

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

APPLICATION FOR PREMISES TO BE APPROVED AS A VENUE FOR MARRIAGES IN PURSUANCE OF SECTION 26(1)(bb) OF THE MARRIAGE ACT 1949 AND FOR CIVIL PARTNERSHIP REGISTRATIONS IN PURSUANCE OF SECTION 6(3A)(a) OF THE CIVIL PARTNERSHIP ACT 2004

APPLICATION PROCEDURE AND GUIDANCE NOTES

As a consequence of the coming into effect of the Civil Partnership Act 2004, applications for premises to be approved as a venue for Marriages now include approval as a venue for the registration of Civil Partnerships. The Government has stated that, "when granted (the Licence) will entitle the holder to use the premises for either the solemnisation of civil marriages or the registration of civil partnerships, or both. However, the requirement is that the premises must be regularly available for one or the other."

Attached you will find an application form and three sheets of information as follows:

- Requirements before an approval can be granted - Annex A
- Conditions to be attached to Grants of Approval - Annex B
- Additional information - Annex C

Before completing the application form please read the information contained in all three sheets.

- a. This application must be made by the proprietor or a trustee of the premises. If successful, the applicant will be the holder of the approval.
- b. Where an application is made on behalf of a limited company, the Secretary or Director should sign the form. In the case of a partnership, each partner should sign. If signing on behalf of the applicant, please state in what capacity you are acting.
- c. 'Premises' are defined as a permanently immovable structure comprising at least a room, or any boat or other vessel which is permanently moored. The primary use of the premises must not be such as to render it unsuitable for the solemnization of marriages or registration of civil partnerships, demean marriage/partnership or bring them into disrepute.
- d. Marriages and civil partnership registrations must take place in readily identifiable and regularly available premises. This will preclude them from taking place in the open air, in a tent, marquee or any other temporary structure, most forms of transport or in a private house.
- e. **Attached to the application must be 3 copies of a scale plan of the premises (1:200 scale) showing the room(s) in which it is intended that marriages/partnership registrations will take place. The plans submitted must clearly show the dimensions of the rooms including the dimensions and locations of the fire exits.**
- f. **Venues must comply with a safe seating layout as recommended in the Fire Safety guidance document BS9999:2017. A seating plan to show the number of seats and their positions within each room must be included with your application.**
- g. **Attached to the application must be 3 copies of the applicants current Fire Safety Risk Assessment and a statement confirming the maximum permitted numbers for each room designated for ceremonies. (See www.communities.gov.uk for more information regarding Fire Safety Risk Assessments.)**
- h. **The applicant should consult the planning authority as to whether planning consent is required and attach evidence that the planning authority is content that the premises may be used for the solemnization of marriages and registration of partnerships. If a Premises License is held then a full copy must be included with the application.**
- i. The premises will be inspected for suitability before approval is granted.
- j. Public notice of the application will be given by advertisement in a newspaper with a period of 21 days for objections to be lodged.

- k. If the requirements and conditions are met, and any objections received are resolved or rejected, the premises will be approved for the purpose for a period of three years subject to further inspections and possible revocation if the requirements and conditions are not met.

GUIDANCE ON INCLUDING A GARDEN OR OUTSIDE STRUCTURE IN YOUR APPLICATION

Suffolk Registration Service will only consider applications for garden or outside structure which comply with the following criteria:

- The relevant planning permission, to use the structure for ceremonies, must be in place prior to submission of the application
- The structure must form part of an application which includes at least one other room large enough to be used as an alternative in the event of the ceremony being moved due to inclement weather
- The structure must provide adequate weatherproofing and must include a roof.
- The structure must be sufficient size (at least 9 square metres of useable floor space) to accommodate:
 - A table for the Registrar to place the marriage register and legal paperwork on
 - Seating for the Bride, Groom, 2 witnesses and 2 Registration Staff
 - Comfortable space in which the ceremony can be conducted
- There must be a sound system to enable the ceremony to be heard
- There must be sufficient lighting within the structure to enable the Registration Officer to carry out their duties effectively
- There must be a 'hard standing' area for guest's chairs (all guests to be seated)
- Consideration must be given in your agreement with couples to ensure they accept the limitations of use of the structure in the event of inclement weather. This is in addition to Suffolk Registration Service's own Garden/Outside Structure Agreement with couples signed at the time of booking the attendance of Registration Staff.

This criterion is in addition to standard licensing requirements. Additional licence conditions relating to the inclusion of a garden/outside will apply. Please note that complying with this guidance does not guarantee a licence will be issued but is designed to serve as a benchmark for minimum requirements.

The attached form when completed must be forwarded to **Jane Parker, Head of Registration Service, Constantine House, 5 Constantine Road Road, Ipswich, IP1 2DH** together with the non-returnable fee of **£1,800 payable to Suffolk County Council. Please don't forget to enclose the documents required as specified above (e to h).**