Worcestershire County Council Registration Service

Permanent ancillary / outdoor structures

This is further guidance in respect of the licensing of permanent ancillary / outdoor and miscellaneous type structures. These may include garden buildings, summer houses, gazebos, as examples, though the list is not exhaustive.

If you are considering including an existing structure with your application, or you are building a new structure, you are strongly advised to seek advice from the Registration Service to ensure that it will be acceptable to be included within the licence approval. Some structures may be subject to Planning and Building Regulations and subsequent approvals may be required.

Any venue wishing to construct such a structure to be used for civil marriages/partnership must have the plans approved by the Council and access must be available to Worcestershire Registration Service to inspect the construction of the structure. The venue is responsible, must ensure that they have sought the necessary advice from the local planning office to ensure that planning consent and/or change of use is required. The Council reserve the right to check with the relevant authority if it deems appropriate.

For buildings and structures not subject to or requiring building regulations, an assessment of the suitability of the building or structure will be required and should be submitted with an application. This should include:

- A copy of the fire risk assessment by a suitably competent person
- A general condition survey or the building / structure by a surveyor
- A disabled access audit by a suitably competent person.
- Acknowledgement that the planning authority are content with the proposed structure

The building / structure must be fully completed and adhere to all regulations, guidelines etc, as appropriate. Worcestershire County Council is unable to grant a licence "off plan". We strongly advise venues to liaise with the Registration Service for advice before commencing work on any structure.

Such ancillary structures must be **permanent and immovable, with sides and a roof** and **regularly available.** The building must comply with the following requirements:

1. The structure must have a brick, stone or concrete base and ideally this should be raised above the surrounding ground level. The structure should have a roof which should be tiled, although other covering e.g. polycarbonate, glass or thatch, will be considered appropriate, providing such coverings are waterproof and satisfy the requirements of the local planning officer and/or a conservation / heritage decision

2. Brick, stone, concrete, metal, UPVC, glass, wood pillars and walls should support the roof. The structure should have at least on three sides enclosed to a minimum height of 3ft around the sides. The sides can be of brick, stone, concrete, metal, wood or glass and if the sides are of an "open patterned" design

an additional surround cover will be required to provide protection from the elements.

3. The front of the building should be open and sufficiently wide to enable the ceremony party to enter. Steps and ramp may need to be provided if the structure is raised above the surrounding ground level.

4. The structure should be of sufficient size (suggested to be at least 4 metres square) to accommodate a ceremony in comfort, with at least the following:

    a. Two Registrars
    b. One table – preferably two (size approx 120cm x 120cm)
    c. Two or three corresponding chairs
    d. The bride and groom / couple
    e. Two witnesses

5. The structure should be sited to ensure adequate protection from the elements e.g. wind, strong sunlight etc for the registrars, the register, the couple and their witnesses

6. Where appropriate the structure should be provided with electric light and power, which will have been appropriately maintained and tested. Further advice from the Registration Service may need to be sought dependent on the siting of the structure and hours between which the structure is used; time of the year etc.

7. The structure must be in a safe condition, of good repair with suitable access requirements, clean and dry, free from potential slip, trip and fall hazards. Where appropriate, there must be suitable and sufficient fire escapes, fire prevention equipment etc. It is recommended that the structure is fully risk assessed (including a separate and current fire risk assessment) and copies of these will need to be attached to any application / relicense process.

8. The structure must be easily accessible and well sign-posted for members of the public. If disabled access is not possible then measures must be in place for a disabled member of the public to attend. If the disabled member of the public wishes to object to the marriage/civil partnership then a suitable mechanism must be put in place.

9. Consideration should be given to the area immediately in front of the structure where guests may be seated or standing. Soft ground should be avoided or appropriate "matting" / hard standing provided. Sufficient room must be available for a central aisle to allow the ceremony party to make their entrance or other appropriate "walk way".

10. The structure will only be approved if it forms part of a larger venue which must include either one or more approved licensed ceremony rooms. In this respect whenever a ceremony is booked within an outside structure another licensed ceremony room must be kept available so that if for any reason the ceremony has to be moved inside, venue staff are able to set up the room at short notice.

If an ancillary structure is approved then the following **Special Licence Conditions** will be applied:

i. Civil Marriages / partnerships / non statutory ceremonies will normally only be celebrated in these structures between 1st April and 30th September in any year. Any ceremonies outside these dates will be subject to the prior written agreement of the Registration Service

ii. The structure and any approved adjacent area to be used for guests should be roped or barriers erected so as to restrict access one hour prior to and during the ceremony. No food or drink may be consumed in this restricted area one hour prior to or during the ceremony.

iii. Any other activities taking place in the grounds must be kept separate and must not be allowed to interfere with, disturb or interrupt the ceremony or associated proceedings.

iv. A ceremony may not take place in the structure if the weather becomes inclement and/or unsuitable. This may include:

   a. Inclement weather e.g. persistent rain, hail, sleet, snow

   b. Unsuitable weather conditions e.g. uncomfortably low or high temperatures or other extreme conditions; windy weather

   c. Unsuitable ground conditions e.g. wet underfoot, muddy conditions

   d. Other unsuitable conditions e.g. insects, heat, cold.

vi. The Registrar and Responsible Person will make a decision as to whether a ceremony has to be moved into a ceremony room inside the main venue, at least 1 hour prior to the commencement of the ceremony. See also vii below.

vii. If the weather forecast 48 hours prior to the date / time of the ceremony is forecasting inclement weather (as noted in vi above) the Registration Service and the Responsible Person will make a decision as to whether the ceremony can continue to go ahead outside. If the ceremony has to be moved into a ceremony room the Responsible Person will liaise with the couple as to the change. Where the forecast is showing unpredictability but erring on the side of clement weather note vi above applies.

viii. The Registration Service (Registrars in attendance) reserve the right to refuse to conduct a ceremony if, in their opinion, the weather is not suitable or the conditions in which the ceremony is to take place are unsuitable. See also iv above.

ix. Registrars must not incur any delays as a result of late decisions.

Dated: February 2015