

GUIDELINES ON THE ASSESSMENT OF VEHICLES TO BE LICENSED AS HACKNEY CARRIAGES OR PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The vehicle must, of course, comply with all statutory requirements and with the Council's conditions attached to Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle Licences, as appropriate. In addition, the following guidelines will apply:-

1. Vehicle Suitability

The vehicle should be of sufficient size as to be capable of seating at least three adult passengers, one in the front, two or more in the rear (excluding the driver) in safety and comfort.

- (a) As a guide, in the case of saloon, estate and hatchback cars, the rear seat will be measured to ensure that it has at least 16 inches space per person for the number of passengers the vehicle is to be licensed for.

Vehicles could be licensed for less than 4 passengers if the vehicle is considered unsuitable for 4.

Each vehicle will be assessed at a visual by the Technical Support Team and confirmation will be given of the number of passengers the vehicle will be allowed to carry.

- (b) It has at least 4 doors (including drivers door).
- (c) The London Cab type vehicle is not acceptable as a private hire vehicle.

2. Vehicle Body

- (a) The body must be of the fixed head (i.e. not convertible) type.
- (b) The vehicle must be right hand drive.
- (c) Passenger doors should be capable of being readily opened from inside and outside the vehicle by one operation of the latch mechanism, though this must not prevent doors being fitted with child safety locks. In the case of saloon, estate and hatchback cars, there must be at least three passenger doors, with a separate additional door for the exclusive use of the driver.
- (d) All windows must be in a good clean condition and free from damage
 - (i) All vehicles must comply with the Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986 as amended, that specifies that the light transmitted through the windscreen must be at least 75% and the front side windows must allow at least 70% of light to be transmitted through them.
 - (ii) Rear windows - all windows must comply with relevant legislation in respect of light transmission (ie VOSA). Only original AS 1, 2 and 3 vehicle manufactured tints are permitted on the rear windows. Any tint film that has been added after manufacture must be removed.

3. **Facilities for Driver**

The vehicle should be so designed and constructed that:-

- (a) The driver's seat accommodates the driver only and the driver has adequate room, can easily reach and operate the controls and give hand signals on the off-side of the vehicle.
- (b) At least one external driving mirror should be provided to each side of the vehicle and be so fitted and adjusted as to afford the driver an adequate view to the rear.
- (c) Adequate devices for de-misting and de-frosting the windscreen and rear window and for washing the windscreen are fitted.

4. **Ventilation**

Adequate ventilation must be provided for the driver and passenger either by windows or mechanical means.

5. **Heating**

An adequate heating system should be provided and maintained for the driver and passengers and, where the driver's compartment and passenger compartment are separate, means should be provided for independent control by the driver and passengers.

6. **Luggage**

There should be a separate luggage compartment within the body of the vehicle providing adequate means of carrying and securing luggage.

7. **Vehicle Maintenance and Safety**

The vehicle shall be kept clean and should be maintained in a good state of repair and without prejudice to this general guideline:-

- (a) No visible rust or rust damage should be present.
- (b) No chipped, peeling, cracked or otherwise defective paintwork should be present. The paintwork to any repaired section should match the existing paintwork colour. The paintwork should possess a reasonable degree of shine.
- (c) The body surface finish should be smooth and without ripples or undue blemish. Any repairs to the body should match the existing lines of the bodywork and leave the bodywork of comparable strength to that when the vehicle was first constructed.
- (d) The windscreen, windows, mirrors and lights should be free of any cracks, chips or other blemishes which could reasonably impair the vision of the driver.

- (e) The vehicle should have no damage to the coach trim or bumpers.
- (f) The wheels shall be matching and comply with (a) and (b) above, if wheel trims are fitted they shall be an undamaged, matched set.
- (g) The vehicle must carry a legal spare wheel and tyre and a means for changing a wheel.
- (h) All body fitments must be in place, secure and free from damage.
- (i) The legal vin plate/chassis plate must be fitted to the vehicle in a legible state.
- (j) Where vehicles have wheelchair facilities, then these must comply with the Department of Transport Code of Practice, "The Safety of Passengers in Wheelchairs on Buses".

8. **Vehicle Interior**

The interior shall be well maintained and kept in a good state of repair this shall include, the interior and seats shall be kept clean and free from stains, tears, cuts, burns and similar.

9. **Seat Belts**

A seat belt shall be provided for each passenger.

10. **Alternative Fuels**

Vehicles powered by fuels other than petrol or diesel are acceptable provided they comply with national safety requirements. LPG and natural gas powered vehicles should have a safety test certificate for the gas tank, renewable every six months, and any vehicle that has been converted to use these fuels should also have a certificate for a safe installation of the system.

11. **Non-Saloon Car Type Vehicles**

In respect of these vehicles, which can for example be MPV or small mini-bus type, the following additional guidelines will apply:-

- (a) Maximum of eight passenger seats allowed. All seats in excess of eight must be removed.
- (b) Passenger entrance/exit doors on both sides of vehicle, the only exception is for purpose built vehicles with a rear-opening door accessed from a corridor (no moving seats or climbing over seats), then this is acceptable with one near side opening door.
- (c) Ease of access from ground to floor level, a step to be provided where necessary (see Mini-bus Regulations).

- (d) Suitable grab handles to be provided at exits.
- (e) Configuration of seating to be such that no passenger has to cross more than one seat position to reach an aisle or the external air via a door.
- (f) The seating to be such that the driver and the controls are not impaired by the presence of a passenger, this usually means no front bench seat, unless the gear lever is not mounted on the floor.
- (g) Adequate luggage space and suitable restraint to such luggage to be provided. This provision to be such that no entry or exit door or aisle is obstructed, neither is the driver's vision impaired.
- (h) Where any seat is so placed that any passenger seated on it is liable to be thrown through any exit or down any steps, an effective screen or guard to be provided to afford adequate protection for that passenger with padding to guard where appropriate.
- (i) If any part of the petrol tank or filling system comes within the vehicle it is to be protected and sealed off.
- (j) The seat width per person to be one-third of the current accepted width measurement of the rear seat (for three passengers of the normal Private Hire Vehicle). In respect of Mini-buses, 16" is acceptable for individual seats, (Mini-bus Regulations).
- (k) Where there is a lit passenger compartment in a minibus or stretch limousine, there shall be a screen at rear of driver for use at night.
- (l) No engine fuel to be carried within the vehicle.
- (m) Fuel filler cap to be external.
- (n) Any tail lifts, mobile lifts and ramps are to comply with BS EN 1756-2:2004. All lifts must have a EC declaration of conformity Reg 9(1)(a) and a satisfactory examination report at intervals not exceeding six months by a competent engineer Reg 9(3)(a)(i).

If you are in any doubt about the suitability of a vehicle please email licensing@thanet.gov.uk and ask for a visual before purchasing the car.

Revised – 27 July 2022