

Reply to Licensing Team

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Guidance Notes for the Approval of a Premises as a Venue for Civil Marriages and/or Civil Partnerships**Requirements Relating to Approved Premises**

1. Premises approved as venues for civil marriages and civil partnership must preserve the dignity of the occasion. Hotels, stately homes, and civic buildings are examples of suitable premises. All premises must be permanent or immovable structures.
2. Civil marriages / civil partnerships cannot take place in the open air, in a tent or marquee, any form of temporary structure or on any form of transport unless permanently moored or fixed.
3. Premises must be available regularly to the public for civil marriage ceremonies and for the formation of civil partnership ceremonies, and must have no recent or continuing connection with religion or religious practice. For example, a chapel in a stately home; a building with furniture or fixings associated with a place of worship; or a building with stained glass windows depicting religious images would not be suitable*.

**The only exception to this rule is religious premises that wish to conduct civil partnership ceremonies only. Such premises may apply to us to become an approved premises for the registration of civil partnerships (but not civil marriages). Such premises may also, or alternatively, “opt-in” to conduct same-sex marriages if registered as a place of worship with their local Register Office. For more information on the latter, please contact the Superintendent Registrar’s Office on 020 8921 6290.*

4. A celebration, commemoration or blessing of the marriage/civil partnership may follow the ceremony, providing it is not a religious marriage ceremony and is separate from the civil ceremony. If religious blessings regularly followed marriages at a particular premises, or can be considered part of the service offered, the Act may be breached and the registration revoked (subject to the exemption mentioned above).
5. The public must have unfettered access to the premises to witness the marriage/civil partnership and be able to make objections before or during the ceremony. Public access to the ceremony must be permitted without charge.

Application Process

6. A proprietor or trustee of the premises must make the application. The application must be accompanied by the appropriate fee (see Fees overleaf). Cheques should be made payable to “Royal Borough of Greenwich”. A copy of the ‘Fire Risk Assessment’ should be attached to the application as prepared under The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO) and state the name of the ‘Responsible Person’ as defined in Article 3 of the same order.
7. Two copies of the plans for the premises must also accompany the application. The Royal Borough will advertise the application on the Royal Greenwich website. This will be carried out *after* the

application has been submitted, checked and confirmed as being complete. The period of consultation runs for 21 days from the date that the website notice of the application is published.

8. Before granting the approval, officers will inspect the premises to ensure that the venue is seemly and dignified for the purpose, and that adequate means of escape and the fire risk assessment under the Regularly Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and other necessary health and safety precautions, are in place.
9. The Community Services Directorate will determine the application. We will notify the applicant of any objections to the application, the decision and the reasons for reaching it.
10. The local authority will hold details of approved premises on a register and on the Council's website, which is open to inspection by members of the public.

Review Process

11. An applicant aggrieved by a decision to refuse an approval or to attach local conditions may seek a review of that decision. The Council's Licensing Sub-Committee will carry out the review. A direction by the Registrar General to revoke an approval is *not* subject to review by the local authority.
12. A separate fee of £103.90 is payable for the cost of a review hearing.

Length of Approval & Revocation Process

13. As of April 2016, any approval granted following an application for a new approval, or to renew an existing one, will last for a period of 5 years (previously 3 years).
14. The local authority may revoke an approval if it is satisfied that the holder has broken any of the conditions applicable to the granting of that approval or if the structure of the premises has changed so as to render them no longer suitable for that purpose.
15. The Registrar General may revoke an approval if they are satisfied that there have been breaches of the law relating to marriages or civil partnerships on the approved premises.

Conditions of Approval

16. The approval, if granted, will be subject to the attached conditions and any further conditions that the local authority may wish to attach to the approval for those particular premises.

Fees

17. The fee depends on the permitted capacity of the part(s) of the premises to be approved. If you are applying for more than one room, the fee is based on the total capacity of the room(s) to be approved:

<u>Permitted Capacity</u>	<u>Fee</u>
Less than 150 persons	£1651.34
150 - 400 persons	£2005.34
More than 400 persons	£2571.28

There is a reduction of 20% on all fees if the premises are already licensed under a Licensing Act 2003 Premises Licence. Please note the fee is non-refundable, whether or not your application is successful. Fees above are for financial year 2023-24.

Registrar of Marriages

18. The Superintendent Registrar is responsible for receiving marriage and civil partnership notices and conducting civil marriages and civil partnership ceremonies within the Royal Borough of Greenwich. You should advise couples to contact the Register Office on 020 8921 5015 and visit the Royal Borough of Greenwich's website: <http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/registerars> for more information. A separate fee is chargeable for the attendance of the Registrar.