

ANNEX A

NOTES ON THE REQUIREMENTS BEFORE AN APPROVAL CAN BE GRANTED

The non-returnable fee for this application is £3960¹ and must be submitted with the application to **South Gloucestershire Registration Service, R&BC Department, PO Box 1953, Bristol BS37 0DE**

The application must be made by the proprietor or trustee of the premises. When made on behalf of a limited company there should be a separate statement of the names and addresses of all the directors.

The premises must fulfil the following standard requirements in Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

1. Having regard to their primary use, situation, construction and state of repair, the premises must, in the opinion of the authority, be a seemly and dignified venue for the solemnization of marriages and the formation of civil partnerships.
2. The premises must be regularly available to the public for use for the solemnization of marriages and the formation of civil partnerships.
3. The premises must have the benefit of such fire precautions as may reasonably be required by the authority, having consulted with the fire authority, and such other reasonable provision for the health and safety of persons employed in or visiting the premises as the authority considers appropriate.
4. The premises must have no recent or continuing connection with any religion, religious practice or religious persuasion which would be incompatible with the use of the premises for the solemnization of marriages in pursuance of section 26(1)(bb) of the Act or the formation of civil partnerships under the Civil Partnership Act 2004.
5. The room or rooms in which ceremonies of marriage will be solemnized if approval is granted must be identifiable by description as a distinct part of the premises.

In considering the suitability of premises as a venue the local authority will have regard to the following Guidance from the Registrar General:

- (a) The law is intended to allow civic marriages to take place regularly in hotels, stately homes, civic halls and similar premises without compromising the fundamental principles of English marriage law and Parliament's intention to maintain the solemnity of the occasion. The term "premises" is defined in Regulation 2(1) and there are restrictions introduced in Schedule 1. These will mean that certain premises would not be suitable for approval.

(Copies of The Marriages (Approved Premises) Regulations 1995 are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-registering-a-venue-for-civil-marriage-and-civil-partnership>).

- (b) Ceremonies must take place in readily identifiable premises. This will preclude marriages from taking place in most forms of transport.
- (c) Marriages must be solemnized or civil partnerships formed in premises with open doors, which the Registrar General interprets to mean that the public must have unfettered access to witness the marriage or civil partnership and make objections prior to or during the ceremony.
- (d) A private house is unlikely to be an appropriate venue for civil marriage. It would not be known to the public as a marriage or civil partnership venue or regularly available for their use.
- (e) The primary use of a building would also render it unsuitable if that use could demean marriage or civil partnership or bring it into disrepute.
- (f) The secular nature of civil marriage and civil partnership precludes the use of any building with a recent or continuing religious connection. This effectively rules out any building or room whose description, purpose or appearance is still considered to be linked to religion. A chapel in a stately home and a building containing furniture or fittings associated with a place of religious worship, or which has stained glass windows depicting a religious image are examples of a continuing religious connection. However, premises in which a religious group meets occasionally may be suitable if the primary use of the premises is secular.
- (g) Marriages or civil partnerships on approved premises may be followed by a celebration, commemoration or blessing of the couple's choice, providing that it is not a religious marriage ceremony and is separate from the civil ceremony. However, if a religious blessing were to regularly follow marriage ceremonies on a particular premises, or be considered part of the service being offered on the premises, there may well be a religious connection which would breach the requirements and lead to the local authority having to consider revoking the approval.

Notes

- 1 The fee of £3960 is applicable up to 31st March 2024. Any increase of fees applied by South Gloucestershire Council will be payable from 1st April 2024.
- 2 The fee is payable in advance and is non-refundable in the event that the license is not granted or renewed.
- 3 Fees can be paid by cheque payable to South Gloucestershire Council or by BACs (see additional sheet)