

Part 9 - Hackney Carriage Vehicle Specification

The vehicle specification is an aid to help guide applicants in choosing an appropriate vehicle type. Applications for vehicles that do not fully comply with the vehicle specification will be automatically referred to the Licensing Sub-Committee for determination.

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1.0 Definition

Vehicles must be constructed so as to facilitate the carriage of disabled persons and be capable of accommodating a disabled person in a wheelchair in the passenger compartment, provided that the wheelchair is no larger than a DFT Reference wheelchair, as specified in the Public Service Accessibility Regulations 2000.

Side and rear-loading type vehicles are permitted.

2.0 General Construction

At the time of its first registration, a vehicle must be covered by one of the following type approvals as a category M1 vehicle:

- An EC Whole Vehicle Type Approval
- A UK Low Volume Type Approval
- A UK National Small Series Type Approval
- A Provisional GB Type Approval
- A GB Whole Vehicle Type Approval
- A GB Medium Series Type Approval
- A UK (NI) Small Series Type Approval
- A GB Small Series Type Approval
- A UK (NI) Type Approval

In all cases, documentary evidence of compliance with one of the above approval regimes, will be required for licensing.

In addition, vehicle proprietors are reminded of their legal obligations to comply with the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (as amended) and the Road Vehicle Lighting Regulations 1989 (as amended) – both of which apply at all times to any vehicle used on a public road in the UK.

The vehicle must be righthand drive.

Where retrofit emissions technology is installed, such as liquefied petroleum gas, the technology must have been approved as part of the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme (CVRAS).

No vehicle first being licensed will have been written off in any category and will not be renewed if written off during its licensable period.

3.0 Type of vehicle

Vehicles will only be licensed if they satisfy the definition of a wheelchair accessible vehicle, as described in section 1, and the general vehicle details outlined in section 2.

Once licensed, the vehicle will appear on the council's approved list of designated vehicles, in accordance with the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022.

4.0 Age criteria

The date of first registration will be used to determine the age of the vehicle.

Diesel and Petrol vehicles must be at least Euro 6 compliant and under seven years and six months of age when granted their first licence.

Zero Emission Capable vehicles must be under seven years and six months of age when granted their first licence.

Licensable Period

Diesel and Petrol vehicles will be licensed up to 15 years of age.

Zero Emission Capable vehicles will be licensed up to 20 years of age.

As of 1st January 2027, all newly licensed vehicles must be Zero Emission Capable (ZEC)

Existing licensed vehicles will continue to be licensed for the periods stated above.

5.0 Fuel Systems

Retrofit Emissions Technology

If retrofit emissions technology is installed in a vehicle, the technology must have been approved as part of the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme (CVRAS).

Zero Emission Vehicles

A Zero Emission Capable (ZEC) vehicle refers to:

- Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), or 'pure electric' where the use of a battery is the only power source
 - Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), which switch between a battery and an internal combustion engine (ICE)
 - Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), or 'full hybrids' which do not plug into the electricity grid but recharge while driving
 - Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs), which use onboard hydrogen fuel cells to generate electricity
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6.0 Body

The body must be of a fixed head type.

Rear-Loading Wheelchair Access Vehicles

Where the vehicle is constructed so as to accommodate a disabled person in a wheelchair, and that wheelchair is loaded from the rear, there is no requirement to have a partition installed and the use of one front passenger seat is permitted.

Where such a partition is fitted, it will conform to the technical specification set out in this condition.

The partition shall incorporate a means by which a fare may be paid without leaving the vehicle.

The partition shall extend the full width and height of the vehicle interior at the point where it is fitted.

The upper portion of the partition may be glazed, but without tint and, in any event, must allow the occupants of the rear seats to see the meter.

Where a partition is installed, use of the front passenger seat is not permitted.

All other vehicle types

The vehicle shall be designed and constructed so as to contain a partition separating the rear passenger(s) from the driver.

The partition shall incorporate a means by which a fare may be paid without leaving the vehicle.

The partition shall extend the full width and height of the vehicle interior at the point where it is fitted.

The upper portion of the partition may be glazed, but without tint and, in any event, must allow the occupants of the rear seats to see the meter

Where a partition is installed, use of the front passenger seat is not permitted.

Running Boards

Running boards are allowed where they are fitted by the manufacturer. All running boards must not increase the width of the vehicle at its widest part. The boards must be five inches in width, all of which must be available as a step.

7.0 Driver's Compartment

Vehicles that have a partition installed must be fitted with an intercom system to permit the driver and passenger(s) to communicate verbally and must have appropriate signage in place in the passenger compartment to indicate such.

8.0 Passenger Compartment

General

The vertical distance between the highest part of the floor and the roof must not be less than 1200mm.

Suitable provision must be made for the seating of no more than 8 passengers.

Doorways

Rear-Loading Wheelchair Access Vehicles

The clear height of the wheelchair accessible doorway must not be less than 1200mm.

The nearside door and doorway must be constructed to permit an unrestricted opening across the centre of the doorway of at least 600mm.

The top tread for any entrance of the passenger compartment must not exceed 460mm above ground level when the vehicle is unladen.

Where the top tread for the entrance exceeds 460mm and the vehicle is not fitted with approved running boards, a moveable intermediate step must be provided at each entrance into the passenger compartment.

The intermediate step shall be encased beneath the vehicle and be electrically operated to extend outwards. When not in use and whenever the vehicle is in motion, the step must not extend outwards beyond the vertical line of the bodywork. The step must be operated from within the driver's compartment and must have an inhibitor device to prevent the possibility of the vehicle being driven while the step is extended.

Such features may include (but are not restricted to): devices linked either to the handbrake mechanism, ABS sensors or taximeter feed. The step must be covered with a suitable non-slip surface with the edges of the step highlighted in a high visibility colour, which is different from the colour scheme of the immediate vehicle surroundings.

All other vehicle types

The clear height of the wheelchair accessible doorway must not be less than 1200mm .

The nearside door and doorway must be constructed to permit an unrestricted opening across the centre of the doorway of at least 750mm.

Grab handles must be placed at door entrances, to aid passenger ingress and egress from the vehicle. These should be of a high visibility colour contrasting with their immediate surroundings.

The outer edge of the floor at each entrance must be fitted with non-slip treads and have a band of colour across the entire width of the edge that shall contrast with the remainder of the tread and floor covering.

The top tread for any entrance must be at floor level of the passenger compartment and must not exceed 460mm above ground level when the vehicle is unladen.

Where the top tread for the entrance exceeds 460mm and the vehicle is not fitted with approved running boards, a moveable intermediate step must be provided at each entrance into the passenger compartment.

The intermediate step shall be encased beneath the vehicle and be electrically operated to extend outwards. When not in use and whenever the vehicle is in motion, the step must not extend outwards beyond the vertical line of the bodywork. The step must be operated from within the driver's compartment and must have an inhibitor device to prevent the possibility of the vehicle being driven while the step is extended.

Such features may include (but are not restricted to): devices linked either to the handbrake mechanism, ABS sensors or taximeter feed. The step must be covered with a suitable non-slip surface with the edges of the step highlighted in a high visibility colour, which is different from the colour scheme of the immediate vehicle surroundings.

9.0 Doors

Hinged Doors

The door and doorway must be so constructed in order to allow an unrestricted opening across the doorway.

Sliding Doors

The interior door handle must be clearly visible and easily accessible to passengers when the door is in the fully open position.

There must be reflective strips on the inside of both the front and rear edges of the door.

10.0 Door Fittings

Rear-Loading Wheelchair Access Vehicles

Where a vehicle is constructed so as to accommodate a wheelchair from the rear, there is no requirement for any such automatic door locking device to be fitted to passenger doors.

All other vehicle types

An approved type of automatic door locking device must be fitted to passenger doors to prevent them from being opened when the vehicle is in motion.

When the vehicle is stationary, the passenger doors must be capable of being readily opened from the inside and from the outside of the vehicle by one operation of the latch mechanism. However, the system may also incorporate features to prevent the use of the interior door handles of the passenger doors in other circumstances, such as the vehicle being stationary with the footbrake applied, or by use of the vehicle indicators to prevent egress from a passenger door on the side of the vehicle where traffic might be passing. The interior door handle must be clearly identified, to prevent it being mistaken for any other control.

11.0 Seats

All seats must be at least 400mm in width. The minimum distance from the back of the upholstery to the front edge of the seat must be 350mm.

Occasional seats must be so arranged as to rise automatically when not in use.

Where seats are placed facing each other, there must be a minimum space of 420mm between any part of the two seats.

The minimum leg room available to any passenger shall be 600mm. The measurement will be taken from the base of the seat to the rear of the seat in front when the front seat is at its full, rearwards extension. Where there is no seat in front the measurement will be taken from the base of the seat to the nearest obstruction in front.

Where the rear seat is of the bench type, the overall width of the seat must not be less than 1190mm at its narrowest point.

Where seat covers are used, they must be properly affixed to the seat so as not to become loose during use. They must be clean and devoid of damage of any kind.

12.0 Facilities for the Disabled

Every vehicle must be equipped in order that wheelchair passengers may be transported.

It shall be possible to board a reference wheelchair and once in the vehicle, manoeuvre the chair into the prescribed position for travelling in safety and without lifting any of the wheelchair's wheels from the floor.

Occupied wheelchairs must only be transported either forward or rearward facing.

The minimum headroom over the centre of the wheelchair space must be 1350mm.

The vehicle must be fitted with either a ramp or lift to assist wheelchair occupants.

The vehicle should be equipped with a manufacturer's user manual/guide on the safe boarding and alighting and security of wheelchair passengers.

Ramps

The ramp must provide a continuous surface at least 700mm wide and should not exceed 1900mm in length when deployed.

The ramp surface should be covered with non-slip material. Side edges of the ramp shall be provided with flanges at least 25mm high to prevent the wheelchair rolling off.

The edges of the ramp surface shall be marked in a high-contrast colour scheme.

The ramp shall have a minimum safe working load of 250kg

When in use the ramp must be securely located at the point of wheelchair entry.

Ramps must be stowed in a way which does not obstruct any handle or other opening device for any exit and such that in the event of an accident it could not cause injury to either passengers or the driver. If the ramp obstructs an exit, it must also be capable of being manually pushed or pulled out of the way from the inside and outside when the door is open so as to leave the doorway clear for use in an emergency.

Lifts

Lift platforms shall be of sufficient size to accommodate an occupant in the reference wheelchair. The lift surface should be covered with non-slip material. Side edges of the lift platform shall be provided with flanges at least 25mm high to prevent the wheelchair rolling off. The rear edge shall incorporate a device at least 100mm high to prevent rolling off which becomes effective when the lift leaves the ground.

The edges of the lift surface shall be marked in a high contrast colour scheme.

If power operated, the lift shall have a manual means of operation in the event of a power failure.

Lifts must be stowed in a way which does not obstruct any handle or other opening device for any exit and such that in the event of an accident it could not cause injury to either passengers or the driver. If the lift obstructs an exit, it must also be capable of being manually pushed or pulled out of the way from the inside and outside when the door is open so as to leave the doorway clear for use in an emergency.

Any controls for the operation of a lift must be inhibited while the vehicle is in motion and may only be operated at the point where the boarding device is fitted either by the driver or by an individual under their supervision.

The lift shall have a minimum safe working load of 300kg.

Where a vehicle is fitted with a power operated lift, the proprietor of the vehicle shall produce to the council's vehicle inspector on each occasion that the vehicle is presented for testing by the council, a valid test certificate for such lift in accordance with the requirements of the Lifting Operations and Lifting Regulations 1998 (LOLER). These regulations require that the passenger lifts are tested and certified as fit by a competent person every six months.

Securing the Wheelchair

Requirements for a rearward-facing wheelchair

The wheelchair must be secured completely independently of the occupant.

The vehicle shall be fitted with a wheelchair tie down system situated symmetrically about the longitudinal centreline of the wheelchair space.

A tie down system shall incorporate at least two straps, with end fittings capable of attaching to the rear securement points on to the wheelchair. The attachment points shall be approximately symmetrically arranged about the longitudinal centreline of the wheelchair.

The tie-down system must be able to withstand a force of 8.2kN applied horizontally towards the rear of the vehicle via a wheeled loading apparatus designed to represent the reference wheelchair.

Requirements for tie-downs in the case of a forward-facing wheelchair

The wheelchair must be secured completely independently of the occupant.

The vehicle shall be fitted with a 4-point tie-down wheelchair system situated symmetrically about the longitudinal centreline of the wheelchair space.

The tie-down equipment must satisfy the requirements of ISO 10542-1:2012 or any subsequent amendment.

The tie-down system anchorages in the vehicle structure must be able to withstand a force of 24.5kN applied horizontally towards the rear of the vehicle via a wheeled loading apparatus designed to represent the reference wheelchair. Surrogate tie-down straps may be used for the test.

The tie-down system must be able to withstand a force of 8.2kN applied horizontally towards the rear of the vehicle via a wheeled loading apparatus designed to represent the reference wheelchair.

Securing the Wheelchair Occupant

Requirements for a rearward-facing wheelchair

Any wheelchair occupant travelling rear facing should be afforded similar levels of protection to any other rear facing occupant in the same vehicle.

As a minimum, a three-point belt complying with UN ECE Regulation 16 or ISO 10542-1:2012 (or any subsequent amendment), shall be provided for each wheelchair occupant.

Requirements for occupant restraints in the case of a forward-facing wheelchair

Any wheelchair occupant travelling forward facing should be afforded similar levels of protection to any other forward-facing occupant in the same vehicle. As a minimum, a three-point belt complying with ISO 10542-1 : 2012 or any subsequent amendment, shall be provided for each wheelchair occupant. Provision should be made for the belt to be worn in contact with the wearer's pelvis rather than the arms or other rigid parts of the wheelchair.

13.0 Windows

Windows must be provided at the sides and rear area of the passenger compartment.

A window on either side of the passenger compartment must be capable of being opened by manual or electronic means by passengers when seated. The control for opening a window must be clearly marked.

Front windscreen and front side door glass must comply with Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, Section 32 in regard to the level of tints. Therefore, light transmission must meet the following criteria:

- Front windscreen - minimum 75% light transmission
- Front side door glass - minimum 70% light ingress transmission
- Remaining glass – Factory fitted as standard

Tinted films applied to any window, and any other aftermarket alterations are not permitted.

14.0 Tyres

Vehicles must adhere to the following in respect of wheels and tyres:

- The vehicle must be fitted with four road wheels
 - All tyres, including the spare (if supplied), must have at least 2.0mm tread depth throughout the continuous band in the centre 3/4 of the tread and around the entire circumference of the tyre
 - All tyres fitted must be fit for purpose and free from any defects.
 - The vehicle must come equipped with a serviceable wheel brace and jack of suitable capacity for the maximum axle weight shown on the vehicle.
 - Remoulded or part worn tyres are not permitted
 - Tyres must not be more than 10-years old
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15.0 Electrical Equipment

Any additional electrical installation to the original equipment must be adequately insulated and be protected by suitable fuses. It must meet the requirements of the relevant Automotive Electro Magnetic Compatibility (EMC) Directive, (or equivalent United Nations ECE regulation) as amended, and be marked accordingly.

16.0 Image and Sound Recording Equipment

See Image and Sound Recording Equipment requirements

17.0 Radio Apparatus and Communication Systems

Where apparatus for the operation of a two-way radio system is fitted to a vehicle, no part of the apparatus may be fixed in the passenger compartment or in the rear boot compartment if LPG or CNG tanks or equipment are situated therein.

Any radio apparatus shall be so positioned and properly secured so as not to interfere with the safe operation of the vehicle.

18.0 Taxi Sign

A roof mounted "Taxi" sign that must be amber and of an approved pattern, which is clearly visible both by day and by night when the vehicle is available for hire, must be fitted.

19.0 Taximeter

A taximeter must be fitted within the driver's compartment in such a position that the face of the meter is clearly visible in the passenger compartment and it does not interfere with the safe operation of the vehicle.

The taximeter shall be fitted with an approved form of sealing which will prevent non-approved, accidental, or deliberate alteration to the calibration of the meter.

20.0 Table of Fares

A facility must be provided to display of the table of fares in such a position that the full table of fares is clearly visible to the passengers.

21.0 Licence plates

Information bearing the licence number of the vehicle shall be displayed within the vehicle in such a position that it is clearly visible to the passengers.

Provision shall be made for the display of the exterior licence plate on the rear of the vehicle in an approved position.

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