

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

17 JANUARY 2023

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

DARLINGTON ARENA, NEASHAM ROAD, DARLINGTON

Purpose of Report

1. To consider an application for the grant of a licence to be 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 marriages and civil partnerships can take place as an alternative venue to a Register Office with most approved venues being hotels.
3. Darlington Arena is currently not licensed as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships. The Arena is looking to be an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships from 1st April 2023 and have their first wedding booking for a civil marriage on Saturday 15th April 2023.

If their application is successful, then it would provide the Darlington Arena with a three year licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2026.

Information

4. Darlington Arena is already an experienced hospitality venue currently offering a variety of functions including wedding receptions.

The Arena has previously been licensed for civil ceremonies when under ownership as the Darlington Football Stadium but has not held a licence for civil ceremonies for a number of years. Civil Marriages were previously held at the premises without any concerns or incidents and little has changed in terms of the layout of the function suites within the venue.

There is adequate parking on site for the public who attend the marriage or civil partnership. The Darlington Arena has the required fire risk assessments and DDA risk assessments required to be an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships.

The Darlington Arena have indicated that they will only host one civil ceremony per day and have identified a number of areas within the Arena where ceremonies could take place and also will offer outdoor ceremonies on the arena pitch.

The majority of ceremonies are expected to take place in the Executive Lounge which overlooks the pitch. Several other rooms (Presidents Suite, Platinum Suite, Board Room and Directors Room) are requested to be licensed however these are proposed to be licensed more for business continuity/emergency use.

The Concourse Suite has a separate entrance to the main Arena and function suite and is currently under refurbishment. The Arena anticipates utilising the Concourse suite to offer large weddings with the opportunity to be independent from the rest of the venue and allow couples more flexibility to provide their own suppliers.

A plan of the venue including the proposed locations for ceremonies is attached at Appendix 1

5. The proposed locations and capacities for civil marriages and civil partnerships at the Darlington Arena are:

Location	Maximum Capacity
Executive Lounge (the principal ceremony room)	150
Presidents Suite	250
Platinum Suite	110
Board Room/Directors Room	30 each/60 combined
Concourse Suite	400
Outdoors (Pitch)	The stadium has a maximum capacity of 25,000 people.

Notes:

1. Maximum capacities do not include the couple being married, registrars, photographers/videographers and venue staff.
2. Outdoor marriages/civil partnerships can take place at any location within the boundary of the venue.
3. Where an outdoor structure has been approved for marriages/civil partnerships the maximum number of persons within the approved structure is the couple being married and their witnesses and excludes registrars, photographers/videographers and venue staff. The number of guests located outside of the structure is unlimited and does not form part of the maximum capacity of the structure.

Financial Implications.

6. Darlington Arena 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 partnership.

Legal Implications.

7. The grant of a licence to be an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships is required to facilitate current bookings for hospitality functions at the Darlington Arena.

The Darlington Arena is seeking a standard three year licence from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2026. The licensing committee can issue a licence on a shorter timescale and also make any specific conditions on where ceremonies can take place and be managed.

Conclusions.

8. Members are asked to grant the licence for Darlington Arena to be an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnership for a three year period with effect from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2026.

Recommendations.

9. It is recommended that the licence for Darlington Arena, Neasham Road as an approved venue for civil marriage and civil partnerships be granted for three years from 1st April 2023 and that the places designated where civil marriage and civil partnerships can take place at the premises and the maximum number of persons who can attend those marriage and civil partnerships can be:

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Executive Lounge (the principal ceremony room)	150
Presidents Suite	250
Platinum Suite	110
Board Room/Directors Room	30 each/60 combined
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Reasons.

10. To facilitate civil marriages and civil partnerships at Darlington Arena.

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

Anthony Hall, Superintendent Registrar, Ext 6400

Background Papers.

There were no background papers in the production of this report.

Appendix 1.

Floorplan of proposed locations for civil marriages and civil partnership ceremonies in Darlington Arena.

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	This report has no direct implications to the Health and well-being of residents of Darlington
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no issues which this reports needs to address
Diversity	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	Eastbourne Ward
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan.
Efficiency	The Work Programmes are integral to scrutinising and monitoring services efficiently (and effectively), however this report does not identify specific efficiency svings.
Impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers