



Southwell Cathedral

DRONE AND UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS POLICY

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1. Purpose

Southwell Cathedral recognises that Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), including drones, can provide valuable opportunities for photography, filming, surveying, conservation, inspection and educational purposes.

However, these benefits must be balanced against the need to:

- protect the safety of visitors, worshippers, residents, volunteers and staff;
- safeguard the fabric of historic and listed buildings;
- preserve the dignity and atmosphere of a working cathedral and place of worship;
- respect the privacy and quiet enjoyment of residents living within the cathedral precinct;
- ensure compliance with all relevant aviation, privacy, safeguarding, and health and safety legislation.

Southwell Cathedral and its grounds are **private property**. No person may launch, land or operate a drone from, within or over cathedral property without prior written permission.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all drone and UAS operations undertaken:

- on cathedral property;
- by commercial and recreational operators;
- by contractors appointed by the cathedral;
- by organisations working on behalf of the cathedral.

For the purposes of this policy, 'cathedral property' includes the Cathedral Church, The Archbishop's Palace and Gardens, Vicars Court, Trebeck Hall, Higgons Mead, Minster Chambers and all associated land and buildings under the ownership or management of Southwell Cathedral.

3. General principles

All drone operations associated with Southwell Cathedral must:

- comply with all current Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regulations and guidance;
- be conducted safely and responsibly;
- respect the privacy of residents, visitors and neighbouring properties;
- avoid disturbance to worship, pastoral activities, educational activities and public events;
- protect the cathedral's buildings, collections, grounds and heritage assets;
- avoid any activity likely to bring Southwell Cathedral into disrepute.

Permission to operate a drone on cathedral property is entirely at the discretion of Southwell Cathedral and may be refused without explanation.

Applicants must satisfy the operational, competency, insurance and documentation requirements set out in the Appendix.

4. Applications for permission

Any person seeking permission to operate a drone from the cathedral grounds must submit an application in advance (see Appendix).

Southwell Cathedral reserves the right to require qualifications, competencies, authorisations, insurance cover or supporting documentation beyond the minimum required by the CAA where considered necessary to protect people, property, heritage assets or the reputation of the cathedral.

5. Operational restrictions

All approved operations must comply with the requirements contained within this policy and the Appendix.

In addition:

- No drone may be launched or recovered from cathedral property unless expressly authorised.
- Southwell Cathedral may impose separation distances, exclusion zones, operating conditions or other restrictions beyond those required by the CAA.
- Southwell Cathedral may designate areas where drone operations are prohibited, regardless of whether such operations would otherwise be lawful under CAA regulations.
- Operators must immediately comply with any instruction issued by authorised cathedral staff.

6. Commercial filming and photography

Applications for commercial filming or photography using drones will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Additional requirements applicable to commercial operations are set out in the Appendix.

Any permission granted:

- shall be limited to the approved project only;
- shall not permit use of footage for other projects without further consent;
- may be subject to conditions;
- may be subject to fees and charges determined by Southwell Cathedral.

Southwell Cathedral reserves the right to require a representative of the cathedral to be present throughout any drone operation.

7. Worship, events and pastoral activities

Drone operations will not normally be permitted during:

- services of worship, including weddings, funerals and memorial services;
- educational activities;
- major public events;
- periods of heavy visitor attendance.

Southwell Cathedral reserves the right to suspend, postpone or terminate any authorised flight at any time where it considers that the operation may adversely affect worship, visitors, residents, staff, safety, heritage assets or the reputation of the cathedral.

8. Contractors

Contractors appointed by Southwell Cathedral who propose to use drones as part of their work must comply fully with this policy and the Appendix.

Appointment as a contractor does not automatically grant permission to operate a drone.

9. Enforcement

Any unauthorised drone activity may result in:

- immediate withdrawal of permission;
- removal from cathedral property;
- reporting to the CAA where appropriate;
- reporting to the police where criminal offences are suspected;
- suspension or termination of contracts, licences or permissions where applicable.

Southwell Cathedral reserves all legal rights available to it as landowner.

10. Approval authority

All applications for drone operations on Southwell Cathedral property shall require the written approval of the Chief Operating Officer or a person formally delegated by them.

Approval may be granted subject to such conditions as Southwell Cathedral considers appropriate.

11. Note on Appendix

The Appendix forms part of this policy and sets out:

- application requirements;

- documentation requirements;
- competency expectations;
- insurance requirements;
- general operational guidance;
- additional requirements for commercial operators;
- typical risk assessment considerations.

The Appendix is intended to provide practical guidance and may be updated periodically to reflect changes in legislation, CAA requirements and operational best practice without requiring amendment of the main policy.

12. Review

This policy shall be reviewed periodically to ensure continued compliance with legislation, CAA regulations and operational requirements.

For further information or to discuss a proposed drone operation, please contact office@southwellminster.org.uk

Appendix

DRONE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

Version: July 2026

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This Appendix is intended as general guidance only and does not replace Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regulations.

Drone regulations are subject to change. Operators remain responsible for ensuring that they comply with all current legislation, CAA requirements, airspace restrictions and operational authorisations applicable at the time of flight.

The latest information should always be checked on the CAA website before any application is made.

REQUIRED INFORMATION

Applications should normally be submitted at least 14 days before the proposed operation and should include:

- Name and contact details of the operator and pilot.
- Details of the aircraft to be used.
- Aircraft manufacturer and model.
- Aircraft weight.
- Aircraft class marking (where applicable).
- Proposed purpose of the flight.
- Proposed flight dates and times.
- Proposed launch and landing locations.
- Proposed flight area and maximum altitude.
- Risk Assessment.
- Method Statement (where applicable).
- Evidence of qualifications and competency.
- Evidence of insurance.
- Copies of any CAA authorisations required for the proposed operation.

MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION

Applicants should normally provide:

- Flyer ID (where required by law).
- Operator ID (where required by law).
- Evidence that the Operator ID is displayed on the aircraft where required.
- Any applicable CAA competency certificates.

- Public Liability Insurance Certificate.
- Risk Assessment or Method Statement.

PILOT COMPETENCY

As at July 2026, the CAA's principal competency requirements are:

Basic Operations: Flyer ID (CAA online theory test).

Additional Open Category Qualification: A2 Certificate of Competency (A2 CofC).

Specific Category Operations: General Visual Line of Sight Certificate (GVC) or other qualification specified by the CAA for the particular operation.

The qualification required depends upon the aircraft, its classification, where it is being flown and how close it will be operated to uninvolved persons.

Southwell Cathedral reserves the right to require qualifications above the minimum required by the CAA.

AIRCRAFT WEIGHT AND CLASSIFICATION

As at July 2026, aircraft are generally operated according to either:

- their UK Class Mark (UK0–UK6); or
- their weight if they are a legacy aircraft without a UK Class Mark.

Examples include:

Under 250g: typically operated in the Open A1 category.

250g – 2kg: may require additional competency qualifications depending upon operating environment and aircraft classification.

2kg – 25kg: generally subject to increased restrictions and may require higher levels of competency or authorisation.

Southwell Cathedral will normally apply greater scrutiny to applications involving aircraft above 2kg.

IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

As at July 2026:

Flyer ID: A Flyer ID is generally required for persons flying drones weighing 100g or more.

Operator ID: An Operator ID is generally required for drones weighing 250g or more or weighing 100g or more and fitted with a camera. The Operator ID must be displayed on the aircraft in accordance with CAA requirements.

INSURANCE

Commercial operators must provide evidence of current public liability insurance.

Non-commercial operators may also be required to provide insurance where Southwell Cathedral considers the operation presents an elevated risk.

Southwell Cathedral reserves the right to specify minimum insurance limits.

FLIGHT LIMITATIONS

Unless specifically authorised by the CAA, operators should expect the following general limitations to apply:

- Maximum height of 120m (400ft) above the surface.
- Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) must be maintained at all times.
- Operations must not endanger people, buildings, vehicles or aircraft.
- Operations must comply with all applicable separation distances required by the aircraft's class and operating category.
- Operations must not take place in restricted airspace without the necessary permissions.

DISTANCES FROM PEOPLE

CAA requirements vary depending upon aircraft weight, aircraft classification, operating category and pilot competency. As a broad guide:

A1 (Over People): Some aircraft may legally operate over uninvolved people but never over crowds.

A2 (Near People): Some aircraft may operate closer to uninvolved people when the pilot holds the required qualification.

A3 (Far From People): Aircraft must remain well clear of uninvolved people and built-up areas.

Operators should not assume that one set of separation distances applies to all aircraft.

DISTANCES FROM BUILDINGS

The CAA does not prescribe a single separation distance from buildings in all circumstances. However, flights must not endanger persons or property and they must comply with the requirements applicable to the aircraft's operating category.

Southwell Cathedral may impose minimum separation distances from buildings, structures, monuments, archaeological remains or other heritage assets that exceed CAA requirements.

SOUTHWELL CATHEDRAL ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

In addition to all legal requirements:

No drone may be launched or recovered from cathedral property without written permission.

The cathedral may require greater separation distances from people, buildings or events than those required by the CAA.

Drone operations will not normally be permitted during services, weddings, funerals, educational activities or major public events.

The Chief Operating Officer may attach additional conditions to any approval.

TYPICAL RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Risk assessments should consider:

- Visitors and tourists.
- Worshippers.

- Weddings and funerals.
- School visits.
- Staff and volunteers.
- Residents within the Precinct.
- Listed buildings.
- Stonework, roofs and towers.
- Trees and wildlife.
- Roads and footpaths.
- Emergency procedures.
- Loss of control procedures.
- Weather conditions.
- Battery failure.
- Privacy and data protection considerations.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Permission will normally only be granted when Southwell Cathedral is satisfied that:

- The operation is lawful.
- The pilot is competent.
- The risks have been appropriately assessed.
- Suitable insurance is in place.
- The operation will not adversely affect worship, visitors, residents or heritage assets.

Approval remains entirely at the discretion of Southwell Cathedral.