

Start date: 27/03/2026
End date: 15/05/2026
Results date: 29/05/2026

url:

Proposed amendment to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2030: Protected Plates & Accessibility

Background

The [Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2030](#) was approved by the Licensing Committee on 15 December 2025 subject to some minor amendments being delegated to Officers in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman. The decision was also subject to an agreement to undertake a review of the application of the policy with respect to 'protected plates' within the next six months with a view to implementing any changes proposed at the time of the first annual review.

This is a new policy which outlines the framework for licensing hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, drivers, and operators within West Berkshire. Prior to the adoption of the policy the trade was licensed subject to a set of terms and conditions in relation to each licence type as well as a convictions policy. The Department for Transport (DfT) issued a set of Statutory Standards which stated that local authorities should produce a 'cohesive policy document' that brings all procedures together. The Council undertook a consultation on its original draft policy and has been working with the trade to develop the current version of the policy presented to the December 2025 Licensing Committee.

The policy sets out the approach that will be taken by the Council when determining if a private hire, hackney carriage or operator licence will be granted and provides information for applicants, licence holders, the business sector and the citizens of and visitors to the district in respect of taxi licensing. The policy also explains the principles that guide decision-making, the standards expected of license holders, and the processes for compliance and enforcement.

The policy recognises that Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trade is an essential part of the local transport network, providing safe, reliable, and accessible services to residents, businesses, and visitors and seeks to strike a careful balance between safeguarding passengers while supporting a competitive and thriving industry.

The Council licenses five different types of vehicles:

- Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV).
- Non-Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles.
- Swivel-seated Vehicles.
- Stretched limousines.
- Novelty vehicles.

Prior to 2002 the Council had in place a limit on the number of Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences that were issued in the zone that covered the former Borough of Newbury (the 'Town Zone'). The 'District Zone' which covered the remainder of the West Berkshire Council administrative area had no limit applied. In 2002 the Council made the decision to remove the limit on the number of licences that could be issued in the 'Town Zone' but in doing so implemented a condition that all new licences that would be granted for this zone would require the vehicle to be wheelchair accessible. The original vehicle licence holders were given a protection that allowed them to continue to operate saloon vehicles whilst they remained the licence holder. The protection applied to all licences issued prior to the 1st April 2001.

In April 2005 the Licensing Committee considered a proposal to allow the so-called 'protected plates' (the original 'Town Zone' Newbury Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences) to be transferred to immediate family thus creating the so called 'family exemption' along with other proposals. The proposals were adopted. The report and minutes can be found here: [West Berkshire Council - Meeting of Licensing Committee on Tuesday 26 April 2005](#)

The effect of this was to update the Council's Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Conditions as follows:

1. If a taxi proprietor transfers in whole or in part his interest in a hackney carriage proprietor's licence, that transfer shall, subject to the family exemption, be treated as a grant of a new licence for the purpose of the applicability of the disabled access condition. Therefore, the disabled access condition requiring the provision of a fully wheelchair accessible vehicle will be applied to that licence with immediate effect from the date that the licence is transferred.

The Family Exemption

2. Any transfer by a hackney carriage proprietor of an interest in his licence, in whole or part, which is limited to a transfer of such interest to a member of the proprietor's immediate family as defined below, shall not be affected by the disabled access condition to any greater extent than the licence would have been affected had the transfer not occurred. Therefore, upon a transfer to a family member of an interest in a hackney carriage proprietor's licence, the relevant disabled access condition applicable to that licence immediately before the transfer was effected will remain in force.

3. For these purposes, 'immediate family' shall mean the:-

- Mother or Father
- Spouse or partner
- Children
- Brothers or Sisters
- Step-Mother or Step-Father
- Step-Children
- Step-Brothers or Step-Sisters of the hackney carriage proprietor, but shall not extend to any additional family member.

4. Where it is claimed upon the transfer of an interest in a hackney carriage proprietors licence that the family exemption applies, it shall in every case be for the proprietor of the licence to prove that a family relationship exists within the above definitions.

At the time of this consultation there are still 29 number Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences that the saloon car protection and 'family exemption applies'.

What we are proposing:

The Council is of the view that the current policy should be reviewed to establish whether the protections and exemptions are still appropriate given the passage of over 23 years since the protection was applied and 20 years since the 'family exemption' became policy. Options include but are not restricted to:

- Phasing out the exemption for all licences renewed after 1st January 2029
- Phasing out the exemption for all licences transferred to any party from 1st January 2027
- Retain the current exemption but remove the ability to transfer to a family member
- Retain the current exemption and continue to allow the plates to be transferred to an immediate family member.

Why we want your views

We'd like your views on our proposed changes to our Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2030, specifically regarding exemptions for pre-2001 licensed taxis and wheelchair accessibility requirements. Your feedback is essential to help shape a policy that balances these priorities.

How to take part

If you'd like to comment on our proposals, please complete our survey. It should take about xxx minutes.

Complete our survey

You can also send us your comments by email to PPPConsultations@westberks.gov.uk or by post to Moira Fraser, Public Protection Manager, Public Protection Partnership, Theale Library, Church Street, Theale, Berkshire RG7 5BZ

All responses must reach us by midnight on Friday, 15th May 2026 if they are to be considered.

If you have any questions, please contact PPPConsultations@westberks.gov.uk

What happens next?

All feedback we receive will be reviewed and inform an updated version of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2026, which will be considered by the Licensing Committee at their meeting on the **06 July 2026**. If approved, the updated policy will be published on the PPP website and the Council's [Strategies, Policies and Plans webpage](#).

Any personal information you choose to provide will be kept confidential and used in accordance with our [privacy statement](#).

Survey monkey questionnaire

Section 1: About You

1. Are you responding as: Taxi proprietor / Driver / Operator/ Member of the public/Taxi user/Disability and/or accessibility organisation / Other (please specify)
2. Are you a holder of a Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence Plate which is not subject to a condition relating to disabled access?

Section 2: Awareness & Understanding

3. Were you aware of the current exemption for pre-2001 licensed taxis regarding wheelchair accessibility? Yes / No

Section 3: Proposed Changes

4. The Council is considering phasing out the exemption by applying accessibility conditions to all licences renewed after 1 January 2029 and to all licences transferred after 1 January 2027. To what extent do you support or oppose this approach? matrix (please explain)

Separate question for the date?

Section 4: Impact & Fairness

5. What impact would the proposed changes have on: Your business / Accessibility for disabled passengers / Competition within the trade

Section 6: Additional Comments

6. Do you have any further comment?