

**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL FROM STANFORD
COACHWORKS LTD, AS A MANUFACTURER /
INSTALLER OF WHEELCHAIR ACCESS FACILITIES
FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE
VEHICLE**

**REPORT BY:
Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards**

Purpose

1. To consider approving Stanford Coachworks Ltd as an '*approved manufacturer of wheelchair access vehicles to be used as licensed vehicles in Herefordshire*'. The address of the company is given below:
 - Stanford Coachworks Ltd,
Mobility House,
Stanhope Industrial Park, Wharf Road,
Stanford-Le-Hope,
Essex.
SS17 0EH

Background

2. On 15 May 2008 the Regulatory Committee met to update the conditions for licensed vehicles in respect of the required test to ensure vehicles that had wheelchair access facilities and converted vehicles were safe and fit for use. However, on this occasion a decision could not be agreed on the final wording of a revised condition.
3. On 15th July 2008 the Regulatory Committee therefore reconsidered the matter. The Committee agreed that the Council would normally approve wheelchair access vehicles for hackney or private hire *only* if they met the following criteria:-
 - i. The manufacturer must have a vehicle prototype that has passed the 'VOSA –SVA Single Vehicle Approval Standard Test', including class D (disabled) and class P (for import)
 - or
 - ii. The manufacturer must prove to the Council that its vehicle has relevant safety standards and is able to demonstrate consistent manufacture to that standard
4. After this decision was made, in August 2008 the licensing section wrote to all known installers / manufacturers of wheelchair facilities of Herefordshire's taxi fleet as well as Herefordshire's taxi trade to inform them of the above.

5. As a result of this, in August 2008 an application was received from Stanford Coachworks, albeit the application having been made on their behalf by an independent Hereford taxi operator.
6. The application was duly considered by the Regulatory Committee on 7th October along with five other manufacturers. As the application was lacking in the information requested, the committee resolved to refuse the application from Stanford, although it invited them to reapply so that a proper application could be considered by the Committee. (See Appendix 1 in background papers for extract of minutes from 7th October 2008).
7. The Licensing Team therefore undertook to contact Stanford and following a telephone conversation wrote to them on 20th October, (See Appendix 2 in background papers for email dated 20th October 2008).
8. In the interim period, the Licensing Team have liaised with both the Transport Officer in the Adult Social Care Team and the Council's Administration & Transport Manager in the Children & Young People's Directorate, who have respectively confirmed that they authorise the use of vehicles converted by Stanford Coachworks for the transportation of disabled persons and children on behalf of Herefordshire Council.
9. On 17th November an application from Stanford Coachworks was received by Herefordshire Council under 3(ii) above, i.e. they wish their vehicles to be approved by the Council's Regulatory Committee because they feel that they have *relevant safety standards and are able to demonstrate consistent manufacture to that standard*. (See Appendix 3 in background papers for application).
10. The Licensing Team have discussed the application with Stanford, who have confirmed that their conversions are primarily sold directly to local authorities, PCTs and other such organisations, with very few being sold directly to the taxi trade in the UK. It is Stanford's opinion that conversions used as Hackney Carriages or private hire vehicles are therefore usually acquired from a third party, and not directly from Stanford. They have confirmed, however, that they do manufacture conversions that seat 8 or less passengers, which can therefore be used as Hackney Carriages or private hire without further conversion.

Manufacturers' Tests and Quality Procedures

11. Stanford was asked to produce evidence for their wheelchair access vehicles in the following categories:
 - i. Details of any test certificates that would help demonstrate that their vehicle meets the industry standard for the installation of wheelchair access facilities (e.g. a 'Status' test or a 'Mira' test). If unavailable, they were asked to provide a VOSA Single Vehicle Approval Standard Test, for class D (disabled) and P (import).
 - ii. Quality assurance certification.
 - iii. Documentation to demonstrate that there are procedures in place to ensure consistent installation of the wheelchair facility in accordance with the prototype which complies with the test certificates mentioned in (i) above.

- iv. The list of vehicles seeking approval and their approval certificate numbers from the VCA.
- 12. The application and documentation supplied by Stanford Coachworks in answer to the above list is given in Appendix 3. For ease of reference, Table 1 overleaf also summarises the information provided against the criteria requested:

Table 1: Summary of Information Provided to Herefordshire Council

	Test Certificates submitted	Quality Assurance docs / info received	Documents / procedures submitted to show consistency	List of vehicles for approval and VCA Type Approval docs submitted
Stanford Coachworks	<p>Sample of a 'Certificate of Initial Fitness' from VOSA for a typical converted Mercedes Sprinter for a Public Services Vehicle. (i.e. > 8 passengers), presumed to have identical wheelchair facilities for those with 8 or less passengers, i.e. taxis.</p> <p>Passenger Lift Services Ltd CE Declaration of conformity for inboard lift, dated Nov 2008.</p> <p>Unwin Security System's certification of product testing for rail fixing kit to underfloor spreader plate, to EU Directive 76/115/EEC. Test undertaken at MIRA Test Facility and apparently witnessed by VOSA, Feb 2003.</p> <p>Unwin Security System's certification of product testing for a low profile rail used with Unwin's wheelchair tie-down and restraint system, to EU Directive 76/115/EEC. Test undertaken at both STATUS's and MIRA's test facilities, some apparently witnessed by the VCA. Certificate dated Jan 2000.</p> <p>Richard & Shaw's test certificate for seat types 143146 & 143161 for positional and strength testing laid down by EEC/76/115 and ECE 14, for anchorage points for lap and diagonal seat belts. Certificate dated 9.1.2008. Includes a photographic record of testing to destruction of seats under load / crash conditions.</p>	<p>ISO 9001:2000 This QA document covers the conversion of vehicles for people with special needs, as well as the servicing and maintenance of vehicle tail lifts.</p> <p>First issued 5.10.2001</p> <p>Current issue 16.10.2007</p> <p>Valid until 4.10.2010</p>	<p>No supporting documentation submitted.</p> <p>However, there is the presumption that the independently audited and verified ISO 9001 status will require such procedures, documentation and forms.</p>	<p>Sample of a VOSA British National Type Approval certificate for their Mercedes Sprinter conversion.</p> <p>Uncompleted VOSA SVA application form for a minister's approval certificate. From subsequent discussion with Stanford, since October 2007 this form has been completed and approved for each individual conversion prior to sale.</p> <p>Attached product literature mentions conversions from vehicles originally manufactured by Mercedes Benz, Volkswagon, Renault, Peugeot, Citroen, Fiat, Ford, Irisbus, Iveco, Vauxhall and Maxus.</p>

Options

- A) To approve Stanford Coachworks Ltd as an approved manufacturer.
- B) To require further information.
- C) To refuse the application.
- D) To come to some other conclusion.

See background papers for:

Appendix 1 – extract of minutes from 7th October 2008

Appendix 2 – email dated 20th October 2008 requesting the required information

Appendix 3 – application from Stanford Coachworks received 17th November 2008