

# Comments for Planning Application 18/01509/FUL

Submitted by Dr.Nigel Roberts

## Introduction

Kelmscott is a tranquil small rural village which has a character vulnerable to change and has a scarcity of facilities and infrastructure. The village lies within a designated Conservation Area and consists of 36 properties occupied by approximately 65 adult residents. However, four properties are only occupied by their owners for a few days per year. There are also two working farms in the village and one public house.

With respect to the proposals contained in this planning application it is important to note at the outset that the **TWO** access roads to the village from the B4449 Clanfield to Lechlade road and **ALL** roads within the village are single-track that have **NO** speed limits and **NO** street lighting. Both single-track access roads also have blind bends as they enter the village and, between spring and autumn, drivers are unable to see oncoming traffic due to overgrown vegetation on the verges. The eastern single-track access road used by visitors to Kelmscott Manor is, for the majority of its length, 2.8 metres wide and is shown in Fig.1



Fig.1. View of 2.8m wide eastern access road towards Kelmscott village

The Planning Application submitted by Kelmscott Manor shows that they want to accommodate either 15 metre long coaches or 12 metre long buses in their car park at Kelmscott. The Manor have also stated that **ONLY** the eastern access road is to be used for visitor access and egress to & from the village and have erected appropriate road signs on the B4449. The width of a standard bus or coach is 2.55 metres and the width of the eastern access road into Kelmscott is 2.8 metres. This road has two blind bends and **DOES NOT** have formal 'passing places' that could accommodate 15 metre long coaches or 12 metre long buses as shown in Figures 2 & 3 below respectively.

This width of the road (2.8m) and a standard coach or bus (2.55m) means that a coach would be unable to pass even a pedestrian or cyclist on this access road never mind the problem of two coaches wanting to pass one another. The eastern access road is regularly used throughout the day by school buses, delivery trucks, post office vans, heavy farm machinery, emergency vehicles and Kelmscott residents. Any traffic mounting the verges in an attempt to allow two vehicles to pass each may become bogged down by the many lateral drainage channels dug into the verges on both sides of the road to remove rain

water. The proposed volume and frequency of access & egress traffic along a single-track road for up to six days per week without sufficiently long passing places to accommodate 15m long vehicles will seriously affect and disrupt the lives of the residents and businesses in Kelmscott village.



Fig.2 1<sup>st</sup> blind right hand bend on 2.8m wide access road into Kelmscott



Fig.3 2<sup>nd</sup> blind right hand bend on 2.8m wide access road into Kelmscott

Significant environmental damage to the grass verges along both access roads has already occurred as vehicles attempt to pass each other on single-track roads (see Fig.4 below) and further significant and continuous damage is inevitable due to the proposed 76% increase in visitor numbers as estimated by Kelmscott Manor.



Fig.4 Typical severe environmental damage to grass verges on village roads

Kelmscott Manor have provided a car park in a field at the north end of the village for their visitors but have not provided a full-time Car Park Marshall to ensure efficient and proper parking. On frequent occasions this results in the car park becoming full. There are no restrictions on parking anywhere in Kelmscott so visitors to the Manor resort to parking on the single track roads and verges in the village. Some visitors refuse to use the 'official' car park and park on the village roads and verges to save themselves a 10-minute walk from the official car park to Kelmscott Manor.

There are no pavements in Kelmscott between the north car park and Kelmscott Manor apart from a single-person width footpath between the Old School House and the Morris Memorial Hall. The footpath extends southward beyond this point to the Plough Inn but many customers and overnight residents at the Plough and village residents living nearby park their vehicles on the footpath to allow traffic to pass on the adjacent single-track road, a typical example is shown in Figure 5 below.

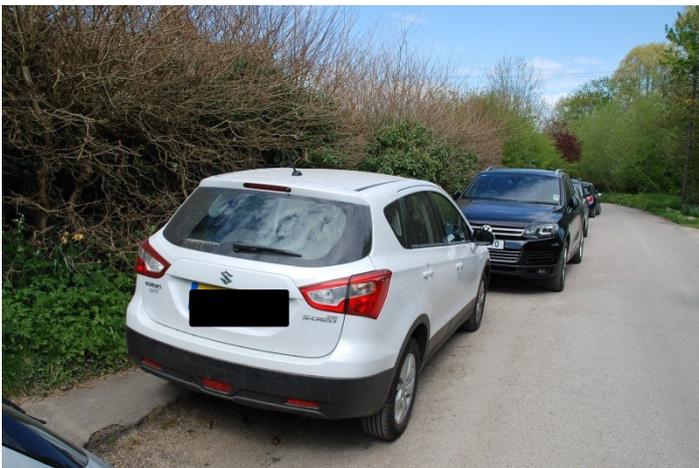


Fig. 5 Cars parked on footpath so visitors have to walk in the road to Kelmscott Manor

As there are no pavements in the village, visitors to Kelmscott Manor are forced to walk in the middle of the single-track roads between the car park and Kelmscott Manor, a journey of around 8-10 minutes. Kelmscott residents who need to use their vehicles whilst going about their business during Manor open days therefore have to navigate groups of visitors walking in the middle of roads and vehicles haphazardly parked partially on verges and on the edge of roads. The two farms in Kelmscott also move large and heavy agricultural machinery (eg tractors, trailers, ploughs, combine harvesters etc.) frequently on a daily basis, through the village and its two access roads to reach various fields. Any obstruction on a single track road therefore seriously affects their business and activities.

From the planning application documentation it is noted that Kelmscott Manor wish to open during the winter months of November and from January to March for schools and community groups. I have previously noted above that the single-track roads in Kelmscott have no speed limits or street lighting and are never gritted by the council.

### **Comment 1: concerning the safe circulation of pedestrians**

The planning documentation submitted does not address how Kelmscott Manor propose to ensure the safety of their visitors walking in the dark between the Manor and the car park in the middle of icy ungritted roads that have no pavements or streetlights during the winter months.

**Objection 1:** The current and proposed future situation as described above clearly **DOES NOT** comply with West Oxfordshire District Council Policies **BE3** and **T6** as described in Sections 4.7 and 4.11 of the PLANNING STATEMENT for KELMSCOTT MANOR. In particular the requirements of the Sections of BE3 and T6 shown in bold type below have **NOT** been addressed.

Policy BE3 addresses the provision of parking and movement and states that:

"Movement and Parking Development should make provision for the safe movement of people and vehicles, whilst minimising impact upon the environment. Within built-up areas priority should be given to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Proposals will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

- a) safe and convenient circulation of pedestrians and cyclists, both within the development and externally to nearby facilities, with provision to meet the needs of people with impaired mobility as appropriate;**
- b) safe movement of all vehicular traffic both within the site and on the surrounding highway network;**

Policy T6 deals with Traffic Management and states that: "Traffic management schemes will be sought which:

- a) promote and give priority to the safe and convenient movement of pedestrians and cyclists, particularly on roads with significant or potentially significant pedestrian and cycle flows;**
- c) reduce traffic conflicts, the potential for accidents and alleviate congestion;**
- d) reduce environmental damage caused by traffic."**

## **Objection 2: concerning the impact on the conservation area.**

A conservation area seeks to protect buildings of architectural or historic interest, walls trees and hedges, open spaces and views and the local environment and its character. One of attributes of Kelmscott that attracted William Morris to live in the village was its peaceful and tranquil environment. Kelmscott lies wholly within a designated conservation area and is surrounded by water meadows and open agricultural countryside in a peaceful and tranquil setting. The tranquil environmental character of Kelmscott deserves equal protection to that afforded to historic buildings as this is becoming an increasingly rare quality in most of Southern England.

The planning documentation submitted by Kelmscott Manor states that their preferred Manor opening option will result in a 76% increase in visitor numbers from the current 21000 visitors/year to 37000 visitors/year and Manor opening days will more than double from the current 91 days/year to 199 days/year. Section 5.21 of their Planning Statement states **"The increase in pedestrians walking through the village from the car park to The Manor will not affect the character of the conservation area"**.

This statement is clearly false as the current visitors to the Manor already trespass into private gardens and properties and take photographs of properties and residents without their permission as they walk to the Manor. It is often very difficult for residents to drive out of the village on Manor open days as a constant stream of visitors walk in the middle of the road from the car park to the Manor. An increase in visitor numbers on the scale and frequency proposed in the Planning Application would completely destroy the peace and tranquillity of the conservation area.

## **Comment 2: concerning cutting back vegetation and partial demolition of a dry stone wall at entrance to proposed car park:**

Document 987-901C\_CAR\_PARK shows proposed alterations to the car park used by Kelmscott Manor and vegetation within the public highway to be cut back or removed to provide traffic visibility splays. It is not entirely clear at this stage but the trees to the left of the proposed new entrance of the car park may have already been designated as 'Important Trees and Tree Groups' in the Kelmscott Conservation Area as designated in 1995. It is also unclear from the drawings submitted whether the dry stone wall scheduled for partial demolition is within the Kelmscott conservation area.

## **Comment 3: concerning vehicular egress from the southern end of Kelmscott village.**

Many residents living in the southern half of Kelmscott village drive northwards past the Morris Memorial Hall and want to turn right at the grass triangle adjacent to the Old School house and diagonally opposite the proposed new widened entrance to the Kelmscott Manor car park. This right turn around a completely blind corner has to be navigated with the utmost caution. Kelmscott Manor have proposed traffic visibility splays in both directions at the widened entrance/exit to the car park on the north side of the road but have not considered traffic visibility splays for use by visiting drivers and residents approaching the car park from the southern end of the village. Without these additional visibility splays, the

proposed increase and frequency of traffic and large coaches in and out of the proposed car park and zero visibility to the driver waiting at the grass triangle to turn right makes a serious accident at the entrance to the car park almost inevitable.

#### **Final Comments 4:**

I have no objection whatsoever to any of the proposed conservation work that is required at Kelmscott Manor and the construction of a new 'Learning Centre' building. However, the proposed drastic expansion in the number of visitors and the increased frequency of Manor open days will essentially destroy the unique tranquil and peaceful character and environment of Kelmscott Village forever. Once this has occurred, it can never be replaced as history has already shown that Kelmscott Manor will continue to seek further and further expansion in visitor numbers in future years.

The proposed expansion of the car park at the north of the village and 2-way traffic along a single-track access road without adequate passing places into the village will cause major problems to both visitors themselves and the residents and businesses in the village who want to use the road to exit the village or to return to their homes. More serious is the fact that 2-way traffic blocked on a single track access road may delay or prevent emergency vehicles gaining access to the village.

End of Comments & Objections for Planning Application 18/01509/FUL