

Approval of a building as a venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships

Completed forms should be sent by post: The Superintendent Registrar, Chester Register Office, Goldsmith House, Chester, CH1 2BG.

The fee of £582 must be enclosed. Cheques should be made payable to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

You must also include a sketch plan of the premises which clearly shows the room(s) to be used for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies.

Before completing your application it is important that you understand your responsibilities, which are set out in the:

- conditions attached to grants of approval (see pages eight and nine)
- requirements for the grant of approval (see page ten)

You should read the conditions and requirements before submitting your application.

Guidance notes are provided on pages five and six to help you complete your application.

1. Please provide the full name and private address of applicant (if the application is made on behalf of a limited company, please give the address of the registered office and if different, the main trading address of the company).

Address:

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.....
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Telephone: Email:.....

Position in organisation:

2. Details of premises to be approved.

Address:

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.....
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Telephone: Email:.....

Give a brief description of the premises (for example hotel, stately home, civic hall) and, if applicable, state the primary use(s) of the premises.

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3. State names and occupations of the proposed responsible person(s) (see page five for more information)

Responsible person:

Deputy:

Name:

Name:

Occupation:

Occupation:

Telephone:

Telephone:

Email:

Email:

4. Give the name and location of the room(s) which will be used for ceremonies (for example, conference room, first floor). Also, state the maximum number of people permitted to occupy the proposed room(s) under the relevant fire and health and safety risk assessments.

Name and location of ceremony room(s):

Maximum occupancy:

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5. Give the name and location of the separate room which will be used by the registrar to interview the couple prior to the ceremony.

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6. Do the premises have any recent or existing connection with any religion or religious body? No Yes (tick one box)

If yes, give details:

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7. Do you intend to offer couples an outdoor marriage ceremony No Yes

If yes, please also include on your sketch plan of the premises the location of the 'designated outdoor area' (see guidance notes on page five).

Declaration

- I certify that the particulars given in this application are true and correct.
- I declare that I have read and understand both the conditions attached to grants of approval and the requirements for the grant of approval.
- To the best of my knowledge and belief, the premises listed in this application meet these conditions and requirements.
- I confirm that the necessary fire and health and safety risk assessments have been completed for the rooms to be used for ceremonies.
- I understand that the venue must not advertise that it is licenced for civil marriage or civil partnership until the approval has been granted by Cheshire West and Chester Council and the licence has been issued.

I have included with this application:

- A plan of the premises which clearly shows the ceremony room(s)
- The fee of £582 (non-refundable if the application is unsuccessful)
- A copy of the insurance policy which provides proof of public liability insurance to a minimum of £5 million, including the expiry date
- A copy of the current fire risk assessment including details of the room occupancy/capacity numbers.

Signature of applicant:

Date:

Guidance notes for completing the application form

- If you have any enquiries about your application please contact the Superintendent Registrar by telephone: 0300 123 7037.
- To assist with the processing of application forms, please use black ink.
- The fee covers the cost of approval for a period of three years and must be included with the completed application form. Cheques should be made payable to Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- The sketch plan of the premises must show the layout and location of the room(s) which you intend to use for ceremonies. It is unnecessary to submit architectural plans.

Questions on the application form

1. The application must be made by the proprietor or trustee of the premises, or a senior manager. Examples of 'position in organisation' are General Manager, Managing Director, Owner etc.
2. The full postal address should be given.
3. The 'Responsible person' is the individual responsible for ensuring that the 'Conditions attached to grant of approval' are met in full for every civil marriage or civil partnership that takes place on the premises.

The Responsible person must be present one hour before, and throughout each ceremony. They will liaise with the registrars over such issues as the notice to be displayed at the entrance to the premises and when food or drink may be taken into the ceremony room. In the absence of the Responsible person the Deputy must fulfil this role. You may appoint any number of deputies, but do bear in mind that each one must have sufficient authority to solve any problems which may occur during the ceremony

4. It is very important that you include in your application all rooms which may be used for ceremonies during the period of the approval. An extra charge is applied should you wish to include additional rooms at a later date (see page seven). However you should bear in mind that each room must be clearly identifiable and satisfy the criteria set out in the 'conditions attached to grants of approval'.

As part of the approval process the local fire safety officer will be consulted about the maximum number of guests allowed in each room during the ceremony.

5. On the day of the ceremony, the registrar will usually speak to the bride and groom in private beforehand to check that their personal details are correct. If there is no separate room available the registrar will use the ceremony room.
6. In some cases a building's recent or continuing religious connection may not be compatible with its use as a venue for civil marriage ceremonies or civil partnerships.
7. The 'designated outdoor area' is the location for ceremonies which take place outdoors, in addition to the legal ceremony in a licenced room.

Public notice

Before Cheshire West and Chester Council can approve a building for civil marriage ceremonies and civil partnerships, details of your application will be published on our website in the following form and 21 days will be allowed for any public objections to be made:

“Notice is hereby given that (name of applicant) has applied to Cheshire West and Chester Council for approval to be granted for the premises described below to be used as a venue for civil marriages and civil partnerships:

The name and address of your premises will be shown

The application, together with a plan of the premises which accompanies it, is available for public inspection during normal working hours Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Address: Chester Register Office, Goss Street, Chester, CH1 2BG

Please telephone: 01244 972 930 if you require further information about this application.

Date of publication:

General information

Planning permission

There is no specific planning requirement for marriage ceremonies or civil partnerships. However planning permission may be required if, for example, using rooms for civil ceremonies constitutes a change of use of the premises. If you are in any doubt about whether planning permission is required you should contact the Cheshire West and Chester planning department before completing this application form.

Telephone: 0300 123 8123

Inspection of premises

As soon as possible after the application form has been received, the Superintendent Registrar will arrange to visit the premises to inspect the rooms and discuss the legal requirements with the applicant or proposed Responsible person.

Notification of changes

The Superintendent Registrar should be notified of any changes in the information shown in the application. This includes changes to the name of the premises and the list of Responsible persons, plus any alterations to the layout of the premises.

Item four of the 'Conditions attached to grants of approval' on page eight gives more details.

Please note: changes in the name of the premises or the ceremony room(s), which require a new certificate of approval, will incur a charge of £25. Where any proposed changes require an inspection visit from the superintendent registrar, such as the inclusion of an additional room, a fee of £97 is payable.

Arranging the marriage or civil partnership ceremony

Two registrars attend civil marriages and civil partnerships. It is essential that couples who want to arrange a ceremony at approved premises first contact Chester register office for advice about how to book the registrars and to check their availability.

- Telephone: 0300 123 7037
- Email: chesterregisteroffice@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Conditions attached to grants of approvals

Please detach and keep the following pages on the premises for future reference.

The following conditions are from Schedule 2 of the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 (as amended) and set out your responsibilities. It is important that you read and comply with these conditions. They may be amended from time to time on the instruction of the Registrar General.

Proceedings means the solemnisation of a marriage or the registration of a civil partnership and does not refer to any other activities on the premises.

1. The holder of the approval must ensure that there is at all times an individual with responsibility for ensuring compliance with these conditions (the 'responsible person') and that the Responsible person's occupations, seniority, position of responsibility in relation to the premises, or other factors (his 'qualification'), indicate that he is in a position to ensure compliance with these conditions.
2. The Responsible person, or in his absence, an appropriately qualified deputy appointed by him, shall be available on the premises for a minimum of one hour prior to and throughout each of the proceedings.
3. The holder must notify the authority:
 - (a) of his name and address immediately upon him becoming the holder of an approval under regulation 7(2) and
 - (b) of the name, address and qualification of the Responsible person immediately upon the appointment of a new Responsible person.

Please note: Regulation 7(2) referred to above concerns a change of ownership of the property
4. The holder must also notify the authority immediately of any change to any of the following:
 - a) the layout of the premises, as shown in the plan submitted with the approved application, or in the use of the premises
 - b) the name or full postal address of the approved premises
 - c) the description of the room or rooms in which proceedings are to take place;
 - d) the name and address of the holder of the approval
 - e) the name, address or qualification of the Responsible person
5. The approved premises must be available at all reasonable times for inspection by the authority.
6. A suitable notice stating that the premises have been approved for the proceedings and identifying and giving directions to the room in which the proceedings are to take place must be displayed at each public entrance to the premises for one hour prior to and throughout the proceedings

7. (1) No food or drink may be sold or consumed in the room in which proceedings take place for one hour prior to and during that ceremony.

(2) Non-alcoholic drinks may be consumed prior to the proceedings.
8. All proceedings must take place in a room which was identified as one to be used for that purpose on the plan submitted with the approval application.
9. The room in which the proceedings are to take place must be separate from any other activity on the premises at the time of the proceedings.
10. The arrangements for and content of proceedings must meet with the prior approval of the superintendent registrar of the district, or the registration authority of the area, as the case may be, in which the approved premises are situated.
11. (1) Any proceedings conducted on approved premises shall not be religious in nature.

(2) In particular, the proceedings shall not:
 - a) Include extracts from an authorised religious marriage service or from sacred religious texts;
 - b) Be led by a minister of religion or other religious leader;
 - c) Involve a religious ritual or series of rituals;
 - d) Include hymns or other religious chants;
 - e) Include any form of worship.
(3) But the proceedings may include readings, songs or music that contain an incidental reference to a god or a deity in an essentially non-religious context.

(4) For this purpose, any material used by way of introduction to, in any interval between parts of, or by way of conclusion to the proceedings shall be treated as forming part of the proceedings.
12. Public access to any proceedings in approved premises must be permitted without charge.
13. Any reference to the approval of premises on any sign or notice, or on any stationery or publication, or within any advertisement may state that the premises have been approved by the authority as a venue for marriage in pursuance of section 26(1)(bb) of the Marriage Act 1949 and the formation of civil partnerships under section 6 (3A) (a) of the Civil Partnership Act 2004 but shall not state or imply any recommendation of the premises or its facilities by the authority, the Registrar General or any of the officers or employees of either of them.
14. If a change of name to the approved premises occurs before the issue of the certificate for marriage or the civil partnership document, but before the proceedings, the former name of the approved premises as recorded in the certificate for marriage or the civil partnership document shall remain valid for its duration for the purpose of the proceedings.

Requirements for a grant of approval

Before an approval can be granted the premises must fulfil the following requirements as set out in Schedule 1 of the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005, and in pursuance of Section 6 (3A) (a) of the Civil Partnership Act 2004.

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 proceedings.
2. The premises must be regularly available to the public for use for the solemnisation 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 solemnisation of marriages in pursuance of section 26(1)(bb) of the 1949 Marriage Act or as a venue for civil partnerships in pursuance of section 6 (3A)(a) of the Civil Partnership Act 2004.
5. The room or rooms in which ceremonies of marriage will be solemnised, or civil partnerships ceremonies or registrations take place, must be identifiable by description as a distinct part of the premises.

For the purpose of approval, premises are defined as 'a permanently immovable structure comprising at least a room, or any boat or other vessel which is permanently moored'.

Additional requirements

The following additional requirements will apply to all approvals granted and may be amended from time to time by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The holder of the approval must:-

1. Ensure that the premises are covered by an appropriate public liability insurance policy of a minimum of £5 million with a reputable insurance provider.
2. Room occupancy (identified in the fire risk assessment document) must not be exceeded and this includes the couple, guests and registrars plus any other attendees (for example musicians, singers).