

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE
02 DECEMBER 2025

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

THE WALWORTH CASTLE HOTEL, WALWORTH, 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 Walworth Castle 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 8 January 2026. The standard period for a licence as an approved venue for civil marriage and civil partnership is three years. The Walworth Castle 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 from 9 January 2026 until 9 January 2029.

Information

3. The Walworth Castle Hotel is one of Darlington's most popular venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships with ceremonies having always worked successfully and there have been no issues for the duration of this current licence which would adversely affect this application.
4. The Walworth Castle 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, 2027 and 2028 which would require a continuation of its licence of civil marriages and civil partnerships beyond 8 January 2026.

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

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 (access via stairs only)
Lady Palmer's Pavilion	6 and unlimited guests outside of pavilion

Note:

The maximum capacity relates to guests and does not include the couple being married, the registrars, photographers, videographers or employees of the venue managing the event.

Most of the civil marriage and civil partnership ceremonies take place in either the Ballroom, the Dungeon or outdoors at the Pavillion with the remaining approved areas being licensed for business continuity purposes in the event of an emergency. Only one ceremony takes place per day at the hotel.

From 2026 The Walworth Castle Hotel will also be offering outdoor civil marriages and civil partnerships in the woodland area which is within the hotel's grounds. This area fully accessible and an area within the woodland has been cleared and pathways and seating areas have been identified. The Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations of 2021 permit a civil marriage or civil partnership to be take place in any designated area within the boundary of the approved premise.

All of the areas designated for civil marriages and civil partnerships at the Walworth Castle Hotel are being fully accessible for guests with disability and mobility needs except the King James Suite and the Dungeon. There is no lift at The Walworth Castle Hotel and the King James Suite is on the first floor. The King James Suite is not offered for ceremonies and is one of several rooms licensed in the event of an emergency only and there are other ground floor accessible rooms available for emergencies should accessibility be a requirement in that emergency.

Civil marriages and civil partnership ceremonies do frequently take place in the Dungeon which is also not fully accessible with access only via a flight of steep stairs. Couples who book the Dungeon for their ceremony area advised of this restriction at the time of booking to advise guests.

6. The Walworth Castle Hotel is seeking to renew its licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships for a further three years from 9 January 2026 to 9 January 2029.
7. The fee payable to the relevant Local Authority for the renewal of a licence for civil marriages and civil partnerships is £1925.00. The Hotel have been invoiced for this fee.
8. 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.

9. There are future bookings for marriage and civil partnerships at The Walworth Castle Hotel beyond the expiry of the current licence on 8 January 2026 with ceremony bookings and advance payments having been made for ceremonies taking place in 2026 and 2027 and 2028.

Legal Implications.

10. The renewal of a licence to be an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships to be held at The Walworth Castle Hotel is required to meet existing contractual bookings beyond the current ceremony licence which expires on 8 January 2026.
11. 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.

12. Members are asked to grant the renewal of the licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships to The Walworth Castle Hotel, Darlington for a three-year period with effect from 9 January 2026 to 9 January 2029.

Recommendations.

13. It is recommended that a licence as an approved venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships be granted to The Walworth Castle Hotel, Darlington for three years from 9 January 2026 to 9 January 2029 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
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 (unlimited guests outside of pavilion)
The Woodland	100

Note:

The maximum capacity relates to guests and does not include the couple being married, the registrars, photographers, videographers or employees of the venue managing the event.

Reasons.

14. To facilitate existing and future bookings for civil marriages and civil partnerships at, The Walworth Castle Hotel, Walworth, 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 Walworth Castle Hotel.

Anthony Hall, Superintendent Registrar.

