests spent much of the time in the grounds and as they got more intoxicated during the evening the noise level increased as did the volume of the music being played. Some guests were shouting at each other across the grounds and a group of them began yelling unprovoked abuse at us in the field next to the grounds where we were working. On another occasion, a wedding held on 26 May 2007, the ceremony began about 12.30 pm and was followed by a reception that continued until about 11.30 pm. The reception included music from a live band, which was very loud.

The use of Dode for wedding ceremonies can mean that we suffer from noise nuisance for a long period during the day, from when the guests arrive for the ceremony until late into the evening. When the venue is used to hold a reception after the ceremony there can also be additional traffic using the lanes as the guests are sometimes taken away from the premises after the ceremony and are then brought back later for the reception. There is also further traffic when vans are used to bring additional equipment and supplies to the venue. There are many examples of this in Annex A.

We have spoken with our neighbours Mr and Mrs Mather who live at Matthewdown House, which is also next to The Lost Village of Dode. They told us they are fed up with noise from the weddings and have contacted the police about it on a number of occasions.

We know that noise pollution is recognized by the government as being something that should be taken into account in planning as on page 106 of The South East Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East at paragraph 9.55 it states: *"Noise can have a serious effect on the quiet enjoyment of property and places, reducing quality of life. Ambient noise and neighbour noise can have significant impacts on quality of life."* While we appreciate that this policy guidance is not binding in connection with the licensing of approved premises for civil marriages we do feel it confirms that noise is regarded as a nuisance and therefore under Regulation 6(1)(b) a licensing authority should take account of it when licensing such premises. We are grateful that KCC has taken this into account in imposing conditions on the licence in the past.

2. As we are usually at Winnats Farm all day, every day of the week, we get to see when any events take place at The Lost Village of Dode. We have recorded the weddings that we have seen take place there during certain years. In 2008 there were 18, in 2009 there were 36 and in 2010 there were 18 (as specified in Annex A). We did not record the weddings in 2011 but we recall the number was similar to 2010, probably fewer rather than more. From these statistics it can be seen that the current limit of 42 ceremonies a year is sufficient to satisfy demand. In addition there are an abundance of venues in Kent where people can have a civil wedding ceremony. The Kentish Ceremony website refers to there being over 200. Therefore it is not necessary to increase the permitted number allowed at The Lost Village of Dode in order to ensure that Kent County Council can offer a sufficient number of venues to meet the demand for civil ceremonies.

3. The current conditions that are imposed on the licence for The Lost Village of Dode are a compromise that allows Mr Chapman to use the premises as a business for holding weddings and therefore earn income which can be used to pay for the upkeep of the premises while at the same time seeking to mitigate the nuisance that this activity causes to local residents and also to other persons who come to Great Buckland, whether it is to work such as farm traffic using the lanes to gain access to fields or for recreation such as in the case of walkers. The prices for having weddings are no longer published on The Lost Village of Dode website but we do have the prices that were charged in 2009 which were previously published on the website (please see Annex B attached). These were £1,200 for a Thursday wedding, £1,350 for a Friday wedding and £1,750 for a Saturday wedding. In 2009 there were 36 weddings that we saw take place at Dode, 4 on a Thursday, 10 on a Friday and 22 on a Saturday (please refer to Annex A for more information). This equates to a gross income of £56,800. This we are sure is not only an adequate income to keep the premises and grounds in good order and repair but will also return a good profit as well. Therefore the current licence conditions do allow for the wedding business at Dode to be run as a profitable business.

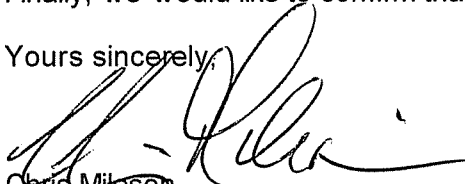
The two retreat cottages on the site also provide an income as they are let out as self-catering holiday cottages through an agency called Hideaways. The Hideaways website reveals that weekly rental for one cottage is £401 to £656 per week and for the other cottage is £270 to £435 per week.

4. The Lost Village of Dode has been put up for sale with Knight Frank. We attach a copy of the sales particulars (Annex C). In the particulars the property is described as "*an enchanting and tranquil spiritual retreat in the heart of a delightful valley in the North Downs of Kent*" and that it "*is located in an inspirational and tranquil position in the heart of the valley between Luddesdown and Holly Hill. The valley is the picture of serenity ...*". These statements are generally true except that the valley loses its tranquility and serenity during the time that weddings are held at Dode. We are not sure if the property is still currently on the market. If it is not, then it may well be put on the market again during the term of the new licence. Accordingly, we are concerned that if the current conditions on the licence are relaxed then a new owner may seek to have as many ceremonies at the venue as possible in order to maximize the earnings from the premises so as to try to recoup as quickly as possible what will no doubt be a substantial sum that was paid as the purchase price. This is a real concern as regulation 7(2) of the 2005 Regulations provides that where a licence holder ceases to own the premises then the licence passes to the new owner. In the sales particulars under Agents Note 2 – Business it is stated "*The properties are currently providing an income and a new owner may wish to continue running it as a going concern*". In this uncertain situation we feel it is especially important not to relax any of the conditions in the current licence.

In conclusion we would like to ask the Member Panel considering this licence application to be sympathetic to retaining the charm, special character and heritage of the valley in which Great Buckland and The Lost Village of Dode are situated. The increased commercial activity that would result from a relaxation of any of the conditions imposed under the current licence would impact adversely on these valuable qualities of the area and spoil what is a unique tranquil location which is so easily accessible to people who live in built-up areas near by who are looking for a place where they can relax and unwind.

Finally, we would like to confirm that one of us would like to speak at the meeting on 15 June.

Yours sincerely,


Chris Mileson



Denise Mileson

Annex A

Weddings at The Lost Village of Dode 2008 to 2010

2008

| Date | Comments |
|--------------|--|
| 3 April | Wedding ceremony. |
| 26 April | Wedding ceremony. |
| 3 May | Wedding ceremony at around 2 pm. At about 5 pm Porky & Best catering van arrives. Reception held in evening. Some music but volume kept low. |
| 24 May | Wedding ceremony held about 1 pm. Guests left about 2.30 pm. |
| 7 June | Wedding ceremony at around 11 am. |
| 12 July | Wedding ceremony – guests left by 2 pm. |
| 2 August | Wedding – Porky & Best catering van arrives + hire van + minibus + Rolls Royce bridal car. Wedding ceremony about 2 pm. Music at about 3 pm. Minibus and bridal car left about 4.30 pm. Returned just after 6 pm for reception. Guests used Retreat. Many people walking into the Retreat with Boxes and bags. Taxis used to ferry guests. Many trips. Minibus also brought back guests on at least 2 trips. Party finished 12.08 am. We were woken up by car headlights being flashed through our bedroom window. |
| 15 August | Wedding ceremony held about 1 pm. 2 large minibuses used. Guests left about 3.30 pm. |
| 23 August | Wedding ceremony held about 12 pm. Guests left about 2.15 pm. Noisy guests. |
| 30 August | Wedding and reception – About 1.30 pm guests arrive and Porky & Best catering van. 3 pm guests leave. At 3.05 pm Porky & Best van leaves. Lots of shouting. 5 pm guests arrive again. 2 large minibuses + Porky & Best van. Guests leave at 7.11 pm. Lots of shouting. |
| 5 September | Wedding ceremony – guests left at about 5 pm. |
| 6 September | Wedding ceremony about 12 pm. Guests left at about 2.30 pm. |
| 13 September | Wedding ceremony – 1 coach and 1 minibus. |
| 18 September | Wedding and reception – 2 minibuses + Porky & Best catering van. 4.40 pm minibuses leave. 4.50 pm minibuses return. |
| 20 September | Wedding – 2.30 pm till late. Wedding reception held in marquee on the site. A toilet trailer was parked on the site and an electricity generator used. 2 minibuses used to bring guests. Marquee delivered on 19/9/08 – collected on 22/9/08. Toilet trailer collected on 24/9/08. |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 25 September | Wedding and reception – guests arrive about 12 pm. 1 minibus + Porky & Best catering van. Minibus leaves at 1.50 pm with guests. Minibus returns at 4.35 pm drops off guests then leaves again. 5.05 pm minibus returns with more guests and bridal car arrives. |
| 29 September | Wedding ceremony. |
| 10 October | Wedding and reception. Guests left about 7 pm. 2 minibuses and a van used. |

2009

| Date | Comments |
|----------|--|
| 4 April | Wedding ceremony. Between 2 pm and 4 pm. |
| 9 April | Wedding and reception. Guests left around midnight. |
| 11 April | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 1 pm. |
| 16 April | Wedding ceremony. Noisy guests. Commenced around 4 pm. Left at around 5.50 pm. |
| 25 April | Wedding and reception. Commenced around 2 pm. Guests left and catering van (Porky and Best) arrived at 3.30 pm. Guests returned for reception at 5.20 pm. We met them in Buckland Road on our way out for the evening. We do not know how long the reception went on for as we were out all evening. |
| 2 May | Wedding ceremony. Commenced about 1 pm. Coach blocks Wrangling Lane at 2.45 pm. Guests leave at around 3 pm. |
| 9 May | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 1 pm. 12 cars and two large vans on site. |
| 14 May | Wedding and reception. Guests leave at 4.15 pm. At 5 pm the Porky & Best catering van arrives. Guests return and reception held until late. |
| 15 May | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 1 pm. |
| 16 May | Wedding and reception. Commenced around 2 pm. Guests left at around 10.30 pm. |
| 22 May | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 3 pm. |
| 23 May | Wedding and reception. Commenced around 2 pm. Guests left after wedding and returned around 6 pm for the reception. |
| 30 May | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 2 pm. |
| 5 June | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 2 pm. |

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 12 June | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 2 pm. |
| 20 June | Wedding and reception. Commenced around 1.30 pm. Guests left at 3 pm and returned at 6.30 pm for the reception. Stayed till late. |
| 27 June | Wedding and reception. Commenced around 2 pm. Guests left at 3.30 pm and Porky & Best van arrived. Guests returned for reception at 6.30 pm. Started leaving at 8.30 pm. |
| 4 July | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 2.30 pm. |
| 11 July | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 2.30 pm. |
| 18 July | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 2.30 pm. |
| 25 July | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 2.00 pm. |
| 31 July | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 1.30 pm. |
| 7 August | Wedding ceremony. |
| 8 August | Wedding ceremony. |
| 15 August | Wedding ceremony. |
| 27 August | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 3.00 pm. |
| 29 August | Wedding ceremony. |
| 11 September | Wedding ceremony. Commenced around 1.00 pm. |
| 12 September | Wedding and reception. Commenced around 3 pm. O'Brien's catering van at premises. |
| 18 September | Wedding and reception. Guests left after wedding reception and returned about 6.00 pm. Guests spent a lot of time in the grounds of the church. There was lots of shouting. |
| 19 September | Wedding ceremony. |
| 25 September | Wedding and reception. Guests left after wedding ceremony and returned around 6 pm for the reception. Bespoke catering van at premises. Lots of shouting by guests. |
| 26 September | Wedding and reception. Guests left after wedding ceremony and returned around 6 pm for the reception. Very noisy guests with lots of shouting. It was like having a lot of football supporters next door. A small van brought the catering supplies. The guests left around 11 pm. They were so noisy that they could be heard above the sound of our TV. |
| 10 October | Wedding and reception. Porky & Best van brought the catering supplies. |
| 16 October | Wedding and reception. Porky & Best van brought the catering supplies. |

| | |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| | The van blocked Wrangling Lane. |
| 17 October | Wedding ceremony. |

2010

| Date | Comments |
|-------------|--|
| 8 April | Wedding ceremony. |
| 10 April | Wedding and reception. Guests left premises after ceremony and returned later for the reception. Porky & Best catering van arrives. Music at reception. Guests leave about 8 pm. |
| 24 April | Wedding ceremony. |
| 1 May | Wedding ceremony. |
| 14 May | Wedding and reception. Porky & Best catering van on site. Very noisy guests. Guests left about 8 pm. |
| 15 May | Wedding and reception. Porky & Best catering van on site. Very noisy guests who we could hear above the sound of our TV. Guests left about 11 pm. |
| 24 July | Wedding and reception. Very noisy guests dressed in medieval costumes. Rubbish thrown into our field. |
| 30 July | Wedding ceremony. |
| 6 August | Wedding ceremony. |
| 7 August | Wedding ceremony. |
| 20 August | Wedding ceremony. |
| 27 August | Wedding ceremony. |
| 28 August | Wedding and reception. |
| 9 September | Wedding and reception. |
| 7 October | Wedding ceremony. |
| 21 October | Wedding ceremony. |
| 28 October | Wedding ceremony. |
| 30 October | Wedding and reception. |

Annex B

Weddings

[Dode Home](#)

The Lost Village of Dode Is undoubtedly one of the most exclusive and sought after Wedding venues in Kent.

Its unique marriage room, built over 900 years ago is small in scale and suitable for parties of up to a maximum of only 45 people – people that are truly special to you as a couple.

Only one wedding per day is held on Thursdays, Fridays or Saturdays from the 1st April to the 31st October each year. Every wedding ceremony is special and unique to your individual requirements.

Christmas weddings on Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays may now be held from the 1st until the 23rd of December

Hire Charges for 2008 / 2009 are:

- *Thursdays - £1,100 / £1,200*
- *Fridays - £1,250 / £1,350*
- *Saturdays - £1,550 / £1,750*

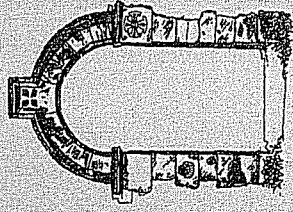


[Directions](#)

Please contact Mary & Doug Chapman for a brochure or if you would like to visit.

Tel: 01622 -734205 or E-mail: dougchapman@hotmail.com

Annex C



THE LOST VILLAGE OF DODE

Holly Hill, Nr Luddesdown, Kent



THE LOST VILLAGE OF DODE

Holly Hill, Nr Luddesdown, Kent

An enchanting and tranquil spiritual retreat in the heart of a delightful valley in the North Downs of Kent and considered by many to be one of this country's ancient spiritual sites.

Meopham 3.2 miles ♦ M2 Junction 2 4.55 miles
M20 Junction 2 5.85 miles ♦ Ebbsfleet 9.4 miles
Central London 29.3 miles (all distances approximate)

Accommodation and Amenities

Dode Church: A two cell former Norman Church in its original form, with minstrels gallery

Hill View: Open plan sitting room/kitchen
First floor bedroom ♦ Shower room

Woodside: Open plan sitting room/kitchen ♦ Master bedroom with en-suite shower room ♦ First floor bedroom
Further shower room.

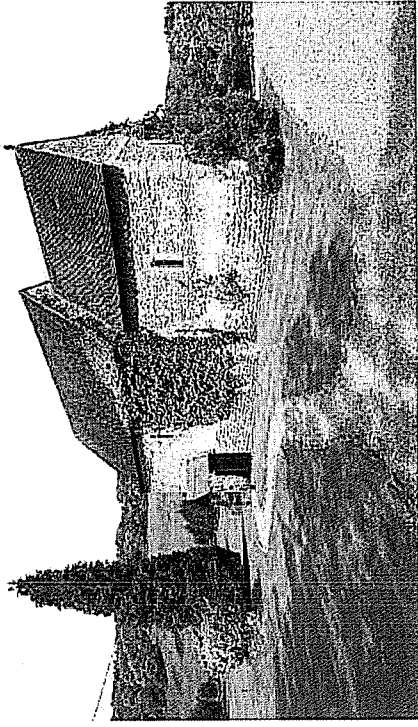
Gravel parking and turning area ♦ Delightful gardens and grounds.

In all about 1.42 acres.

For sale Freehold

01732 744477

113-117 High Street, Sevenoaks,
Kent, TN13 1UP
george.berry@knightfrank.com



Situation

The Lost Village of Dode is located in an inspirational and tranquil position at the heart of the valley between Luddesdown and Holly (Holy) Hill. The valley is a picture of serenity 3.2 miles from Meopham with its main line station and with its day to day amenities. The M20 at junction 2 is 5.85 miles away providing links to the national motorway network, London, the Channel Tunnel, Gatwick, Stansted and Heathrow airports and the Kent coast. Ebbsfleet International Station is 9.4 miles to the north with high speed links to London St Pancras and Paris. Sevenoaks is 14.3 miles with a comprehensive range of shops, restaurants and recreational facilities together with mainline station to London Bridge, London Waterloo East, London Charing Cross, and London Cannon Street. There is golf at Wrotham Heath and Wildemesse, motor racing at Brands Hatch and cricket at The Vine, Sevenoaks.

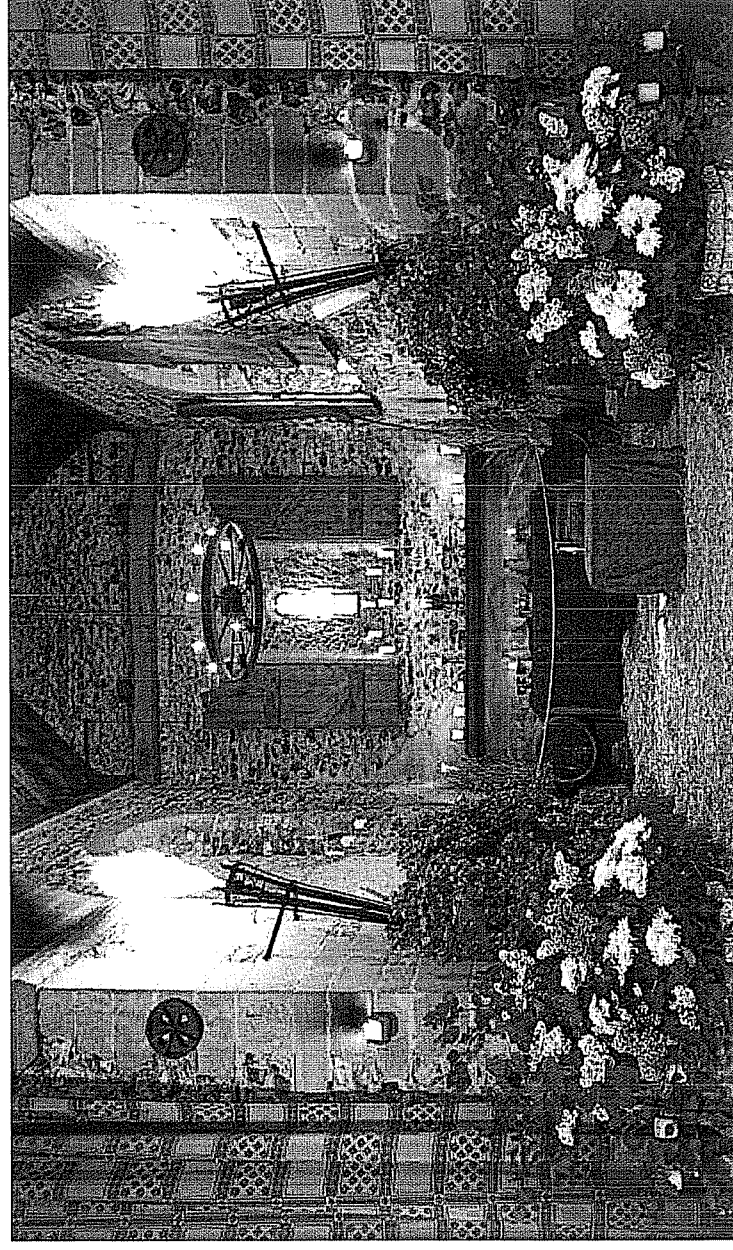
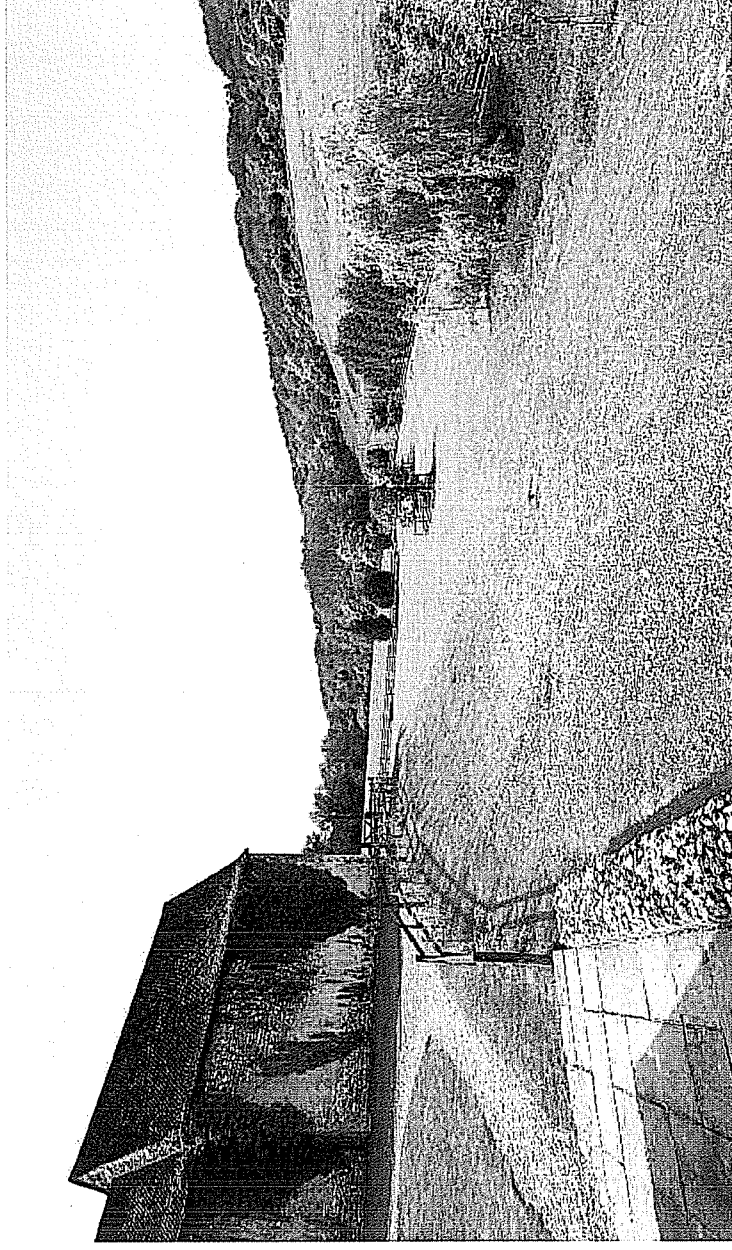
History

Archaeological evidence in the 19th century confirms occupation of the site during the Roman period. The mound upon which Dode Church is built stands at the end of a ley line which stretches to the east for some ten miles. Upon this line stands three Pre-Reformation churches, two Roman sites and a bronze age burial ground. The village of Dode was destroyed in 1349 as a result of the Black Death and shortly afterwards Dode Church was abandoned, never to be used for regular worship again. The church which was formally known as Our Lady of the Meadow is Grade II* listed, it is described in Arthur Mee's The Kings England as being "....a jewel of our lonely countryside".

Within its grounds lie buried the remains of an ancient road leading poignantly to the village well.

Description

The Lost Village of Dode comprises part of the site of the village of Dode and includes its former church and two residential retreats currently used for spiritual vacations. The church comprises a 12th century Grade II* building restored in 1905-6 and then again by the current owner. The building is constructed of uncoursed flint with ashlar dressings under a pitched and tiled roof. The two cell church has small single light round arched windows in the nave and chancel. The building provides an enchanting spiritual



setting for civil /humanist ceremonies. To one end is a free standing oak framed minstrels gallery.

Hill View and Woodside, which were built in time for the millennium, have been cleverly designed to nestle into the landscape and are of green oak construction under a pitched and tiled roof. Hill View comprises a double aspect open plan sitting room/kitchen with stairs to a first floor bedroom with range of exposed timbers. There is a shower room and a covered veranda to the front. The covered veranda continues to the front door of Woodside which again comprises an open plan sitting room/kitchen with stairs to a first floor bedroom with exposed timbers. There is a further ground floor bedroom with en-suite shower room and separate hot tub together with a separate shower room.

Externally

The property is approached from Wrangling Lane via a gravel private drive providing parking for several vehicles. A path leads to the main door of the church and leads down to the retreats. All three properties have delightful views over the grounds which follow the undulating contours of the valley. The adjacent farmland and woodland provides for a delightful backdrop to this enchanting site. The grounds are laid predominantly to lawn with a former pond. Close to the entrance is an excellent timber pergola.

Services

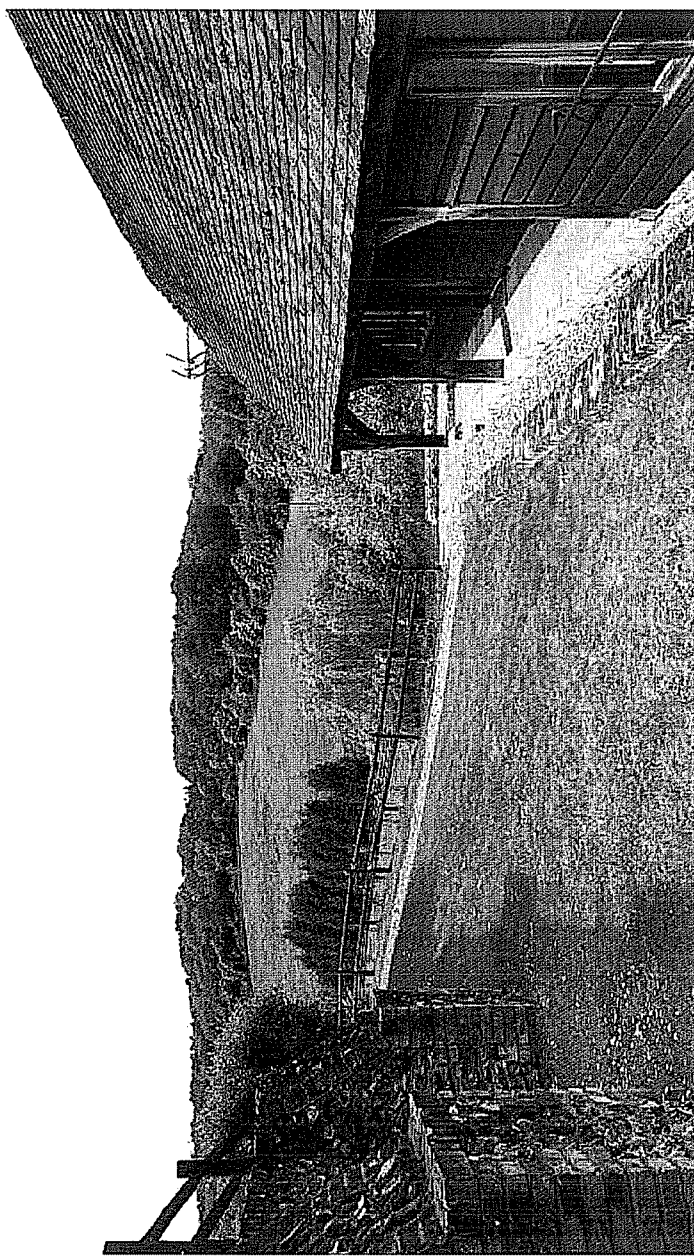
Mains water, Main electric, Septic Tank for 1 and 2 The Retreat, Electric heating in 1 and 2 The Retreat and Electric heating in Dode Church.

Fixtures and Fittings

All items known as vendors fixtures and fittings are specifically excluded from the sale however certain items may be available by separate negotiation.

Agents Note 1 – Planning

Dode Church is currently utilised as a place of congregation performing most of the functions of a Church in a Civil or Humanist format. It holds a Civil Wedding Licence for 42 weddings per year with a capacity 45 people. In April 2011 it was voted in the Independent as being one of the best 50 wedding venues in the Country.



1 and 2 The Retreats were granted planning under Section 106 and are deemed as retreats only and can not be used currently for permanent occupation. They are currently let through www.hideaways.co.uk for spiritual vacations and recuperation.

Agents Note 2 – Business

The properties are currently providing an income and a new owner may wish to continue running it as a going concern. Further information can be provided upon request from the vendor only to those parties seriously interested.

Directions

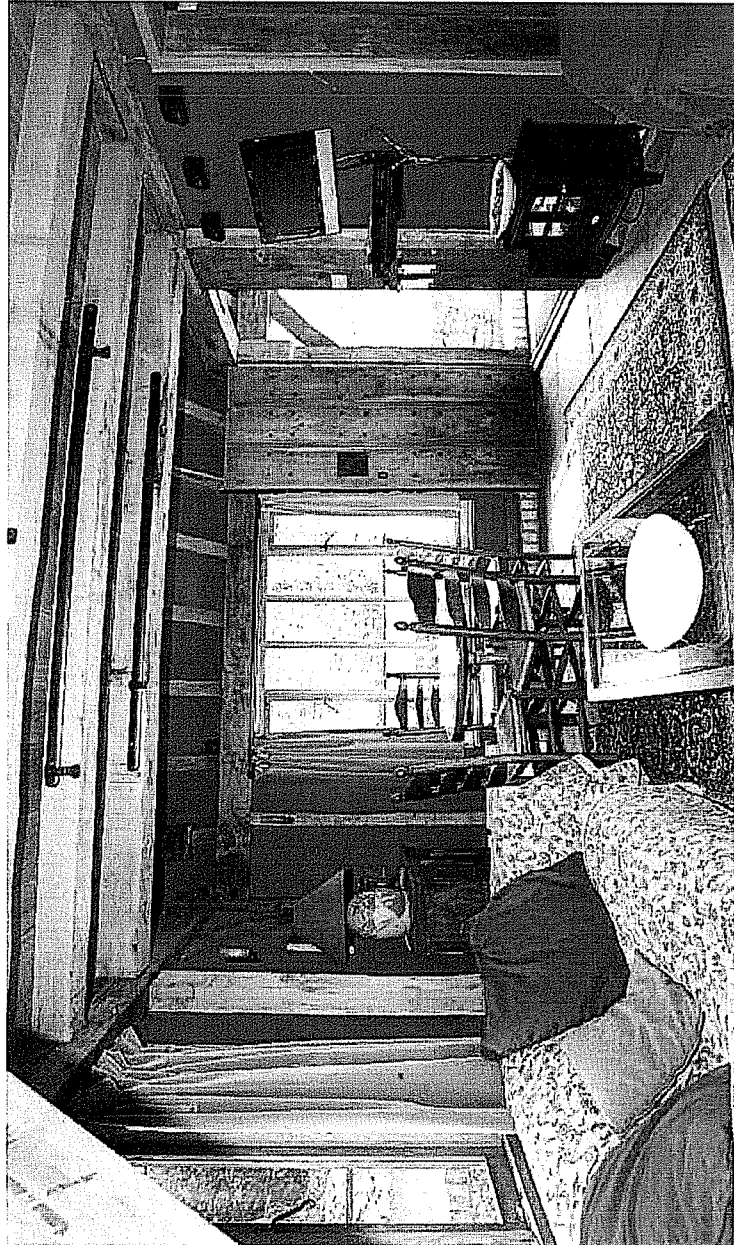
Leave the M20 at junction 2 heading south on the A20. At the roundabout take the first exit onto the A227 towards Meopham and Gravesend. Continue on the A227 through Vigo and Culversten Green and upon entering Meopham turn right into The Street. Continue along Foxen Down Lane and in turn into Oakingdon Road towards Luddesdown. Continue along Oakingdon Road into Luddesdown Road and at the staggered crossroads turn right into Cutteridge Road which joins Buckland Road. Continue along Buckland Road and on the bend fork left into Wrangling Lane where The Lost Village of Dode can be found on the right hand side.

Local Authority

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council 01732 840636

Viewings

Strictly by prior appointment with the vendor's sole selling agents Knight Frank 01732 744477.

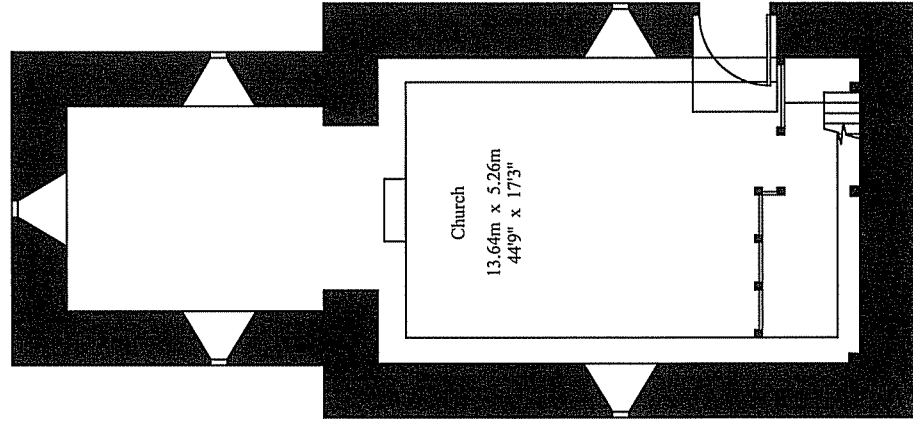


The Lost Village of Dode

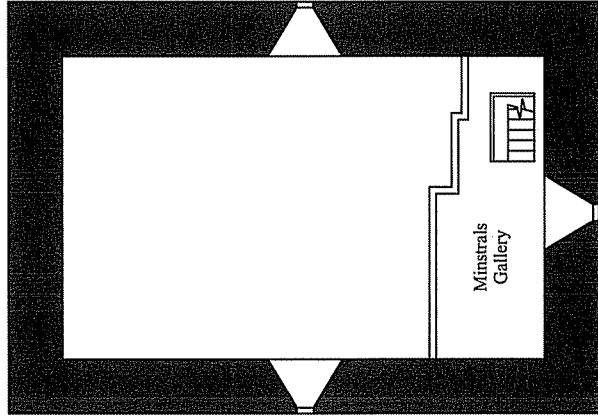
Church - Gross Internal Area : 105.9 sq.m (1139 sq.ft.)

Woodside - Gross Internal Area : 55.1 sq.m (593 sq.ft.)

Hill View - Gross Internal Area : 31.3 sq.m (336 sq.ft.)



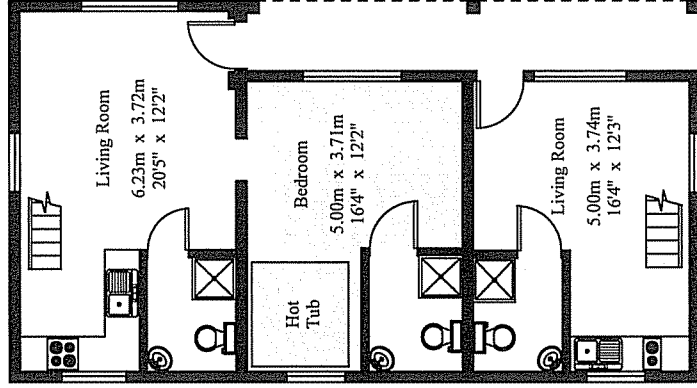
Ground Floor



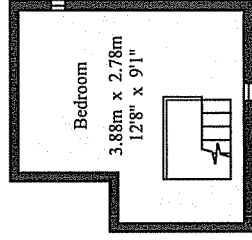
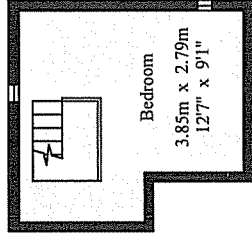
First Floor



Woodside



Ground Floor



First Floor

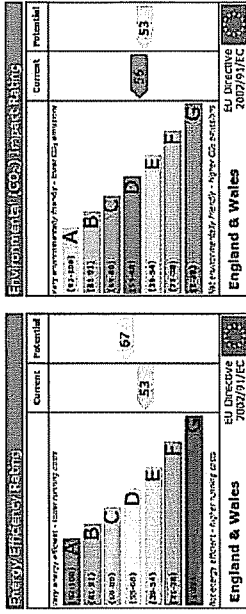


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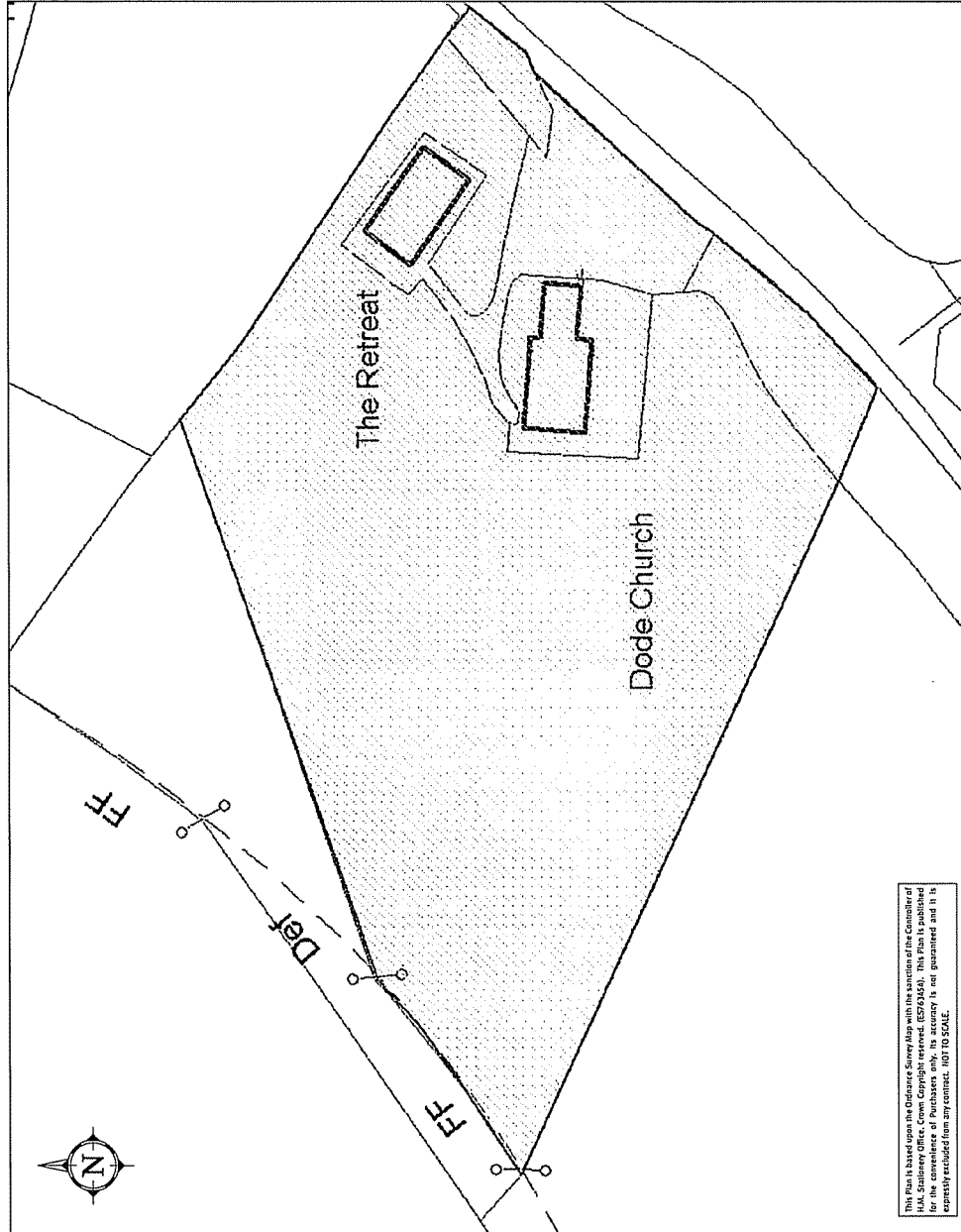
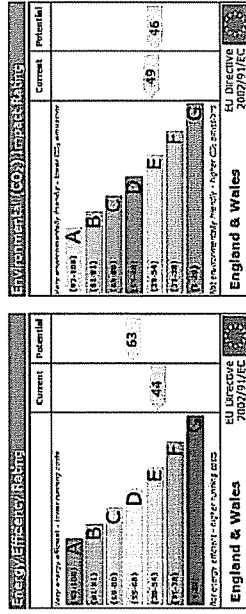
This plan is for guidance only and must not be relied upon as a statement of fact. Attention is drawn to the Important Notice on the last page of the text of the

These plans are for guidance only and must not be relied upon as a statement of fact. Attention is drawn to the Important Notice.

Hillview



Woodside



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