

**Guidance on
Approval of Places for
Civil Marriage & Civil Partnerships**

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Introduction

The legislation governing civil marriages/partnerships was introduced in NI to specify the procedures required for the approval of places by a local Registration Authority (in this case Mid and East Antrim Borough Council) for civil marriage other than at the Registrar's Office.

The legislation is intended to allow civil marriage/partnerships to be solemnised at any approved location, including any premises, fixed buildings, temporary structures, enclosures and similar structures, land (including any land covered with water insofar as within the jurisdiction of the registration district) and any vessels or vehicles, without compromising the fundamental principles of N Ireland marriage & civil partnership law and the solemnity and dignity of civil marriage/partnership. These will mean that certain places are not suitable for approval.

Relevant legislation

- The Marriage (NI) Order 2003
- The Marriage Regulations (NI) 2003
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- The Civil Partnership Regulations (NI) 2005
- The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) and Civil Partnership (Opposite Sex Couples) NI Regulations 2019

(available at www.legislation.gov.uk)

Types of Approval

The legislation allows two types of Approval to be granted:

a) A Place Approval

This means the approval, by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, of a place where civil marriages/partnerships may be solemnised for a period in its district. The Approval licence is valid for 3 years and covers all civil ceremonies/registrations at the designated premises.

b) A Temporary Place Approval

This means approval, by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, of a place where a civil marriage/partnership may be solemnised for one occasion in its district. The approval licence is valid for one event only on the date specified at the designated place.

Process for the Approval of Places for solemnisation of Civil Marriages/Civil Partnerships

1. Who can apply for a Place Approval?

- (a) **A Place Approval (valid for 3 years)** - applications may be made by the Proprietor or a trustee of suitable premises for use as a civil marriage/partnership venue.
- (b) **A Temporary Place Approval (single occasion only)** - applications must be made by either of the parties to an intended civil marriage/partnership.

Note: Approval shall not be granted where Mid & East Antrim Borough Council is of the opinion that the applicant is not a fit and proper person.

2. Which premises/locations can be approved?

Any premises/location which meets the requirements of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council's Approval process can be approved. The following conditions will determine suitability:-

- (a) The premises/location must provide an appropriate and dignified setting for the celebration of marriage/civil partnership.
- (b) Marriage/civil partnerships must be solemnised at identifiable places within the Registration district.
- (c) Health and Safety regulations and Fire regulations must be complied with.
- (d) Public Liability Insurance must be provided.
- (e) The premises must have no recent or continuing religious connections.
- (f) The safety of Registration Office staff and their legal documents will be a consideration as to the suitability of the premises.

Note:

- (a) For place approvals, there is no limit to the number of rooms/external areas/locations which can be approved for civil marriages/partnerships. However, each area must be separately identified on a site plan and specifically approved. The site plan which identifies all approved areas will be appended to the issued licence.
- (b) Marriages/civil partnerships must only take place in a room/location which has been approved.
- (c) Where approval is sought for outdoor locations, the provision of appropriate shelter is advised in case of inclement weather.

3. How to apply

Application forms can be obtained from:

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Licensing Section, Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing
Department
Larne Market Yard, Station Road
Larne B40 3AA
Telephone 028 28 262498
Email: Licensing@midandeantrim.gov.uk

A copy of the Place Approval application form can also be found at Appendix 1 of this document.

4. Application submission and fees

For a 3-year Place Approval, the completed application form must be signed by the Proprietor of the Premises or his/her Trustee. A copy of this form is available in Appendix 1. In the case of Temporary Place Approvals, the bride or groom/civil partners must complete and sign the form at Appendix 1.

The following documentation is required to be submitted along with the application form: -

- 2 copies of layout plans for the place/premises showing the ceremony/registration rooms and any outdoor areas
- Electrical Installation Condition Report (within last 3 years)
- Emergency and Escape Lighting System Inspection Report
- Fire Alarm and Detection System Inspection Report
- Certificate of Inspection for Firefighting Equipment
- Copy of Fire Risk Assessment for the venue
- Certificate of Public Liability Insurance

If premises already hold an entertainment licence for the venue please contact us to confirm whether these additional documents and certificates are all required.

Forms should be submitted with all appropriate documents and the application fee of £460 for the Grant or renewal of licence of both standard and Temporary Place approvals. Application for a Temporary Place Approval should normally be made 6 months prior to the date Approval is required.

5. Public Notice

The Marriage Regulations (NI) 2003 and the Civil Partnership Regulations (NI) 2005 require that public notice be given of an application for a place approval (both 3-year and temporary). Mid & East Antrim Borough Council requires public notice template (Appendix 2) be displayed by the applicant in a prominent place on/at the premises/place for 21 days.

6. Objections

Any person may give notice, in writing, to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council of an objection to an application for the granting of a place approval in accordance with the Regulations. Council shall consider the objection providing that the objection:

- (a) specifies the name and address of the person making it
- (b) specifies the reason for the objection
- (c) was made to Mid & East Antrim Borough Council within 21 days from the date on which public notice was first displayed at the place to be approved

The Marriage Regulations (NI) 2003 and the Civil Partnership Regulations (NI) 2005 also allow for Council to consider an objection to which the above applies received out with the notice period.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council shall send a copy of any objection submitted in accordance with the regulations to the applicant.

7. Decision to grant or deny Place Approvals

All Approval applications will be acknowledged within 10 days of receipt. Approvals which are granted will be issued within 3 months of application providing all requirements have been met. Refusals will be issued within 3 months.

8. Appeals

Under Regulation 31 of the Marriage Regulations (NI) 2003 and Regulation 23 of the Civil Partnership Regulations (NI) 2005, an applicant or an Approval Holder may appeal to the County Court against any decision of Council if the Approval Holder considers that Council: erred in law, based its decision on any incorrect material fact, acted contrary to natural justice or exercised its discretion in an unreasonable manner. In upholding an appeal, the County Court may remit the case back to Council for reconsideration of its decision or reverse or modify the decision of Council.

9. Inspection of Places for Approval

Places/venues will normally be inspected by the Registrar and/or other representatives of the Council, and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. Further inspections may be carried out should a 3-year Period Approval be granted.

Temporary Approvals will be granted on condition that the “marriage/civil partnership venue” meets required standards at time of inspection.

10. Validity

A Place Approval will be valid for 3 years from the date of issue. The Approval holder must maintain valid maintenance certificates as required on application for the entire duration of the licence.

A Temporary Place Approval will be valid only for the date and place as stated on the Approval certificate. Any requests for changes can be made to the Council but this may require a re-application and incur charges.

11. Renewal of a Place Approval

The approval holder may apply for the renewal of a 3 year Place Approval. A renewal will run from the expiry date of the current Place Approval. A further application fee of £460 is payable for inspection of the premises and the issue of a renewed Approval.

The Council will normally send out renewal applications at least 3 months in advance. As long as the renewal application and fee are received before the expiry date, the Place Approval will continue to be valid until the renewal application is determined.

Temporary Place Approvals cannot be renewed - even if a civil marriage/partnership has previously taken place at that location - each civil marriage/partnership will require separate temporary place approval.

12. Expired Place Approval

Civil marriage/civil partnerships cannot take place in premises or locations where the approval has expired, unless a renewal of application has been applied for and has not been finally determined before the previous application expires. In such cases the approval shall continue in effect until such time as the application is finally determined or withdrawn.

13. Refusal or Non-Renewal of Approval

Where an application or renewal is refused the applicant will be notified in writing along with the reason for refusal.

14. Revocation and Suspension

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has the right to revoke or suspend an Approval at any time. Council may revoke or suspend an approval if, in its opinion, after considering any representations by or on behalf of the Approval Holder, that:

- (a) the Approval Holder has failed to comply with one or more of the standard or local conditions attached to the approval;
- (b) the approved place is no longer suitable for the solemnisation of civil marriage/partnerships: or
- (c) in the case of a 3-year approval, the Approval Holder is not or is no longer a fit and proper person

If the Approval Holder ceases to have an interest in the approved place, then Council may also revoke, suspend or vary the terms of the approval.

Before revoking the approval, Council will:

- (a) notify in writing the reasons why it is proposed to revoke the Approval, and
- (b) the Approval Holder will be given an opportunity to respond and rectify any breaches of requirements, conditions and regulations.

If the Approval Holder is unable to rectify breaches of requirements within a reasonable timeframe, Council will notify in writing the date from which the Place Approval will be revoked.

When approval has been suspended or revoked, the regulations require the Approval Holder to notify all parties that marriages/civil partnerships cannot take place on the premises or at the location concerned. Any fees paid to Council as part of the Approval Process are non-refundable.

15. Surrendering Approval

The holder of a 3 year Place Approval or Temporary Approval may surrender the approval at any time which will be revoked as soon as is practicable. It will be the responsibility of the Approval Holder to notify all parties that marriages/civil partnerships cannot take place on the premises or at the location concerned. Any fees paid are non-refundable.

16. Variation

Subject to providing notice to the Approval Holder, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council may at any time vary the conditions attached to any Approval on any grounds it thinks fit.

17. Amend the Approval

The holder can request to amend the approval during its 3 year approval period to add or remove rooms or areas from the Place Approval. The relevant sections of application form and suitable plans and certification as detailed in this guidance should be submitted to the Council. From 1 January 2024 a charge for these amendments will be payable.

18. Changes of Responsible persons

At any time during the 3-year approval period the holder can request changes to be made to the list of Responsible Persons listed on the Approval. The relevant sections of the application form should be completed and submitted to the Council. There is no charge for this change.

19. Register of Approved Premises

A Register of all premises holding 3-year Place Approvals within Mid and East Antrim will be kept by the Registrar and notified to the Registrar General for Northern Ireland. The register will contain:

- name, description and full postal address (if any)
- name and address of approval holder
- description and location of approved room(s)
- date approval granted
- date approval expires
- date the renewal of approval is granted
- date approval revoked
- name and address of responsible person(s) (present at time of marriage/civil partnership)

This register will be available on Council website and for public inspection during office hours at Council offices.

Approval Holder's Responsibilities

The Approval Holder must be aware that marriage/civil partnership is a solemn and dignified occasion and must ensure that nothing of a frivolous or unseemly nature is permitted before or during the ceremony/registration, which detracts from the dignity of the marriage ceremony/civil partnership registration.

The Approval Holder must:

- a) Appoint a "Responsible Person" who will be named on all applications. The responsible person will have sufficient authority to guarantee all requirements and conditions are fulfilled and all arrangements are in place to ensure the solemnity and dignity of the occasion. A Deputy or deputies may be appointed providing they have been named at the time of application. Subsequent amendments may be made, in writing to the Registrar and Licensing Section, prior to the date of marriage/civil partnership. The Approval Holder may appoint himself or herself as a responsible person.
- b) Ensure that all information held by the Registrar is current and complete i.e. changes to names or telephone numbers of responsible person or deputy must be reported to the Registrar and the licensing Section, Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing Dept, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.
- c) Ensure the responsible person or their named deputy is aware of the responsibilities and requirements for co-ordinating marriages/civil partnerships. The responsible person must be present at least 1 hour before each ceremony/registration and throughout the ceremony/registration.
- d) Ensure compliance with any limitations imposed by Health and Safety regulations, Entertainment Licence and Fire regulations in respect of the number of guests allowed into the approved area*.
- e) Ensure the premises are available for inspection at all reasonable times by the Registrar and/or Council Representatives.
- f) Ensure that all parties are aware that the granting of approval does not guarantee the availability of a Registrar.
- g) Ensure advertising of premises or locations where approval has been granted is not implied to be a recommendation of that place by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council or the Registrar General.
- h) Ensure no food or drink is sold, dispensed or consumed within the approved room where the ceremony/registration will take place for at least one hour before or during the ceremony/registration.

- i) Ensure that smoking and vaping is not permitted in any approved areas whether internal or external for at least one hour before or during the ceremony/registration.
- j) Ensure that the approved room/area is clearly signposted and that no charge is made for anyone attending.
- k) Ensure music is organised and controlled by a designated person. This music must be secular and take into account any copyright issues.
- l) Ensure guests are aware that casual photographs may not be taken during the ceremony/registration. Also that couples are aware that only one video camera will be permitted for use during the ceremony/registration - preferably hand held and battery operated.
- m) Ensure that there will be no connection with religion or religious practice.

* approved area - the room, place or location as defined on the approval certificate where the ceremony/registration will be held.

Arranging a Marriage/Civil Partnership at an Approved Place

Once a Place Approval has been granted the Marriage Ceremony/Civil Partnership Registration requires to be arranged. Arrangements will be made between the Approval Holder, the parties and the Registrar as applicable.

The following procedures must be followed in the case of 3 year Place Approval or a Temporary Place Approval.

- a) Parties wishing to marry/have a civil partnership registration must make preliminary enquiries with the Approval Holder or Responsible Person for the selected Approved Venue.
- b) Please note that, in the case of a Temporary Place Approval the Approval Holder must be one of the parties in wedding or civil partnership.
- c) Form AP1 (a)/ CPAP1(a) must be completed by the Approval Holder or Responsible Person agreeing that the marriage ceremony/civil partnership registration can take place on their premises/ location. These forms will be supplied to the Approval Holder by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council. The Approval Holder should remind the parties that the completion of Form AP1(a)/CPAP1(a) does not guarantee the availability of a Registrar and therefore the date and time cannot be confirmed at this point.
- d) The parties are advised to attend the Registrar's Office as soon as possible, bringing with them the completed AP1(a) /CPAP1(a) and the Registrar's attendance fee, if appropriate.
- e) At this time Form AP1(b)/CPAP1(b) will be completed confirming the availability of the Registrar, if appropriate, and the date and time of the ceremony/registration. The Registrar will issue copies of the completed Form AP1/CPAP1 to the Approval Holder and to the parties within 21 days of receiving the application AP1(a)/CPAP1(a).
- f) The parties must be advised by Approval Holder of any limits to the number of guests attending their marriage/civil partnership as stated on the Approval
- g) The parties must be advised by Approval Holder that punctuality on the day of the marriage/civil partnership is essential

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council accepts no responsibility for the cancellation of ceremonies/registrations due to the late arrival of any member of the bridal party.

- h) The Approval Holder and Responsible Person must be aware that the necessary legal preliminaries to marriage/civil partnership must be completed by the parties. Marriage/Civil Partnership Notice forms must be completed by the parties and lodged with the Registrar NO LATER THAN SIX WEEKS before the date of the marriage/civil partnership. Failure to comply with these preliminaries may mean the marriage/civil partnership cannot take place.

Procedures on the day of the Marriage Ceremony/Civil Partnership Registration

- a) The Registrar will arrive at the premises/location about 30 minutes before the agreed time of the wedding ceremony/civil partnership.
- b) On arrival the Registrar will make contact with the Responsible Person. The Responsible Person will liaise with them to ensure conditions and requirements are met and procedures are in place to allow for the smooth running of the ceremony/registration.
- c) Where an admission fee is normally charged this must be waived for all wishing to attend the ceremony/registration.
- d) The Registrar must, on arrival, have access to where the ceremony/registration will take place.
- e) The Responsible Person may have to ensure Ushers are provided to assist the marriage party/civil partnership party and the Registrar.
- f) Music may be provided but must be secular i.e. no religious content and organised by the Responsible Person. (see Part 3:12)
- g) The Responsible Person should remind the guests at the ceremony of the procedure regarding photography and video recording. (See Part 3.13 above)
- h) After the marriage ceremony/civil partnership registration the Registrar will require the couple and Witnesses to sign the Marriage/Civil Partnership Schedule. A table and 2 chairs should be provided for this purpose. Once this Schedule has been signed the Registrar's duties will be complete.

It is important to be aware that when conducting a marriage ceremony/civil partnership registration the Registrar is obliged to act in accordance with the Marriage (NI) Order 2003, the Civil Partnership Act 2004, the associated Regulations and guidance from the Registrar General for Northern Ireland.



WEDDING PREMISES VENUE APPROVAL APPLICATION FORM

FOR CIVIL MARRIAGES/CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS UNDER
REGULATION 16, THE MARRIAGE REGULATIONS (NI) 2003 AND
REGULATION 8, THE CIVIL PARTNERSHIP REGULATIONS (NI) 2005

Application Type: (tick as appropriate)

Grant of Venue Approval		Renewal of Venue Approval	
Temporary Venue (Disregard section 6)		Three year Approval (Complete all Sections)	
Amendment to Rooms (Complete sections 2a and 5)		Change to Responsible Persons (complete sections 2a and 6)	

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is collecting and processing your personal information to fulfil our legal obligation & public task in relation to managing requests across our services.

We will keep your information secure, accurate and for no longer than is necessary in accordance with data protection laws.

Your information and that of responsible persons may be shared with PSNI and NIFRS and other statutory bodies for the purpose above.

If you wish to find out more about how we control and process personal data and protect your privacy please see www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/privacy-notice

1. DETAILS OF PREMISES

Please give the full name, address and telephone and fax number of the Premises. Information in section 1 will be available to the public and will appear on the Public Register.

Name of Venue	
Address	
Telephone	
Website address	

2(a) DETAILS OF APPLICANT

Please give the full name, home address, email address and telephone number of the person making the application. This person is **normally the Proprietor or Trustee** of the Premises.

Name	
Home Address	
E-mail	
Telephone	

2(b) If the venue is part of a limited company, please give the address of the registered office.

Company	
Address	
E-mail	
Telephone	

If an approval is granted the Applicant at 2(a) will be known as the “Approval Holder” and will be responsible for ensuring all conditions and requirements are satisfied in respect of the premises for its use as a Venue for Civil Marriages/Civil Partnerships

3. NATURE OF PREMISES

Please describe the nature of the premises (e.g. Hotel, Civic Building etc.) and the primary and other uses to which they are regularly put.

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4. OCCUPIER OF PREMISES

Is the person named in Section 2 the sole occupier of the Premises?

Yes No

If No, please give the names and addresses of other occupiers and the nature of their occupancy below:

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5. CEREMONY/REGISTRATION ROOMS/AREAS

Please describe the primary and other use(s) of the room(s) which are to be used for marriage ceremonies/civil partnership registrations (e.g. Banqueting hall, conference room, specific garden area, marquee etc)

Room/Location :

6. RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)

Please give details of the person and his/her deputy who will be responsible on the day for arranging and co-ordinating the ceremony/registration and ensuring compliance with requirements and conditions as attached.

Name	
Occupation	
Private Address	
Telephone	
Date of Birth	

Name	
Occupation	
Private Address	
Telephone	
Date of Birth	

Name	
Occupation	
Private Address	
Telephone	
Date of Birth	

Name	
Occupation	
Private Address	
Telephone	
Date of Birth	

7. ENCLOSURES

Enclosed with this application are:

2 copies of layout plans for the premises showing the ceremony/ registration rooms and any outdoor areas (New Applications Only)	
Electrical Installation Condition Report (within last 3 years)	
Emergency and Escape Lighting System Inspection Report	
Fire Alarm and Detection System Inspection Report	
Certificate of Inspection for Firefighting Equipment	
Copy of Fire Risk Assessment	
Certificate of Public Liability Insurance	
Application fee of £460 (Grant or Renewal)	

Please note: applications without payment will not be processed. If payment is rejected the application will be void.

Please return your completed form to licensing@midandeastantrim.gov.uk
Or by post to the following address -

Licensing Section, Public Protection Health & Wellbeing Department
Larne Market Yard, Station Road,
Larne BT40 3AA

Marriage Place Approval fees can be paid in following ways:-

Payment via phone and Bacs can be made, or cash payments can be processed at Receptions at

- Larne Market Yard, Station Road, Larne
- Carrickfergus Civic Centre, Antrim Street, Carrickfergus
- The Braid, Bridge Street, Ballymena.

Prescribed fees for renewal (valid for 3 years) will be £460.

Payment can be made by

1. Contacting the cash desk at 0300 124 5000 and paying by card or
2. by Bacs transfer to Danske bank, sort code 95 07 97, Account No 00025828 (please add "AppVenLicence" and premise name as reference and forward remittance to licensing@midandeastantrim.gov.uk)
3. Cheques should be made payable to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. (Please do not send cash in the post).

8. DECLARATIONS AND SIGNATURE

1. I apply for the premises identified in Section 1 to be approved for solemnisation of civil marriage/civil partnership for a period of 3 years.
2. I understand that:
 - (a) The place may be inspected for suitability before approval is granted and, if this application is successful may be subject to subsequent inspection.
 - (b) The premises must satisfy the local authority on fire precautions and health and safety provisions.
 - (c) Approval, if granted will be for an inclusive 3 year period subject to revocation, suspension or variation.
 - (d) Approval, if granted, does not guarantee the availability of a Registrar.
3. I enclose the documents requested in part 7 above.
4. I declare that:
 - (a) I have read and understood “Guidance to the Requirements and Conditions for Approved Premises for Civil Marriages/Civil Partnerships”.
 - (b) The place has no recent or continuing religious connection.
 - (c) I have obtained any necessary permissions regarding use of and access to the premises.
 - (d) I will publish in a prominent place notice of my application for a period of 21 days.
 - (e) If an Approval is granted, I will comply with the Conditions attached to the Approval.

Applicant signature

Name in block capitals

Date:

APPENDIX 2 - PUBLIC NOTICE



**The Civil Partnership Regulations (NI) 2005
The Marriage Regulations (NI) 2003**

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL AS A VENUE FOR MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT

(name of applicant) has applied to Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, for the Approval of areas within the premises at

_____ *(name and address of premises)* to be approved as a Venue for Marriage/Civil Partnerships*.

Any objection relating to the application should be made within 21 days of the date of this notice. The objection should be addressed to Licensing Section, Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing Department, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, Larne Market Yard, Station Road, Larne BT40 3AA (or email licensing@midandeantrim.gov.uk)

Any objection must be in writing and must specify the grounds of the objection, the name and address of the person making it and must be signed by him/her or his/her agent. Such a representation shall be considered to have been made within the period referred to if it is delivered by hand, within that period or post (by registered or recorded delivery post) so that in the normal course of post it might be expected to be delivered within that period.

It should also be noted that where an objection is made to the Council after the date referred but before a final decision is taken on the application, it is competent for the Council to entertain it if satisfied that there is sufficient reason why the objection was not made within the period of time stated.

(Applicant's signature) _____ *(Date)* _____

This Site Notice must be displayed for the whole of the period of twenty one days in a prominent place at or near the premises so that it can be conveniently read by the public.

I _____ *(applicant)* hereby certify that for a period of at least 21 days ending on _____, I displayed this Site Notice in a prominent place at or near the premises so that it could be conveniently be read by the public.

(Applicant's signature) _____ *(Date)* _____

On completion of 21 days notice please return this form to

**Licensing Section,
Mid & East Antrim Borough Council,
Larne Market Yard, Station Road
Larne BT40 3AA**

Or Email to licensing@midandeantrim.gov.uk