

# Private Hire Vehicle Specifications

## Vehicle emissions and age policy

<b>Private Hire Emissions &amp; Age Policy 13 February 2026 to 1 October 2035</b> <i>*Unless reviewed earlier</i>	
<b>Dates</b>	<b>Policy</b>
13 February 2026	All new to fleet vehicles are minimum ULEV and less than 5 years old.  Age limit for all vehicles to be set at a maximum of 15 years and then removed from the fleet.
13 February 2027	All replacement vehicles are minimum ULEV and less than 5 years old. This rule will apply regardless of whether the vehicle is new to fleet or an existing vehicle.  Age limit for all vehicles to be set at a maximum of 12 years and then removed from the fleet.
13 February 2028	All replacement vehicles are minimum ULEV and less than 5 years old. This rule will apply regardless of whether the vehicle is new to fleet or an existing vehicle.  Age limit for ULEV vehicles to be set at a maximum 10 years and then removed from the fleet* Each vehicle shall be assessed on its own merits and an extension of a year to a maximum of 2 additional years might be granted on renewal after a successful RBC compliance test.  That the revised Private Hire Vehicle Emissions and Age Policy run until 2035 at which point it would be reviewed again unless changes prompt a review sooner.

## Specifications

In addition to those in the table above, the vehicle must meet the following specifications:

1. New vehicles will only be licensed which fall within the following Euro NCAP or European classification groups as set below:
  - Large Family
  - Executive
  - Small MPV (will only be licensed to carry a maximum of 4 passengers)
  - Large MPV
2. Further to the above, vehicles which do not fall within Euro NCAP classification groups criteria may be considered for Private Hire vehicle licensing on a case-by-case application basis.
3. The vehicle must be capable of carrying no fewer than four and no more than eight passengers;
4. Three-point type seat belts must be fitted to all passenger seats. Lap belts may only be used for the middle rear passenger seat of saloon vehicles.

5. No seats may be side facing;
6. Each passenger shall have direct access to a door without the need to remove or completely fold flat any other seating in order that passengers may access their seat easily and escape without delay in case of emergency. The Council will consider vehicles that have seats that 'tilt' forward by a single operation. If this type of seat is fitted the driver must inform the passengers of the operation of the seats before a journey commences;
7. Access to the vehicle shall not be more than 15" (38cm) from ground level.
8. In addition to the driver's door, the vehicle will have three doors, each of which must be fitted with an efficient handle, lock and window operation to allow access and egress for passengers;
  - the vehicle will be right hand drive;
  - the vehicle will have four road wheels;
  - the vehicle body must be fixed head type. (A sunroof may be fitted);
  - the vehicle must have a boot or luggage compartment which provides sufficient space to carry a reasonable amount of luggage for the total capacity of the vehicle;
9. Vehicles that do not have a separate luggage compartment (boot) must be fitted with a grill behind the rear seat to prevent luggage entering the passenger area;
10. No alteration to the manufacturer's specification for the vehicle, including a change of or additional fuel type, shall be carried out except with the prior written approval of the Licensing Section of the Council;
11. Windows must meet the following standards:
  - Windscreens: must let in at least 75% of the light.
  - Front, side windows: must let in at least 70% of the light.
  - Rear, side windows: must let in at least 65% of the light.
  - Rear screen windows: must let in at least 65% of the light.
12. Where currently licensed vehicles have factory tinted/privacy glass fitted and can provide documentary evidence of this, they will remain licensed for as long as required assuming they meet the rest of this policy. Where currently licensed vehicles have had a tinted film fitted to the vehicle (i.e. not factory fitted at time of manufacture), they will be required to have the film removed. Failure to do so will result in the vehicle licence being suspended until rectified.
13. A private hire vehicle must not be of such design or appearance as to lead any person to believe it is a hackney carriage.
14. Vehicles which are adapted to carry passengers seated in wheelchairs must meet the following specifications:
  - Suitable independent restraint systems must be fitted for both wheelchair and passenger. The restraint system must be installed and operated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. At no time should wheelchair passengers be transported in vehicles that do not have floor restraints fitted.
  - Passengers must not be fitted in wheelchairs facing sideways or rearward.
  - Vehicles may be fitted with ramps or power operated lifts to facilitate entry and exit for passengers in wheelchairs. Vehicles with a floor height of more than 330mm must be fitted with a power operated lift and not a ramp. All such equipment must be installed, operated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

- If a powered lift is used, an emergency manual method of lowering the lift must be provided.
- Ramps or lifts must not prevent service and emergency doors from being operated from both outside and inside the vehicle.
- The ramp surface must be of non-slip material and raised edges should be provided on each side of the ramp.
- Doorways for use by passengers in wheelchairs must be at least 800mm wide up to a height of 800mm, and 600mm wide (between the handrails) above that height.
- The height of the doorway must be a minimum of 1300mm.
- There should be a minimum floor to ceiling height of 1350mm in any part of the vehicle to be occupied by passengers in wheelchairs.
- Power-operated passenger lifts must have a load-bearing capacity of at least 300kg and have a platform size of at least 750mm wide and 1200 mm long with raised rear rollback plate when deployed and with grip handles fitted to both side edges.
- Vehicles using power-operated passenger lifts must ensure that they have;
  - fluorescent yellow grip handles and strips on the edges of the lift;
  - an audible signal to indicate deployment of the lift;
  - clear warning notices displayed to advise passengers not to board a moving lift, and
  - a lift surface of non-slip material.
- Tail lifts must be maintained and operated in accordance with the British Standard Code of Practice for Tail Lifts BSEN1756. This code of practice requires that the tail lift to be tested once a year and inspected twice a year. Vehicle owners have to pay an extra test fee for this service and will need to supply evidence, if requested, that tail lifts meet the required standard.

15. The Council may vary the requirements of paragraphs 1 – 14 in their absolute discretion in exceptional circumstances but reserve the right to refuse to licence a vehicle if it is considered unsuitable for use as a private hire vehicle.

### **Executive private hire vehicles**

Executive Private Hire Vehicle licences will only be granted to vehicles which comply with the following specifications.

16. The vehicle shall be of a make and model which the Council considers appropriate for an Exemption Notification. The Council may consult any person or organisation as it considers appropriate before deciding whether an Exemption Notification shall be granted in respect of any vehicle.
17. The makes and models of vehicle which may be considered for licensing as an executive vehicle are as follows. This is not an exhaustive list.
- MERCEDES S CLASS
  - MERCEDES V CLASS (MPV)
  - MERCEDES GLS
  - BMW 7 SERIES
  - BMW X7

- VOLVO S90
- VOLVO V90
- VOLVO XC90
- AUDI A8
- AUDI Q8
- LEXUS LS MODEL
- LEXUS LX
- JAGUAR XF
- ROLLS – ROYCE (SEDAN/SALOON)
- ROLLS – ROYCE CULLINAN
- BENTLEY (SEDAN/SALOON)
- BENTLEY BENAYGA
- LAND ROVER – RANGE ROVER
- TOYOTA LAND CRUISER

18. Without prejudice to the generality of Clauses 16 and 17 above, the vehicle shall comply with all the following minimum requirements:
- Be a recognised model of a four-door saloon motor car or people carrier but **not** a hatchback, kit car or vehicle substantively altered in appearance or modified in any way.
  - The vehicle interior and exterior shall be of the very highest quality in design and use of materials available and in exceptional condition.
  - The vehicle shall not be designed or adapted for off-road purposes.
  - Vehicles manufactured as people carriers may be considered for an exemption to display the plate. However, the vehicle shall be of the highest specification, quality and condition.
  - Each application will be considered on its own merits.
19. Any vehicle presented for licensing for the first time shall not be older than four years on the day that the fully and correctly completed application is received with the appropriate fee and will cease to be licensed once it reaches eight years old.
20. Only vehicles that satisfy Clauses 17 and 18 above are on the approved executive list and at the top of the range within the manufacturer's fleet of vehicles, may be considered for an Exemption Notice not to display the vehicle plate, which will be at the Council's discretion.
21. The Council may vary the requirements of paragraphs 16 to 20 in their absolute discretion in exceptional circumstances but reserve the right to refuse to licence a vehicle if it is considered unsuitable for use as a private hire vehicle.
22. For vehicles not included on the above list contact the Licensing Section by email: [licensing@reading.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@reading.gov.uk)

### **Limousine/party vehicles**

Limousine or Party Private Hire Vehicle Licenses will only be granted to vehicles which comply with the following specifications.

23. The vehicle shall be of a make and model which the Council considers appropriate for an Exemption Notification. The Council may consult any person or organisation as it considers appropriate before deciding whether an Exemption Notification shall be granted in respect of any vehicle.
24. Without prejudice to the generality of Clause 23 above, the vehicle shall comply with all the following minimum requirements:
  - Be a recognised model of a four-door saloon motor car or people carrier but not a hatchback, kit car or vehicle substantively altered in appearance or modified in any way except as within the section Limousines/Party Vehicles below.
  - The vehicle interior and exterior shall be of the very highest quality in design and use of materials available and in exceptional condition.
  - The vehicle shall not be designed or adapted for off-road purposes.
  - Vehicles manufactured as people carriers may be considered for an exemption to display the plate. However, the vehicle shall be of the highest specification, quality and condition.
  - Each application will be considered on its own merits.
25. Any vehicle presented for licensing for the first time shall not be older than four years on the day that the fully and correctly completed application is received with the appropriate fee and will cease to be licensed once it reaches eight years old.
26. On being presented for licensing for the first time, the vehicle shall have proof of one of the following:
  - Individual Vehicle approval certificate
  - A European whole vehicle certificate
  - A UK low vehicle type approval certificate
27. No Stretched Limousine/Party Vehicle shall be licensed by the Council where the conversion carried out results in the vehicle being more than 330.2cm (10 feet 10 inches) long. Where the conversion has been approved there shall be displayed on the vehicle a fixed plate giving the details of the company that carried out the conversion.
28. No Stretched Limousine/Party Vehicle shall be licensed by the Council where the maximum unladen weight of the vehicle exceeds 3,220.50kg (7,100 lbs).
29. A Stretched Limousine/Party Vehicle shall only be considered for licensing where the applicant produces evidence that the "stretch" was performed by the manufacturer or by a coachbuilder approved by the vehicle manufacturer. American limousines/party vehicles shall have been built by an approved coachbuilder under the QVM programme for Ford vehicles or the CMC programme for Cadillac vehicles. The onus shall be upon the applicant to prove that the vehicle meets the prescribed standards.
30. Any replacement parts fitted to a Stretched Limousine/Party Vehicle shall meet the approved standards of the stretched specifications i.e. tyres shall meet both the size and weight specifications.
31. Vehicles shall be capable of carrying no fewer than three and not more than eight passengers in addition to the driver. Side facing seats shall only be permitted on a Stretched Limousine/Party Vehicle if they meet the minimum requirements of lap belts fitted to each passenger seat of the side facing seats. A seat shall be a minimum width of

400mm. Stretched limousines shall only be licensed to carry a maximum of eight passengers regardless of how many seats are fitted to the vehicle.

32. Vehicles shall be always equipped with seat belts of an acceptable type in respect of every seat which can be used for the carriage of passengers. Seat belts shall comply with current legislation and always be in proper working order.
33. Each passenger shall have direct access to a door without the need to fold flat, tilt up or remove other seating.
34. Vehicles shall be fitted with at least four doors and four wheels.
35. The vehicle may be left or right-hand drive.
36. All paintwork shall be free of rust and corrosion and be of a very high standard.
37. Vehicles shall have adequate space for luggage.
38. All brakes and mechanical parts shall be kept in good order and condition.
39. The vehicle shall have a serviceable spare wheel, together with the proper tools and equipment to change the wheel in the event of a tyre or wheel becoming defective.
40. All tyres (including any spare) shall be suitable for the vehicle.
41. The vehicle shall not be designed or adapted for off road purposes.
42. The vehicle shall not be designed or adapted as a people carrier, minibus, people mover or other like vehicle.
43. The Council may vary the requirements of paragraphs 23 – 42 in their absolute discretion in exceptional circumstances but reserve the right to refuse to licence a vehicle if it is considered unsuitable for use as a private hire vehicle.

Note: **PRIOR TO** purchasing any vehicle to be used as an executive vehicle or limousine/party vehicle you are strongly advised to contact Reading Borough Council's Licensing Team via [licensing@reading.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@reading.gov.uk) for advice concerning the different makes and models of vehicles considered appropriate for licensing for this type of work.