

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

09 SEPTEMBER 2025

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

BLACKWELL GRANGE HOTEL, GRANGE ROAD, 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. The Blackwell Grange Hotel is seeking to renew its licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships. The hotel's current approved premise licence is due to expire on 22 November 2025. The standard period for a licence as an approved venue for civil marriage and civil partnership is three years. Blackwell Grange Hotel are seeking a renewal of its licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships to commence for three years following expiry of its existing licence until 22 November 2028.

Information

3. The Blackwell Grange Hotel is one of Darlington's most popular venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships with ceremonies having always worked successfully and there are been issues for the duration of this current licence which would adversely affect this application.
4. The Blackwell Grange Hotel has maintained its popularity as a venue for civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies for many years and the hotel has an important role to play on the local and regional economy, attracting couples and their guests for weddings locally, regionally and nationally. The hotel has bookings for weddings for 2026 and 2027 which would require a continuation of its licence of civil marriages and civil partnerships beyond 22 November 2025.

5. The current locations and capacities hotel for civil marriages and civil partnerships at The Blackwell Grange Hotel are:

Venue:

Blackwell Grange Hotel

General Register Office Premise No: 002438

Current Licence Expires: 22.11.2025

Room	Maximum Capacity
The George Allan Suite	130
The Bruhenny Suite	300
The Havelock Restaurant	150
The Gazebo	6

Notes:

- Maximum capacities do not include the couple being married, registrars, photographers/videographers and venue staff.
 - Outdoor marriages/civil partnerships can take place at any location within the boundary of the venue.
 - 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.
6. Most of the civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies take place in either the George Allan Suite or the Bruhenny Suite with the Havelock restaurant being licensed for business continuity purposes in the event of an emergency situation. The hotel also offers outdoor ceremonies at the Gazebo. Only one ceremony takes place per day at the hotel.
7. 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 been invoiced for this fee.
8. The Blackwell Grange Hotel is a large hotel with all its areas designated for civil marriages and civil partnerships being fully accessible for guests with disability and mobility needs.
9. The Blackwell Grange Hotel is seeking to renew its licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships for a further three years from 22 November 2025 to 22 November 2028 without any changes to the locations or capacities already designated.

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

Financial Implications.

11. There are future bookings for marriage and civil partnerships at The Blackwell Grange Hotel beyond the expiry of the current licence on 22 November 2025 with ceremony bookings and advance payments having been made for ceremonies taking place into 2026 and 2027.

Legal Implications.

12. The renewal of a licence to be an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships to be held at The Blackwell Grange Hotel is required to meet existing contractual bookings beyond the current ceremony licence which expires on 22 November 2025
13. 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.

14. Members are asked to grant the renewal of the licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships to The Blackwell Grange Hotel, Darlington for a three-year period with effect from 22 November 2025 to 22 November 2028.

Recommendations.

15. It is recommended that a licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships be granted to The Blackwell Grange Hotel, Darlington for three years from 22 November 2025 to 22 November 2028 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
The George Allan Suite	130
The Bruhenny Suite	300
The Havelock Restaurant	150
The Gazebo	6

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.

Reasons.

16. To facilitate existing and future bookings for civil marriages and civil partnerships at, The Blackwell Grange Hotel, Grange Road, Darlington.

**Amy Wennington, Assistant Director, Law and Governance and
Proper Officer for Darlington Registration District**

Background Papers.

Application for renewal of a licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships from The Blackwell Grange Hotel.

Anthony Hall, Superintendent Registrar.