

**GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
29 NOVEMBER 2022**

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

WALWORTH CASTLE HOTEL, WALWORTH, DARLINGTON DL2 2LY

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the renewal of a licence for the Walworth Castle Hotel to be able to continue as an approved venue for civil marriage 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 2021; and
 - (d) The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013).

Summary

2. Since 1994 local authorities have been able to approve venues where civil marriage and civil partnerships can take place as an alternative venue to a Register Office with most approved venues being hotels.
3. Walworth Castle Hotel has been licensed by the local authority since 1994 as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships and is also currently one of the more popular venues in Darlington for marriages and civil partnerships. It has an important role to play in the local economy in terms of employment and of attracting wedding couples and their guests to Darlington from a wide area with most couples being married at the Walworth Castle Hotel being located outside of Darlington.

The current licence for Walworth Castle Hotel is due to expire on 9th January 2023. The hotel has indicated that they have future bookings for weddings and wish to continue as an approved venue for civil marriage and civil partnerships.

4. There have been no issues with Walworth Castle Hotel which would adversely affect their application to renew its licence. Renewal of the licence would provide the hotel with a licence for civil marriage and civil partnerships for a further three years from 9th January 2023.

Information

- Walworth Castle Hotel has the required fire risk assessments. There is no lift at Walworth Castle Hotel. The function suite (Cardinals Court) and the main indoor ceremony room (The ballroom) are on the ground floor and are both fully accessible. The hotel also has ground floor bedrooms should the couple being married or any guests require them. Outdoor weddings are very popular at Walworth Castle and the Pavilion which is the location for the outdoor ceremonies is fully accessible.

One of the rooms designated for ceremonies, the King James Suite is on the first floor and is not accessible to anyone who is unable to use the stairs. The King James Suite is not normally used or offered as a ceremony room but the restrictions would be explained to them at the time of booking if they chose this option as a location for their ceremony.

The registrars are required to meet with the couple being married before the ceremony starts to check legal paperwork and explain the ceremony to them. In the event that one of the registrars had access issues and was unable to meet with the bride in the upstairs room where she is changing then we would meet the bride in the hotel reception for the pre-ceremony checks and discussions.

Walworth Castle Hotel do make couples aware of potential restrictions with the absence of a lift when booking and planning the wedding.

- The premises are considered to be suitable for approval as a venue for marriage and civil partnerships, subject to the standard conditions and a limit on the number of people permitted to be present in the nominated rooms. The venue does not wish to change the capacities or designated areas where civil marriages or civil partnership can take place.

The Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 were amended in March 2022 to permit outdoor marriage and civil partnerships at a suitable location anywhere within the boundary of the licensed premise.

- The current locations and capacities for civil marriage and civil partnerships at the Walworth Castle Hotel are:

Venue: **Walworth Castle**
GRO Premise No: 001106
Current Licence Expires: 09.01.2023

Room	Maximum Capacity
Reception Lounge	40
Ballroom Lounge/Breakfast Room	40
Ballroom	100
Cardinals Court	120
Hansards Restaurant	80
King James Suite	80
Library Tower	10
Prince Bishops Room	45
Dungeon	50
Lady Palmer's Pavilion	6 (outside of the structure is unlimited)

Financial Implications

- Walworth Castle Hotel has been invoiced for £1750.00 being the fee for all venues seeking a grant or renewal of a licence for civil marriage or civil partnerships.

Legal Implications

- The current licence for the Walworth Castle Hotel expires on 9th January 2023. The grant of a further licence is required to facilitate its current bookings for civil marriages and partnerships. The standard renewal licence is for three years from the date of expiry of the current licence. The licensing committee can issue a licence on a shorter timescale as a temporary measure should it wish and/or make specific conditions including where the ceremony can take place, how many can attend and improvements for accessibility.

Conclusion

- Members are asked to renew the licence for the Walworth Castle Hotel for a further three years from 9th January 2023.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the licence for the Walworth Castle Hotel as an approved premise for civil marriage and civil partnerships be granted for a further three years from 9th January 2023 and that the places designated where civil marriage and civil partnerships can take place indoors at the premises and the maximum of numbers of persons who can attend those marriage and civil partnerships continue to be:

Room	Maximum Capacity
Reception Lounge	40
Ballroom Lounge/Breakfast Room	40
Ballroom	100
Cardinals Court	120
Hansards Restaurant	80
King James Suite	80
Library Tower	10
Prince Bishops Room	45
Dungeon	50
Lady Palmer's Pavilion	6 (outside of the structure is unlimited)

*ie. two registrars, the couple and two witnesses inside the gazebo.
Guests Outside on the garden is unlimited.

Reasons

12. To facilitate the continuation of the Walworth Castle Hotel as a premise approved for civil marriages and civil partnerships.

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

Anthony Hall, Superintendent Registrar, Ext 6400