

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

5 NOVEMBER 2024

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

ROCKLIFFE HALL HOTEL, HURWORTH, DARLINGTON

Purpose of Report

1. To consider an application for the renewal of a licence to be an approved 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 2021; and
 - (d) The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013).

Summary

2. Rockcliffe Hall Hotel in Hurworth, Darlington has been an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships since it opened as a hotel and leisure resort in 2009.
3. The hotel's current approved premise licence is due to expire on 24 November 2024. Rockcliffe Hall Hotel is seeking to obtain a licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships for a further three years from 24 November 2024.

Information

4. Civil Marriage and Civil Partnership ceremonies have always worked successfully at Rockcliffe Hall Hotel and there have been no issues which would adversely affect this application.
5. Rockcliffe Hall Hotel is a five-star hotel attracting couples for weddings nationwide and internationally and has an important role to play in the local economy. The hotel has several bookings for weddings for 2025 and 2026 and considers weddings an important part of its business.

6. The current locations and capacities hotel for civil marriages and civil partnerships at Rockliffe Hall Hotel are:

Room	Maximum Capacity
In the Old Hall:	
The Morning Room	65
The Drawing Room	60
The Cocktail Lounge	60
The Orangery	150
The Boardroom	20
The Campernella	55
The Old Hall Hall	40
The Old Hall Foyer	80
In the New Hall:	
The Rockliffe Suite	170
The Rockliffe Lounge	100
The Bowes Suite	30
The Cotherstone Suite	10

7. The majority of the civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies take place in either the Orangery, Morning Room or the Rockliffe Suite. The remaining designated areas are principally licensed for business continuity purposes. Only one ceremony takes place per day at the hotel.
8. Outdoor ceremonies are currently not offered at Rockliffe Hall Hotel due to customer demand however under the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations of 2021 a civil marriage or civil partnership can now take place outdoors at any suitable location within the boundary of the premise. Should there be a need for an outdoor ceremony at the Hotel the Superintendent Registrar would carry out a risk assessment to determine it a suitable location.
9. Rockliffe Hall Hotel has the required fire risk assessments and there is no accessibility or accessibility issues which would adversely affect this application.
10. The fee payable to the relevant Local Authority for the renewal of a licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships is £1750.00. The Hotel have paid this fee in advance of this application.
11. The application to renew its licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships was received from Rockliffe Hall Hotel on 3 July 2024. In accordance with the process of licensing of approved venues for civil marriages and civil partnerships the application was published on the council's website for 21 days with no comments or objections received.
12. Rockliffe Hall Hotel are seeking to renew its licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships for a further three years from 24 November 2024 without any changes to the locations or capacities already designated.

13. The local authority granting the licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnership can specify the duration of the licence, and also attach any specific conditions to that licence. The standard licence for civil marriage and civil partnerships has historically been three years.

Financial Implications

14. There are future bookings for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies in Rockcliffe Hall Hotel beyond the expiry of the current licence on 24 November 2024 with ceremony bookings and advance payments having been made into 2025 and 2026.

Legal Implications

15. The renewal of a licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships to be held at the Rockcliffe Hall Hotel, Hurworth, Darlington is required to meet existing contractual bookings beyond the current ceremony licence which expires on 24 November 2024.
16. The application a renewal of a licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships for a further three years which is the standard period of renewal.

Conclusions

17. Members are asked to grant the renewal of the licence for Rockcliffe Hall Hotel, Hurworth, Darlington as a venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships for a three-year period with effect from 24 November 2024 to 24 November 2027.

Recommendation

18. It is recommended that a licence for the Rockcliffe Hall Hotel, Hurworth, Darlington as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships be granted for three years from 24 November 2024 to 24 November 2027, and that the places designated where civil marriages and civil partnerships can take place and maximum capacity in those designated areas be:

Room	Maximum Capacity
In the Old Hall:	
The Morning Room	65
The Drawing Room	60
The Cocktail Lounge	60
The Orangery	150
The Boardroom	20
The Campernella	55
The Old Hall Hall	40
The Old Hall Foyer	80
In the New Hall:	
The Rockcliffe Suite	170
The Rockcliffe Lounge	100
The Bowes Suite	30
The Cotherstone Suite	10

Reasons.

19. To facilitate civil marriages and civil partnerships at Rockcliffe Hall Hotel, Hurworth, Darlington.

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

Anthony Hall, Superintendent Registrar.

Background Papers.

Application for renewal of a licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships from Rockcliffe Hall dated 3 July 2024.