

# **LICENSING GUIDANCE PROCEDURE AND CONDITIONS**

## **Granting Private Hire Plate Exemption**



**OCTOBER 2017**

# Application Process for Granting Private Hire Plate Exemption

## INTRODUCTION

The plate identifying the vehicle as a Private Hire Vehicle is required to be exhibited on the vehicle pursuant to Section 48(6) of the Local Government (Misc. Provisions) Act 1976 shall be securely fixed to the external front and rear of the vehicle in a conspicuous position and in such manner as to be easily visible by an authorised officer of the Council, or a Police Officer.

However, West Suffolk Council's allows proprietors of prestige type vehicles to seek permission to waive the requirement to display plates.

## PROCESS

1. Proprietors of prestige type vehicles licensed as Private Hire vehicles, or Private Hire vehicles used in special circumstances, may seek the permission of the Authority to waive the conditions of their licence relating to the display of licence plates.
2. Prestige vehicles remain licensed as Private Hire vehicles and all journeys and contracts must be pre-booked through a licensed Operator, although such vehicles should be used solely to undertake prestige work and should not be dispatched to customers in the ordinary way. Vehicles must not display logos or identification which may indicate that they are used as a taxi or private hire service other than the windscreen exemption.
3. **When booking your vehicle test, you must declare your intention at booking of your wishing to apply for a s75 plate exemption with the testing station.**
4. **Proprietors wishing to obtain a plate exemption will be initially assessed during their vehicle test at the testing station. Vehicle testers will confirm whether the vehicle meets the 'prestige' criteria and can go on to apply for a plate exemption (this is based on the make/model and condition of the vehicle).**
5. **The Proprietor will then go on to complete the plate renewal or first grant application form for the licensed plates as well as the application form for the s75 plate exemption. This is done with every grant/renewal application.**
6. In exceptional circumstances, applications may be considered part way through the life of an existing vehicle licence. This is at the discretion of the

Licensing Team Leader. If an exemption is granted, the remaining term of the exemption will run until the vehicle licence end date.

7. If approved, the proprietor will be notified of the successful application and will be issued with the following:
  - i) A letter detailing that the vehicle is exempt from displaying a Exterior Private Hire Plate. The agreement is required to be carried on the vehicle at all times and to be available for inspection by an authorised officer of the Council, a police officer or by the hirer of the vehicle, on request.
  - ii) A windscreen plate for display in the front windscreen of the vehicle denoting that the same information as a Private Hire Vehicle Plate, indicating the exemption.
  - iii) A Private Hire Vehicle Plate to be secured/ fixed inside the boot of the vehicle.
8. If the exemption request is not approved, the Licensing Officer will write to the applicant giving reasons as to why the application has been refused.
9. **The renewal process for the s75 plate exemption must be followed at each grant/renewal to ensure the continuity of the criteria is met.**
10. The following conditions will be attached to the licences of private hire vehicles where a plate exemption waiver has been made. These are detailed below:
  - i) Vehicles granted a plate exemption waiver shall be used only for Prestige type hirings and shall not be used for standard private hirings.
  - ii) The Operator receiving a booking for a plate exempted vehicle shall provide the hirer with details of the vehicle registration number and the name of the driver, prior to the hiring commencing. Bookings must be recorded and kept available for inspection for at least 12 months. The private hire windscreen identification plate issued by the Council shall be displayed within the front nearside of the windscreen at all times and legible from outside the vehicle.
  - iii) The rear vehicle licence plate shall be securely fixed within the boot of the vehicle in a manner which enables it to be easily inspected.
  - iv) The driver's badge shall be available for inspection by an authorised officer of the Council, a police officer or by the hirer of the vehicle, on request.

- v) The Council's agreement to a plate exemption is required to be carried on the vehicle at all times and to be available for inspection by an authorised officer of the Council, a police officer or by the hirer of the vehicle, on request.
- vi) The driver of a plate exempted vehicle shall wear professional business attire (smart shirt and trousers)
- vii) The proprietor shall not use the vehicle for private hire purposes other than for chauffeur use (ie. Not for 'normal' airport journeys or daily private hire use)
- viii) The driver and passenger front side window glass and the front windscreen must be clear. However, tinted windows can be fitted to the side and rear window glass of the vehicle provided that they comply with current legislation and allow in the correct amount of light.
- ix) The hirer shall not have the facility to settle accounts and / or tender direct payment to the driver by any means. Payment may only be made, either before or after the journey, direct to the Operator or their accounting system.
- x) No alcoholic drink shall be sold or purchased in or from the vehicle.

11. Bookings must be recorded and kept available for inspection for at least 12 months. **Officers will inspect Operator's booking records annually to corroborate the eligibility of the exemption. If the operator is in breach of its records, the exemption may be removed and the Operator may have its licence reviewed.**