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**APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF LICENCE FOR PREMISES TO BE APPROVED  
AS A VENUE FOR MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS**

**Rockliffe Hall Hotel, Hurworth, Darlington**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To consider an application received from Rockliffe Hall Hotel for the renewal of a licence to be approved as a venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships in accordance with the provisions of:
  - (a) The Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by the Marriage Act 1994);
  - (b) The Civil Partnership Act (2004);
  - (c) The Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005; and
  - (d) The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013)

**Summary**

2. Since 1994 Registration Districts have been able to approve other venues as an alternative venue to a Register Office which are largely hotels.
3. Rockliffe Hall Hotel is an established approved venue for Civil Ceremonies generating business for the Register Office and for local business, attracting couples who are marrying both the local area and from further afield.
4. There have been no issues with the venue which would adversely affect its application. The current three-year licence as an approved venue is now due to expire on 24 November 2018 and the Committee is asked to consider an application for its renewal for a further three years.

**Information**

5. The Hotel has several areas within it designated as approved places where civil ceremonies can take place. A list of these designated rooms and capacities is attached to the renewal application form.
6. In practice most civil ceremonies take place in either The Orangery; The Morning Room; or the Rockliffe Suite. The additional rooms currently approved as a places for civil ceremonies are to meet a customer request or to meet business continuity needs e.g. in the event of a particular area of the hotel being inaccessible in the event of urgent maintenance or another event.

7. However as part of the renewal process a venue has the opportunity to review the places designated where a civil ceremony can take place to reflect its business needs. The application seeks to renew all of the rooms currently designated within the hotel but also seeks to approve two additional areas as a place where a Civil Ceremony can take place, namely 'The Glasshouse' and the 'Rosebud Curious Cabin'. Photographs of these new proposed areas are attached with the application.
8. The Glasshouse is a large orangery or summerhouse located within the grounds of the hotel. It has air conditioning, electricity for lighting and music etc. and access is fully accessible for wheelchair users. The Glasshouse is not located close to other residential buildings.
9. The Rosebud Curious Cabin is one of five wooden cabins which are located within the grounds of the Hotel and again are not closely located to any residential buildings. If approved, the Cabin would be the designated place of the marriage and it is envisaged that registrar would stand immediately in front of the entrance doorway to perform the wedding, the guests would be outside of the cabin in a woodland setting and the couple and witnesses would sign the marriage register within the cabin at the end of the ceremony.
10. Access to the Cabin is via a designated pathway but which is of bark construction. Access to the Cabin for a wheelchair user may require a ramp which is currently not constructed. Inside of the cabin is sufficient in size for the two registrars, the couple being married and the witnesses and also is accessible enough in terms of size and floor surface.
11. In regard to both the Glasshouse and the Curious Rosebud Cabin the Hotel envisage that neither will be significantly popular choices as a place for the marriage ceremony to take place in comparison with the Orangery, Morning Room and Rockcliffe Suite but wish to offer them as an alternative.
12. Under the Approved Premises Regulations of 2007 a premise does not need to be fully accessible provided that reasonable adjustments have been made and also that the limitations are explained to potential users before the booking. For example we have an upstairs ceremony room at Walworth Castle, a venue which has no lift and also there are several non-fully accessible venues licensed in other districts e.g. Lindisfarne Castle in Northumberland.
13. A copy of the application submitted is attached as an **Appendix** and the renewal fee of £1,700 has been paid.
14. Following receipt of the application, consultations have been carried out with the following:-
  - (a) Licensing Officer, Darlington Borough Council; and
  - (b) Building Control Manager, Darlington Borough Council

15. In accordance with building control requirements, the applicant has confirmed that:-

- (a) a Fire Risk assessment has been carried out within the last 3 years which covers the proposed areas for use and occupancy.
- (b) a Disability Risk Assessment has been carried out and that there are no access issues for persons attending ceremonies in the proposed areas for use and occupancy other than highlighted above.

16. The maximum number of persons permitted in each room is proposed as follows :-

Designated Room	Maximum Capacity
<u>In the Old Hall:</u>	
The Morning Room	65
The Drawing Room	60
The Cocktail Lounge	60
The Orangerie	150
The Boardroom	20
The Campenella	55
The Old Hall Hall	40
The Old Hall Foyer	80
<u>In the New Hall:</u>	
	170
The Rockliffe Suite	100
The Rockliffe Lounge	30
The Bowes Suite	10
The Cotherstone Suite	
<u>In the Clubhouse:</u>	
The Grassholme	180
The Stanwick	20
<u>External Buildings:</u>	
The Glashouse	120
The Rosebud Curious Cabin	6

## **Legal Implications**

17. This report has been considered by the Assistant Director, Law and Governance, for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

18. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

## **Conclusion**

19. The Officers are satisfied that it would be appropriate for the renewal of Rockcliffe Hall Hotel, Hurworth, Darlington as a suitable venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships under the above legislation. The licence will last for a period of 3 years from the date of issue.

## **Recommendation**

20. It is recommended that application for renewal be granted for Rockcliffe Hall, Hurworth, Darlington as an approved venue for the solemnisation of Marriages and Civil Partnerships in respect of the venue subject to the standard licence conditions and that the maximum number of persons permitted to occupy ceremony rooms on the occasion of Civil Marriages or Civil Partnerships.

**Luke Swinhoe, Assistant Director, Law and Governance and Proper Officer for Darlington Registration District**

## **Background Papers**

Application from Rockcliffe Hotel for renewal of premises as a venue for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships.

Anthony Hall, Superintendent Registrar  
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**Renewal of Licence  
Rockliffe Hall Apper**







