

VEHICLE SPECIFICATION POLICY

1. Introduction

A vehicle must meet the following standards to be considered for licensing either as a Hackney Carriage or a Private Hire Vehicle. These standards define the type of vehicle that is suitable for licensing. A more detailed specification regarding equipment, maintenance, documentation, markings and other requirements is contained in the Council's Vehicle Inspection Manual.

Before embarking on the purchase of a vehicle for use as a Private Hire Vehicle or Hackney Carriage you should check that it meets this specification. If the vehicle does not meet the specification you are advised to discuss the areas of difference with a Licensing Officer before making the purchase.

2. VEHICLE APPROVAL AND CERTIFICATION

1. The Licensed vehicle must comply in all respects with:
 - (a) Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986
 - (a) The requirements of the Motor Vehicle (Type Approval) Regulations 1980;
 - (b) Motor Vehicle (Type Approval) (Great Britain) Regulations 1984
2. In addition, the licensed vehicle must comply in all respects with British and European vehicle regulations and be "type approved" to the requirements of the M1 or M1 (low volume) category of the European Whole Type Approval Directive 70/156/EEC, as amended.
3. Imported vehicles that cannot meet the requirements of 2 above will need to have been approved under the British Single Vehicle Approval Scheme (SVA) and have the required documentation.
4. If the vehicle has been converted to run on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) then a certificate issued by a member of the LPG Association will be required by the Licensing Authority to confirm satisfactory installation, examination and testing of the vehicle has been carried out in accordance with the LPG Associations Code of Practice.

3. Vehicle specification

5. A vehicle must be less than 8 years of age (taken from the date of the first registration in the Vehicle Registration Document) at the date of the first application for licence in respect of that vehicle.
6. The maximum age for accepting a vehicle for first time licensing by the Council may be extended for vintage or specialist built vehicles. The vehicle shall though be in good condition and capable of passing the Council's Certificate of Competency vehicle test.

7. The vehicle must have a passenger seating capacity of not less than 4 persons as determined by the method of assessing vehicle capacity described in section 3 below.
8. For each passenger carried in the licensed vehicle there shall be available a properly fitted and maintained seat belt.
9. All saloons, estates or purpose built taxi vehicles shall have at least 4 side-opening doors, which may be opened from the inside and the outside. Minibuses, transits and people carrier type vehicles shall have at least 3 doors not including any tailgate or rear doors.
10. Highly tinted and blacked out windows are not permitted. The vehicle must be able to comply with the relevant standards contained within the vehicle testing manual.
11. The vehicle must be right hand drive, but left hand drive will be permitted where the vehicle is only exclusively manufactured as a left hand drive vehicle e.g. imported limousines.

4. Vehicle dimensions and seating capacity

4.1 Vehicles licensed to carry up to 4 passengers (saloons, estates)

12. Operators should bear in mind that the manufacturers claimed seating capacity may not always be the same as the Council's licensed seating capacity scheme as detailed below.
13. **Height:** From the top of the seat cushions to the roof at the lowest part (inside) must not be less than 865 mm (34 inches approx.)
14. **Knee Space:** **Front Seat** - there must be not less than 750 mm (29 ½ inches approx.) unobstructed space between the leading edge of the dash board and the back of the seat being measured.
Rear seats - there must be not less than 750 mm (29 ½ inches approx.) unobstructed space between the front surface of all rear seat backs and the back of the seat in front, measured with the front seat located as specified above.
15. **Seat Depth:** fixed passenger seats (measured from the back of the seat to the front edge of the seat cushion) must be no less than 406 mm (16 inches approx.)
16. **Seat Width:** fixed passenger seats (measured along the front edge of the seat) must allow at least 406 mm (16 inches approx.) per person.

4.2 Vehicles licensed to carry between 5 and 8 passengers

17. **Height:** From the top of the seat cushions to the roof at the lowest part (inside) must not be less than 865 mm (34 inches approx.)
18. **Knee Space: Front Seat** - there must be not less than 750 mm (29 ½ inches approx.) unobstructed space between the leading edge of the dash board and the back of the seat being measured.
19. **Rear/middle seats** - there must be not less than 650 mm (25 ½ inches approx.) unobstructed space between the front surface of seat backs and the back of the seat in front, measured with the front seat located as specified above.
20. **Seat Depth:** fixed passenger seats (measured from the back of the seat to the front edge of the seat cushion) must be no less than 406 mm (16 inches approx.)
21. **Seat Width:** fixed passenger seats (measured along the front edge of the seat) must allow at least 406 mm (16 inches approx.) per person.

22. **Facing seats:** the distance between the seat backs measured in a horizontal plane along the top surface of the seating cushion must be not less than 1300 mm (51 inches approx.). The distance between the front edges of the seat cushions must be not less than 425 mm (16 ¾ inches approx.).

5. DISABILITY ACCESS

23. In the case of all hackney vehicles, which are built or adapted for disabled passengers, the design of the vehicle should ensure that any wheelchair is loaded from the side or rear of the vehicle.
24. Where a vehicle is utilised for the carriage of passengers in a wheelchair, the following conditions shall apply:
- (a) Access to and exit from the wheelchair position must not be obstructed in any manner at any time except by wheelchair loading apparatus.
 - (b) Wheelchair internal anchorage must be of the manufacturer's design and construction and secured in such a position as not to obstruct any emergency exit.
 - (c) A suitable restraint must be available for the occupant of a wheelchair.
 - (d) Access ramps or lifts to the vehicle must be securely fixed prior to use, and be able to support the wheelchair, occupant and helper.
 - (e) Ramps and lifts must be securely stored in the vehicle before it may move off.
25. Any equipment fitted to the vehicle for the purpose of lifting a wheelchair into the vehicle must comply with the requirements of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (S.I. 1998/2307). Any such equipment must be maintained in good working order, tested at the required intervals and be available for use at all times.

The Council on an individual basis, prior to licensing, will assess the overall suitability of a vehicle for the carriage of disabled passengers. Applicants therefore should discuss the purchase of a vehicle adapted to carry disabled passengers with the Council, prior to purchase.

6. TRAILERS

26. Trailers may only be used with the prior approval of the Authority and subject to the following requirements:
- (a) Trailers can only be used in connection with private hire bookings and cannot be used for plying for hire on a rank;
 - (b) The trailer must at all times comply with all requirements of Road Traffic legislation in particular those as laid down in the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986;
 - (c) The vehicle insurance must include cover for towing a trailer;
 - (d) Trailers must not be left unattended anywhere on the highway;
 - (e) The speed restrictions applicable to trailers must be observed at all times;
 - (f) A suitable lid or other approved means of enclosure shall be fitted to secure and cover the contents of the trailer whenever in use.