



Framework for consideration of requests for exemption from the normal requirement for private hire vehicles to display a roof sign, door signs and a vehicle licence plate

Sections 48 and 75 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

1. The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 requires that a District Council must issue a private hire vehicle plate with an identity plate or disc and that proprietor should not use, or permit the use of, that vehicle without displaying the plate as directed by the Authority. The Act also gives a District Council the discretion to grant a proprietor an exemption from displaying the licence plate on their licensed private hire vehicle. Each request for an exemption will be considered on its own merits. The overriding consideration will be public safety. The clear identification of a licensed vehicle is considered such a safety aspect, particularly when visiting such places as airports, seaports and the centres of large towns.
2. Exemption will not be granted as a matter of course. A clear case for the exemption will have to be made by the proprietor. In determining a request it will normally be the status of the passenger and the execution of the work that will indicate whether or not the exemption should be granted. The high quality of the vehicle being used will be supportive of a request, but will not be the sole determining factor. Exemptions will normally be granted only where the work is carried out mainly or wholly outside of the Borough. Journeys conducted wholly or mainly within the Borough will not be granted an exemption unless there are exceptional reasons to do so.
3. The types of vehicles that would normally be accepted as being of the quality envisaged in 2. above would be:

Mercedes Benz
BMW 7
Series Jaguar XJ SWB and LWB
Rolls Royce
Bentley Lexus GS
Audi A8

This list is indicative but is not exhaustive. The vehicle would normally be of immaculate condition with no visible defects, dents, to the external bodywork or internal trim.
4. The type of work which would be considered for the grant of an exemption could be termed 'executive style'. Such work could include –
 - contracts with senior personnel of large companies to carry managing directors or their clients;

- contracts with national or local government, or similar agencies, to carry senior personnel and guests on official business;
- the carriage of well known personalities such as sports or 'pop' stars;
- the carriage of the bride and/or groom to a wedding (but not guests)

This list is indicative, but not exhaustive. It is also expected that the clients concerned require the use of vehicles without normal private hire licence plate, door signs and roof signs, the services offered to the passenger will be of a standard and class that go well beyond that which might be expected on a private hire journey normally booked through an operator. Other situations would be considered on their individual merits. Details of the clients and an expression from them that they do require vehicles without licence plate, door signs and roof signs will be requested. It is the Authority's normal expectation that vehicles proposed to be exempted will be engaged substantially (i.e. more than 75%) in the provision of the above type of work.

5. Where an exemption is granted the vehicle must not display any indication that it is a private hire vehicle other than one Bedford Borough Council Licensed Vehicle Sign in the front near side window. This requirement will apply to advertising, company names, telephone, numbers and/or web site addresses or any form of advert or display that indicates that the vehicle is a private hire vehicle or is available for future hire (other than the one Bedford Borough Council Licensed Vehicle Sign in the front near side window).
6. The type of work that will not be considered from the grant of an exemption will include:
 - Council 'school contract' work;
 - Journeys to airports, seaports or railway stations, unless part of a journey covered by an exemption; (it is considered that the proper display of licence plates and Authority door signs is a safety feature when arriving at such venues, particularly in the current climate of a possible terrorist attack)
 - Theatre journeys or sporting events unless stipulated on the exemption; 'Hen' and 'Stag' nights.

This list is indicative, but not exhaustive. In exceptional circumstances, where it can be shown that a particular journey of this nature warrants an exemption, due consideration will be given to a request to permit the exemption for the journey.

7. Drivers are likely to be members of the British Chauffeurs Guild or other driver's organisation relating to chauffeur type work which has prescribed quality standards and qualifications for membership. Evidence of membership would normally be requested.
8. Drivers of the vehicle will normally wear an appropriate uniform.
9. The decision to grant or refuse an exemption for the display of the current private licence plates, roof and door signs will normally be that of the Chief Officer for Democratic & Registration Services.

10. An “appeal” right to the Borough Council’s General Licensing Sub-Committee is provided where exempt vehicle status is refused or deemed inappropriate by the Chief Officer for Democratic & Registration Services.

For a vehicle to qualify as an Exempt vehicle, the following additional conditions will also apply:

1. To qualify as Exempt, the vehicle would be luxurious and of a higher specification than standard model vehicles. It would be relatively new, ideally under 3 years old (though age will not preclude the licensing of a vehicle in exceptionally good condition) and be of suitable size, appearance and design.
2. Any bookings for the undertaking of a journey in an Exempt vehicle must be made by way of a written contract. Such contracts must be in place for no less than 24 hours prior to the commencement of the journey. Written contracts shall be made available for inspection by an Authorised Officer or Constable at any reasonable time and be retained for a period of not less than 12 months. Contracts can be in the form of a formal signed agreement as well as in the form of emails or even SMS messages.
3. Exempt Vehicles that conduct Private Hire work without a written contract in place as per condition 3 will have their Exempt Vehicle status withdrawn. They will then be required to display a Bedford Borough Council standard Private Hire plate on the rear of the vehicle, and the required door and roof signs.
4. Exempt Vehicle shall not display any external markings e.g. operator details or advertisements.
5. Exempt vehicles shall not commence a booked journey from or within the immediate vicinity of any Private Hire Booking Facility, except in such cases where a pre-existing contract, as described in condition 3, is in place.
6. Vehicles qualifying for exempt status will be required to display one Bedford Borough Council Licensed Vehicle Sign in the front near side window denoting that the vehicle is a licensed private hire vehicle.
7. Vehicles qualifying for Exempt status will be required to carry a copy of their Private Hire Vehicle Licence for inspection (on request) by any interested party.
8. In advance of the journey, the hirer must be advised that the vehicle dispatched to collect them will not be displaying standard Private Hire Vehicle Licence plates, door and roof signs.
9. Exempt Vehicles can only be driven by a licensed Private Hire Driver who is licensed by the same authority from which the Exempt Vehicle License was issued.

10. At all times when the vehicle is being used on work covered by the exemption from the private hire plate and the Notice of Exemption from the Authority must be carried in the vehicle and produced for inspection if requested. The driver must also carry his private hire driver's badge and produce it if requested. When not engaged on work covered by the exemption, the vehicle must display the licence plate in accordance with licensing conditions.
11. Any breach of the Exempt Vehicle conditions could result in the vehicle having its Exempt Vehicle status withdrawn; from which point, assuming it continues to be used as a Private Hire Vehicle the display of Licence Plates, Roof and Door Signs will be required.
12. Licence plates for Exempt Vehicles do not need to be displayed for test but the licence plates must be carried in the vehicle (e.g. in the boot) for inspection together with the Notice of Exemption from the Authority.
13. All other conditions attached to the Vehicle Licence shall continue to apply in so far as they are not inconsistent with the above conditions.