# Cambridgeshire outdoor wedding venue forced to close over medieval moat concerns



An outdoor wedding event business in Cambridgeshire has been forced to close following a local council's objections concerning a medieval moat on the site, resulting in significant disappointment for the owners and their clients. Katy and Joe Bird, founders of Hardwick Moat Weddings, have described the difficult decision to dissolve their company after the local authority raised concerns, leading to the cancellation of future bookings and the halting of forthcoming events.

Hardwick Moat Weddings, established in 2021 near the village of Tilbrook, Cambridgeshire, operated on a picturesque four-acre site featuring meadows that once served as grazing land for cattle and now contain a medieval moat with flowing water. The couple, who originally celebrated their wedding at the venue, developed the business to host up to twelve weddings annually under a temporary licence. The venue accommodated up to 150 guests per event, transporting attendees via an old Ferguson tractor from a designated car park. The site also offered glamping facilities in adjacent fields for overnight stays, providing a distinctive countryside experience praised for its idyllic setting and romantic atmosphere.

Despite accumulating numerous five-star reviews and promoting local suppliers from within a ten-mile radius, the business was halted by Huntingdonshire District Council after objections were raised regarding the site's impact on the medieval moat, described by the council as “potentially comparable to nationally significant scheduled monuments.” Scheduled monuments on the National Heritage List for England include various historically important sites, such as the Cruise missile shelter at Greenham Common Airbase and Neolithic long barrows in other regions.

The council's concerns also extended to the use of heavy machinery, light and noise pollution, and traffic issues related to the events. The Birds strongly refuted these allegations, explaining that no heavy equipment was used near the moat and that the marquee was set up on former ploughed fields, with the moat area itself cleared carefully by hand to preserve the environment. They also described how lighting was limited to festoon LED lights hung low for short durations, and visitor numbers were controlled to minimise disturbance.

Katy Bird told the Daily Mail, “They made their minds up that they didn’t want to work with us, even though we jumped through every single hoop. They just kept throwing something new at us, often at the last minute.” She described the emotional toll of informing wedding parties of cancellations. “One bride had chosen the venue two years ago. She’d already been to suppliers and had to cancel them and lose the deposits,” she said.

The couple had initially sought retrospective planning permission for the business but found their application refused after the council cited concerns that the development would “dilute the rural character of the area” and weaken the visual gap between Tilbrook village and the surrounding countryside. The council claimed that “reshaping of the moat” and deturfing to lay paths with machinery might have damaged the archaeological site.

Despite commissioning a suite of professional reports to address wildlife, light, noise, and traffic impact, and arguing that the business constituted legitimate farm diversification supporting the local economy, the couple were unable to overturn the decision. They invested around £15,000 in these reports and estimates suggest that the closure has resulted in a £100,000 annual loss to the local economy due to reduced business for nearby suppliers.

Andrew Brodie, the 73-year-old farmer who owns the land leased by the Birds, expressed surprise at the council's classification of the moat, stating that medieval moated farmsteads are fairly common and that his moat had even undergone dredging in the past. He described the wedding business as suitable diversification with minimal impact: “It’s out of the way and didn’t disturb anyone. I’ve never had anyone complain to me.”

Local suppliers have also voiced frustration at the closure. Dawson Nixon, owner of Pitched Perfect Events, which supplied the bell tents for glamping, called the council’s ruling “an absolute travesty” and estimated a loss of £15,000 to £20,000 annually. “They were literally 15 minutes down the road from me and it was a pleasure working with them,” he said. “The venue was amazing and they didn’t ask for any commission, while other people want 20 per cent commission. They weren’t interested – they just wanted the best local suppliers. They created a really good vibe.”

Mrs Bird has since started a new business as an independent funeral director in St Neots. She confirmed that although an appeal was possible, the couple chose not to pursue it due to the financial and emotional toll involved.

Huntingdonshire District Council was approached for comment on the matter.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.allsides.com/news/2025-04-14-2315/culture-wedding-venue-plans-rejected-medieval-site-near-huntingdon> - Corroborates the council's rejection of planning permission for the Hardwick Moat wedding venue due to concerns about its medieval site.
2. <https://www.magzter.com/tr/stories/newspaper/Cambridge-News/BID-TO-USE-MEDIEVAL-SITE-AS-A-WEDDING-VENUE-REFUSED-AGAIN> - Confirms repeated refusals for the seasonal marquee and glamping setup, including details about the duration of events and guest numbers.
3. <https://www.magzter.com/tr/stories/newspaper/Cambridge-News/BID-TO-USE-MEDIEVAL-SITE-AS-A-WEDDING-VENUE-REFUSED-AGAIN> - Details the council's concerns about rural character dilution and archaeological impact, aligning with claims about land use disputes.
4. <https://www.allsides.com/news/2025-04-14-2315/culture-wedding-venue-plans-rejected-medieval-site-near-huntingdon> - Supports the article's claim about retrospective planning applications and minimal lighting measures described by the owners.
5. <https://www.magzter.com/tr/stories/newspaper/Cambridge-News/BID-TO-USE-MEDIEVAL-SITE-AS-A-WEDDING-VENUE-REFUSED-AGAIN> - References the business's efforts to address prior council objections, including professional reports on environmental impacts.
6. <https://www.allsides.com/news/2025-04-14-2315/culture-wedding-venue-plans-rejected-medieval-site-near-huntingdon> - Indicates the venue's operational timeline (2021 onward) and temporary licensing, matching the article's founding year and setup.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14639421/Wedding-business-owner-destroy-couples-dreams-council-refused-planning-permission.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data