



South Oxfordshire  
District Council



Vale of White Horse  
District Council



# Join the Conversation



## Review of the Joint Taxi Licensing Policy 2026

### SUMMARY REPORT

A review of the feedback received to the Joint Taxi Licensing Policy 2026 consultation.

MAY 2026

If you require this report in an alternative format (for example large print, Braille, audio, Easy Read and alternative languages) please email [jointheconversation@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:jointheconversation@southandvale.gov.uk) or call 01235 422425.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been produced by council officers to analyse the comments received to the Joint Taxi Licensing Policy consultation. The Councils have a responsibility to ensure the policy remains current and compliant with legislation, and we aim to review the policy at least every five years. As part of this review, amendments have been proposed to various sections of the policy, including minor clarifications and updates to reflect recent changes in guidance from central government. The councils consulted drivers, proprietors, operators and the public for seven weeks from Tuesday 20 January until 11:59pm on Tuesday 10 March 2026.

A total of 131 responses were received, with 46 per cent being from individuals/members of the public, closely followed by drivers or proprietors (43 per cent). Of the 131 total responses, 107 of the respondents provided at least one qualitative comment.

Most drivers, proprietors and businesses / organisations operate their business in South Oxfordshire (38 per cent), whilst 8 per cent operate in the Vale of White Horse.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Proposed changes specific to South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

The first section of the consultation asked respondents for their views on proposed changes specific to South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, 88 respondents provided 177 comments, and the most frequently mentioned topics included feedback on the revised target for zero emission vehicles from 2030 to 2045, mandatory acceptance of card/mobile payments and general comments on the climate and health impacts contributed by taxi drivers. You can [find out more about the comments received in this section of the report](#).

### Changes from the Department for Transport (DfT) Best Practice Guidance

The next section of the consultation covered changes from the Department for Transport (DfT) Best Practice Guidance. 76 respondents provided 78 comments, many of which raised concerns towards the tinted windows proposal, which proposed an increase in the level of permitted tint to 30% of light transmission, this was previously 70%. Other feedback included the removal of requirement for a fire extinguisher in a licensed vehicle and vehicle daily condition checks. You can [find out more about the comments received in this section of the report](#).

### Policy amendments which relate to changes already made to how we work and guidance on existing legislation

The final section of the consultation related to proposed changes that covered policy amendments already made to how the councils work and guidance on existing legislation. 66 respondents provided 143 comments. Key topics included the proposal that drivers must have held a DVLA licence for at least 12 months to commence the application process, and in relation to the added condition to the policy for operator booking staff to have passed the relevant disability awareness and safeguarding training. You can [find out more about the comments received in this section of the report](#).

## ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

We contacted drivers, proprietors, members of the public, businesses/organisations and statutory consultees for their comments on the joint licensing policy from Tuesday 20 January until 11.59pm Tuesday 10 March 2026.

We notified taxi licence holders, businesses and organisations, and members of the public through the council's consultation database, using both email and letter communications. We also shared the consultation with key stakeholders, including Thames Valley Police, the South and Vale Taxi Drivers Association, and neighbouring councils. In addition, the consultation was promoted across the council's social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram and Nextdoor.

A survey was conducted to gather feedback regarding the proposed amendments made to various sections, including minor clarifications and updates to reflect recent changes in guidance from central government. This consultation has been divided into the following sections:

- Proposed changes on a local level that affect South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse
- Changes from the [Department for Transport \(DfT\)](#) Best Practice Guidance, which is supplementary to the [DfT Statutory Standards](#)
- Policy amendments which relate to changes we have already made to how we work and guidance on existing legislation

### Reporting methodology

- The qualitative comments received to the consultation are included in the consultation report appendix, alongside an officer response. Any personal information supplied to us within the comments that could identify anyone has been redacted and will not be shared or published. Further information on data protection is available in our general consultation's privacy statement on our [South](#) or [Vale](#) website.
- When stating percentages in the analysis, we are referring to the percentage of respondents that answered the specific question, rather than the total number of responses to the overall survey. Response percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up over .5 and rounding down under .5.
- **If respondents made multiple comments on specific policy points or amendments, these have been separated for ease of reference, therefore the total number of comments received will differ from the total number of respondents. Where comments were received several times, this is indicated underneath the comment. To avoid missing any feedback, officers assigned comments to the appropriate policy point wherever they were confident the comment referred to that specific area. Any comments that did not relate to a specific policy point were placed in an 'other comments' section.**
- A section of the consultation was in relation to vehicle emissions and asked respondents about any barriers to switching to an electric vehicle, if they haven't done so already. The questions asked are for the Climate Team and do not form part of the proposed policy consultation and therefore have not been shared within this report.
- Some spelling, grammatical and punctual errors in the original comments raised were corrected in the main body of the consultation report.

## QUALITATIVE DATA

### SPECIFIC TO SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE AND VALE OF WHITE HORSE

We asked respondents if they had any comments on the following changes, further information and justification for the change can be viewed in the [Appendix](#).

- Added section to confirm that drivers with six DVLA points will be subject to more regular checks
- Revised target for zero emission vehicles to 2045
- Removed exemption for brand new vehicles to undergo a compliance test
- Added mandatory acceptance of card/mobile payments by all licensed vehicles from 1 January 2027
- Added a validity period of 12 months for the knowledge test for the application process
- Added requirement for drivers to report suspensions, revocations and refusals of any licences issued by other local authorities
- Added driver 'working time' guidance
- Added condition to report any safeguarding concerns
- Updated suitability guidance
- Penalty points table updated to reflect above changes, and to include other hand-held devices such as PDAs in the same section as mobile phone use

Frequently mentioned topics	Total comments
Added mandatory acceptance of card/mobile payments by all licensed vehicles from 1 January 2027	57
Removed exemption for brand new vehicles to undergo a compliance test	46
Penalty points table updated to reflect above changes, and to include other hand-held devices such as PDAs in the same section as mobile phone use	46
Revised target for zero emission vehicles to 2045	15
Added section to confirm that drivers with six DVLA points will be subject to more regular checks	3
Added driver 'working time' guidance	3
Added a validity period of 12 months for the knowledge test for the application process	3
Added condition to report any safeguarding concerns	2
Added requirement for drivers to report suspensions, revocations and refusals of any licences issued by other local authorities	1
Updated suitability guidance	1
<b>Total comments received</b>	<b>177</b>

88 respondents provided 177 comments to this section. 57 comments were regarding the mandatory acceptance of card/digital payments, with one making it clear the proposal was welcome, whilst others (3) raised concerns with the charges to process electronic card payments. This requirement will not apply where network coverage means that the payment cannot be made, nor will it apply to private hire vehicles which only conduct journeys where the customer pays the operator directly, for example via an account, app or school transport. While there was concern that this could imply drivers would stop accepting cash, this is not the case, and cash payments will continue to be encouraged.

Another topic covered which resulted in 46 comments was the proposal to require new vehicles to undertake a compliance test, with a suggestion that the fees for compliance tests for brand new vehicles should be lower. Officers would like to reiterate that this is not being proposed due to concerns over mechanical safety, but rather to ensure the vehicle meets the policy criteria overall and is suitable for licensing.

46 comments were received in respect of Appendix G of the policy, which details the penalty points scheme, suggesting that the scheme should be subject to a separate, dedicated consultation with licensing to ensure transparency, consistency, and confidence in enforcement. There are no proposed changes to this section other than updating the table to reflect the changes listed separately in the consultation, and to include other hand-held devices such as PDAs (personal digital assistant) in the same section as mobile phone use. Officers are of the view that the penalty points system is transparent and consistent, and that the points thresholds are reasonable.

15 comments related to the proposed extension of the zero-emission deadline for vehicles from 2030 to 2045. The views varied, some (2) argued the timescale should be brought forward from 2030, while one suggested allowing existing licensed vehicles to operate until 2035, with new licences issued only for electric vehicles from 2030. A handful of comments (8) mentioned the climate, air quality and health impacts and noted that licensed vehicles do higher mileage so contribute more to emissions. Three comments highlighted the current shortage of charging infrastructure, including both standard and rapid electric vehicle chargers. The proposal for all vehicles to be net zero aligns with the target for the district councils, however officers will continue to work to encourage the trade to switch to electric vehicles and will maintain the lower licence fee for such vehicles.

Three comments were received about more regular DVLA checks for drivers who already have six points on their DVLA licence, which is usually carried out on renewals only, generally every three years. It was suggested that the council should provide an online form to report fixed penalties. The councils already offer this service. The provision of a DVLA check code is a temporary code a driver generates online and should take no longer than five minutes to produce.

The qualitative comments alongside an officer response are available to view in the [Appendix](#).

## CHANGES FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT (DFT) BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The following changes are based on Department for Transport (DfT) Best Practice Guidance. As this guidance has been issued by central government, respondents were asked whether they had a compelling local reason for the changes not to be implemented.

- Added section on intended use
- Amended so vehicles exempt from display of plate are to be used solely for contract work (was previously 75%) and exceptional circumstances are required to be proven in order for exemption to be granted
- Added guidance on partitions and driver safety/security measures
- Added requirements for operators
- Added guidance for private hire operators in respect of trading names
- Added operator booking system requirements
- Amended tinted windows – increase level of permitted tint to 30% of light transmission (was 70%)
- Removal of requirement for fire extinguisher
- Added vehicle daily condition checks
- Added requirement for hearing loop where partition fitted

Frequently mentioned topics	Total comments
Added section on intended use	46
No specific section	11
Amended tinted windows – increase level of permitted tint to 30% of light transmission (was 70%)	9
Removal of requirement for fire extinguisher	7
Added vehicle daily condition checks	3
Amended so vehicles exempt from display of plate are to be used solely for contract work (was previously 75%) and exceptional circumstances are required to be proven in order for exemption to be granted	2
<b>Total comments received</b>	<b>78</b>

76 respondents provided 78 comments to this section. 46 were in respect of the intended use policy. For clarity, this policy has been in practice in both districts for over nine years and there is no proposal to retrospectively add the requirement to any licences first issued prior to 2017. Officers have added the detail to the policy to ensure prospective applicants are aware of the requirement and to align with the DfT Best Practice Guidance on the matter.

Nine qualitative comments received were in relation to the tinted windows proposal, regarding increasing the level of permitted tint to 30% of light transmission, this was previously 70%. There was a level of misunderstanding from respondents, with some expressing concerns that the proposal will decrease the level of permitted tint which is not the case. Other comments (3) expressed concern around safety and medical reasons. Other comments (3) were not aware of the existing exemption from tint requirements for plate-exempt vehicles which will remain in

place. Officers have included additional clarification to section B.2 of the policy to ensure the policy is clear that vehicles with an exemption from the requirement to display the plate are exempt from the tinted windows requirement. From the comments, no compelling local reasons have been identified to depart from the Best Practice Guidance in respect of the tinted windows proposal.

A handful of comments (7) were received regarding the removal of requirement for a fire extinguisher in a licensed vehicle, expressing safety concerns. Officers have acknowledged the concerns; the DfT guidance does not encourage drivers or passengers to tackle the fire. Most fire extinguishers are stored in compartments within the boot space, therefore would not assist the public in escaping from a vehicle on fire. However, drivers are welcome to carry their own fire extinguishers if they wish to do so.

Three comments included questions around the vehicle daily condition checks, such as querying the responsibility for the checks where a driver keeps a company vehicle between shifts and does not return it to the base. Officers would like to clarify that given ownership of vehicles varies between company proprietors and individual proprietors, and hackney carriages do not require an operator, it is felt best that the requirement is added to both vehicle and driver licences. This does not mean the checks need to be carried out twice, but where a company owns a vehicle, they will need to liaise with the driver to ensure the checks are done and logged. Alternatively, if a firm leases a vehicle to a driver, the driver will then take sole responsibility.

Two comments were made regarding the requirement for plate-exempt vehicles to only carry out contract work, but the feedback did not include a compelling local reason for the policy not to proceed.

The qualitative comments alongside an officer response are available to view in the [Appendix](#).

## POLICY AMENDMENTS WHICH RELATE TO CHANGES ALREADY MADE TO HOW WE WORK AND GUIDANCE ON EXISTING LEGISLATION

We asked respondents if they had any comments on the following changes, further information and justification for the change can be viewed in the [Appendix](#).

- Added sections on re-licensing and ‘surrender’ of licences
- Added advice on what vehicle proprietors should do when allowing another licensed driver to drive their vehicle.
- Clarified that where a licence holder has benefitted from the reduced fee for a wheelchair accessible or zero emission vehicle, any replacement vehicle must meet the same specification, and added that the councils will consider departing from usual policy requirements where a vehicle is wheelchair accessible
- Added that fares for private hire journeys should be agreed at the time of booking
- Added guidance in respect of signage on licensed vehicles
- Added advice to contact council prior to purchasing a new executive vehicle to check it will be acceptable
- Added reference to new guidance document on CCTV systems
- Added drivers must have held a DVLA licence for at least 12 months to commence the application process
- Amended to confirm medicals can be completed by any registered doctor with access to the full medical records
- Added examples of medical conditions to be reported
- Added guidance on the provision of certificates of good conduct by asylum seekers/refugees
- Added details of provider of enhanced DBS disclosures and Update Service checks for the councils
- Added guidance for operators in respect of the provision of a driver and vehicle to fulfil a booking at the requested time
- Clarified the requirement for company applicants for operator licences to pass disability awareness and safeguarding training
- Added clarification on prohibition of word ‘taxi’ or ‘cab’ on private hire vehicles
- Added that taxis must not illuminate hire signs outside of district
- Added condition for operator booking staff to have passed the relevant disability awareness and safeguarding training
- Clarified drivers are not to call out to persons to ask if they want a taxi in any location, not just on the rank

Frequently mentioned topics	Total comments
Clarified drivers are not to call out to persons to ask if they want a taxi in any location, not just on the rank	46
Added drivers must have held a DVLA licence for at least 12 months to commence the application process	45
Added condition for operator booking staff to have passed the relevant disability awareness and safeguarding training	45

Added that fares for private hire journeys should be agreed at the time of booking	2
Added advice to contact council prior to purchasing a new executive vehicle to check it will be acceptable	1
Amended to confirm medicals can be completed by any registered doctor with access to the full medical records	1
Added details of provider of enhanced DBS disclosures and Update Service checks for the councils	1
Clarified that where a licence holder has benefitted from the reduced fee for a wheelchair accessible or zero emission vehicle, any replacement vehicle must meet the same specification, and added that the councils will consider departing from usual policy requirements where a vehicle is wheelchair accessible	1
Added guidance for operators in respect of the provision of a driver and vehicle to fulfil a booking at the requested time	1
<b>Total comments received</b>	<b>143</b>

66 respondents provided 143 comments. 46 comments were received in respect of the addition of a specific condition to clarify that drivers are not permitted to call out to persons to ask if they want a taxi in any location. In the previous policy, this was mentioned within another condition which was with reference to ranks. It has therefore been separated to make it clear that touting is not permitted at any location, which is a legal requirement.

45 comments included the proposal to allow someone who has not held a DVLA licence for 12 months to commence the application process, so the licence can be issued once they get to the 12-month point. Given the process of obtaining a licence is not usually significantly lengthy, officers remain of the view that a person should be required to hold a DVLA or EEA licence for at least 12 months prior to commencing the application process to ensure they have a suitable amount of driving experience.

Another 45 comments were in respect of the requirement for administrative staff to complete and pass the approved disability awareness and safeguarding training every three years. It was suggested that the administrative staff could refer to the operator for guidance, however it is not expected that the individual operator (or nominated individual in the case of companies who hold licences) would be on duty 24 hours a day 7 days a week, and as a delay in raising concerns could be a significant risk to public safety, this requirement is suggested as essential to ensure the administrative staff are able to assist any customers with specific needs or safeguarding concerns, whether or not the licensed operator is on duty.

The qualitative comments alongside an officer response are available to view in the [Appendix](#).

## OTHER COMMENTS

60 respondents provided 510 qualitative comments which did not relate to any policy changes. The feedback ranges from comments on the existing policy to comments about licensing in general, to some proposed changes such as private hire vehicle signage and mandatory GPS and CCTV in all licensed vehicles which will be picked up when the policy is next reviewed to ensure all those potentially affected by the proposals are able to have their say. The qualitative comments alongside an officer response are available to view in the [Appendix](#).

## **HOW WE HAVE USED THE RESULTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the consultation. All the comments have been reviewed, and an officer has provided a response where required. This report along with a final version of the proposed taxi licensing policy will be shared with the Licensing Committees in June 2026, who will consider the results of the consultation and will make a decision whether to adopt the policy.

If you would like more information about this consultation and the results presented in this report, or you require this report in an alternative format (for example large print, Braille, audio, Easy Read and alternative languages) please contact:

### **Consultation and Community Engagement Team**

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