

GREAT YARMOUTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF POLICY IN RESPECT OF STRETCHED LIMOUSINES AND SPECIALIST VEHICLES

In recent years there has been rapid growth in demand for the hire of limousines and specialist vehicles and the industry has been largely unlicensed and unregulated in terms of either drivers or vehicles. A number of Licensing Authorities have private hire licence conditions which effectively prohibit the licensing of stretch limousines and specialist vehicles. Issues such as left hand drive, tinted windows, seating capacity and side facing seats have meant that limousines cannot comply.

Section 48 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 states that a district council shall not grant a licence unless they are satisfied that the vehicle is:

- Suitable in size, type and design for the use as a private hire vehicle
- Not of such design and appearance as to lead persons to believe that the vehicle is a hackney carriage
- In a suitable mechanical condition
- Safe, comfortable; and that there is in force in relation to the use of the vehicle a policy of insurance.

For the purpose of this policy and licence conditions, a stretch limousine shall be defined as a motor vehicle that has been lengthened by the insertion of an additional body section and modified by a coachbuilder to contain luxury facilities and fixtures that is capable of carrying up to but not exceeding eight passengers. The Council will not license these vehicles as hackney carriages because their length makes them unsuitable to operate from a taxi rank.

This document provides a transparent and consistent framework for the licensing of limousines and specialist vehicles within the Borough of Great Yarmouth and has been produced following the publication of the Department of Transport Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Best Practice Guidance, issued in November 2006.

The following information and conditions are seen as a good model to ensure the safety of the public and regulated standards for private hire operators and to ensure that a minimum standard is set in the licensing of these particular vehicles.

VEHICLES SUITABLE / UNSUITABLE FOR LICENSING

Ford Lincoln Town Car

The original Lincoln Town Car is not suitable for stretching; these vehicles have a chassis number starting with 1LN. The authorised QVM converter is provided with a special vehicle that has been made suitable and the chassis number begins with 1L1. Some early Lincolns were stretched on the 1LN chassis and will be accepted if presented with a certificate of approval from Lincoln or the authorised QVM converter. For full details of any of the chassis number of any ford vehicle check www.fleet.ford.com/maintenance/vin-tools/

In addition, Ford provides a special chassis for the extended car to be built on. This is called a 418 chassis and this designation should appear on the vehicle VIN plate or the sticker or plate attached by the converter. If it is not there, there is double check, i.e. the 418 has a double exhaust and fitted with rear brake drum brakes instead of disc brakes. This must be checked as there is a Cartier edition of the base vehicle that has twin exhausts and disc rear brakes. This model will not however, have the heavy duty components necessary to make it suitable. The only authorised conversion takes the vehicle to 120 inch more than the original vehicle.

Cadillac Fleetwood/Deville

There are not a lot of Cadillac vehicles in the UK at present. The codes that denote whether it is an authorised conversion or not, are hidden in a number of places. If it is the Fleetwood model (1993 to 1996) the code was V4U shown on a sticker marked service parts identification under the boot lid. If it has been removed the only way to check is to remove the rear wheel and hub and measure the width of the brake shoe, this will be almost 2.5 inches (6.35 cm) wide, substantially wider than the conventional one.

From 1997 to 1999 the base car changed to DeVille, which was a front wheel drive. This was not popular and unlikely to be presented for inspection. From 2000 a completely new DeVille was made. The codes being V4U and WC5. These cars have disc brakes all round. A simple way to check whether this is an authorised CMC conversion is to take the wheel nut cover off and check it has an eight stud wheel. If it has it is a limousine package car. The standard car has five studs.

PRE-LICENSING REQUIREMENTS FOR VEHICLES

When presented for licensing for the first time the vehicle will be required to have either European Whole Vehicle Type Approval, UK Low Volume Type Approval or UK Single Vehicle (SVA) Approval or above and the limousine declaration of conditions of use should be produced. If a converted vehicle or a stretch limo, a weighbridge certificate as proof of the unladen weight of the vehicle after it was converted together with the maximum permitted laden weight must be produced.

A vehicle that has been stretched in excess of 3.048 metres (10 feet) will not be considered for licensing as a private hire special events vehicle. The Ford and Lincoln manufacturers will not authorise conversions beyond 3.048 metres for safety reasons as the weight increases substantially; therefore the maximum weight of the resultant vehicle must not exceed 7100 lbs. Furthermore the seating capacity of these longer vehicles will in most cases be in excess of eight passengers and therefore not be able to be licensed by the Local Authority.

Private Hire Vehicle Inspection

All stretched limousines and special event vehicles must comply to the standards laid out in the Council's private hire vehicle inspection manual (available from the MOT test station, Waveney Depot or from the licensing section at the Town Hall).

Liquid Petroleum Gas

Vehicles converted to run on liquid petroleum gas (LPG) must produce an installation certificate from a LPGA approved UK vehicle conversion company.

Vehicle Age Limits

It is the current policy of the Council not to license a vehicle over nine years of age; however in respect of limousines, age requirements may be considered irrelevant compared to the condition of the vehicle. The manner that a vehicle has been cared for is the most important consideration with older vehicles. Providing the vehicle continues to pass the vehicle tests, older vehicles will be allowed to remain licensed.

Conditions

1. The front seat shall accommodate the driver only
2. The maximum passenger accommodation shall be eight seats (n.b. for the purpose of calculating seating capacity the measure unit of a single seat is 17" per person)
3. All forward facing seats must be fitted with approved 3 point inertia seat belts.
4. All side and rear facing seats must be fitted with the minimum of approved 2 point lap belts.
5. The vehicle shall have an overall minimum height of 135 cm (53")
6. The vehicle shall have an engine rating providing adequate power to size of the vehicle.

7. The vehicle must comply with the standards laid out in the private hire inspection manual and must pass an annual roadworthiness test (certificate of compliance). The vehicle shall also be subject to a further spot check during the licensing year.
8. The maximum length of the vehicle stretch shall not exceed 3048 mm (120")
9. The vehicle must be fitted with a full size spare tyre and all tyres fitted to the vehicle shall be of an approved rating as specified by the tyre manufacturer for the weight and speed of the vehicle (see charts at end of document).
10. The front windscreen shall allow 75% light transmittance and the front driver and passenger windows shall allow 70% transmittance.
11. No self-adhesive material (tint or clear) shall be affixed to any part of the glass on the driver and passenger front windows.
12. There must be adequate internal light to enable passengers to enter and leave the vehicle safely.
13. The internal fittings and furniture of the limousine must be in a clean, well maintained condition and in every way fit and safe for public use.
14. Facilities must be provided for the safe conveyance of luggage.
15. The vehicle must have a minimum of two rear doors for the use of persons conveyed in the limousine and a separate means of ingress and egress for the driver. Doors must be capable of being readily opened from inside and outside the vehicle by one operation, and open to an angle of at least 60 degrees.
16. All windows must be fitted with safety glass (i.e. glass that if fractured does not fly into fragments capable of causing severe cuts). Windows must not have any broken, discoloured or cracked glass including the windscreen. All door windows must be so constructed as to be easily lowered or raised by the hirer and must be fitted by approved means to enable them to be opened or part opened as desired.
17. The vehicle must be fitted with at least three rear view mirrors, one of which must be fitted internally. The other two must be fitted to the near and offside of the vehicle giving the driver clear view to the sides and rear.
18. No external fittings will be permitted other than an aerial to receive radio or other transmissions.

19. The vehicle must provide sufficient means by which any person in the vehicle may communicate with the driver.
20. The vehicle must be equipped with a fire extinguisher (current standard).
21. Side marker lights must only show amber light when vehicle is in motion (road vehicle lighting regulations).
22. Two crests shall be displayed on each of the front doors of the vehicle unless written approval of exemption from the Council has been obtained.
23. During the currency of the licence the vehicle is not permitted to tow a trailer.
24. Two-way radio equipment shall not be installed in the vehicle without the prior approval of the Council who may specify the position of the equipment to ensure safe operation.
25. No intoxicating liquor shall be supplied from within the vehicle unless the premise where the booking is taken has an appropriate premises licence under the Licensing Act 2003 permitting the sale or supply of alcohol. *Under the Licensing Act 2003, it is an offence to sell alcohol inside a vehicle (i.e. operate a bar).*
26. No smoking shall be allowed within the vehicle at all times.
27. Entertainment systems must not be fitted in a position as to distract the driver. *It is the operator's responsibility to ensure that any media is suitable for the age of passengers within the vehicle (i.e. classified by the British Film Classification Board) and a performing rights licence is held where appropriate.*
28. Advertisements, no other signs, notices or any other markings shall be displayed on or within the vehicle without written permission of the Council to ensure that any material displayed within the vehicle is suitable for public viewing.
29. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that their passengers remain seated whilst the vehicle is in motion.