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DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



Development Management Advice Note 5 (DMAN 5)

Taxi Offices

DRAFT - June 2025

EXPLANATORY NOTE

DCSDC DCAN 3: BOOKMAKING OFFICES

The purpose of this explanatory note is to clarify that following the adoption of Derry City & Strabane District Council Local Development Plan (LDP) Plan Strategy in July 2025, guidance contained within the DCANs published by Department for Infrastructure (formerly Department of the Environment) ceases to apply. Where such guidance is still considered useful the Council will adopt it as its own guidance. The original DCAN 5: Taxi offices was published by DfI in 1983. This document is an adapted updated version which will remain valid following the adoption of the PS.

Further information on the status of other former DoE Planning guidance is available here

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/guidance-update>

DMAN 5: Taxi Offices

Adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), by Derry City & Strabane District Council LDP 2032

The purpose of this Advice Note is to give general guidance to intending developers, their professional advisors and agents. It is designed to provide advice on the Planning criteria to be applied when an application for this form of development is being considered. It should be stressed that the note is not a specific statement of policy but rather one of advice and guidance.

Each application or appeal is treated on its merits and the application of the guidance given to a particular case is always a matter calling for judgement.

Any legal views stated in this note have no statutory force and should not be relied upon as an authoritative interpretation of the law.

This note deals with the Planning issues that arise concerning applications to establish taxi offices, however described, and sets out the criteria which the Council will take into account when determining such proposals.

The operation of all taxis in Northern Ireland is currently governed by the requirements of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 and by regulations and bye-laws made thereunder. The Order empowers the relevant authorities to lay down standards for the licensing of drivers and their vehicles and, amongst other matters, to designate taxi ranks.

Taxis in Northern Ireland are separately licensed as private or public hire. The former are licensed to operate from registered offices or other premises and may only be indirectly booked by telephone or other prior arrangement. This form of taxi is forbidden to ply for hire in public streets.

Public hire taxis may ply for hire on public streets. Such taxis may lawfully operate only from designated ranks or, when mobile, with a "For Hire" sign displayed. This service is not normally subject to Planning legislation.

It should be noted that a taxi office falls within Part B1: Business (a) of the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 2015.

Regarding private hire taxi operations, of which there are two types, namely those based in taxi offices and those in taxi depots, the Council is concerned primarily with the former. This is because taxis are generally owned by the drivers and not by the owners of the taxi office. Thus, taxi depots, where the cabs are stored on the firm's premises, are a very rare form of development.

The private hire taxi service, comprising an office used to relay requests for taxis to taxi drivers, is not used as a depot, although sometimes the driver may call at the office. Consequently, the Department is mainly concerned with the functions of the office, whose staff are employed to take and relay messages and for any other administrative purposes.

In considering applications for such offices the Council will consider their proper location, their effect on adjoining property including the effect of noise and disturbance, and also car parking requirements.

Proposals for taxi offices in wholly residential areas are unlikely to be favourably considered. This is primarily because of the noise and disturbance which is likely to be incurred by taxi-cabs arriving late at night to collect customers who have called at the offices. It should be noted that taxi services tend to have their peak hours in the evening, from approximately 6.30 pm to 2.00 am. There may be some minor 'peaks' during the day, due perhaps to the arrival of a passenger ferry in a local port or, in the evening, due to visitors at a local hospital. However, normally, the busiest hours for taxi services are outside the peak hours for traffic.

Within an area which is predominantly residential but perhaps with some commercial land uses, the Council will carefully consider the effect of the proposed development on adjoining residential properties.

The fringe of the central area of a town, within an area of mixed land uses but primarily of a commercial nature, can be an ideal location for a taxi office. A secondary shopping area within a town centre may also be a suitable location. However, a prime shopping area will generally not be regarded as acceptable because of the loss of a potential retail outlet.

The Council considers that a location in an Economic Development area would be a sensitive issue, with potential to impact negatively on the primary ED use of the area. Developers would need to ensure that such a location is ancillary, complementary, compatible, etc. as well as being acceptable in terms of the environmental impacts of adjacent uses, traffic hazards and potential dangers from industrial plant or machinery. (Refer in particular to the Justification & Amplification text in Policy ED 4 in the LDP Plan Strategy.)

Car parking facilities for taxi offices operating a radio-controlled type of service should be to the standard for small offices. Currently the standard for staff is 1 car space per 20 square metres, and for operational parking, i.e., space required for cars and other vehicles necessarily involved in the operation of the business, a standard of 1 private vehicle space per 930 square metres and 1 commercial vehicle space per 3,000 metres. However, most taxi firms operate on a 24-hour basis, and it is likely that during that period some drivers will call at the office either to collect a customer or merely to wait. The Council therefore considers that this parking standard should only be regarded as a minimum requirement and, depending upon the scale and character of the proposed business, may require additional parking facilities to be provided. That said for the most part parking will only be required for any length of time for staff taking calls on site.

Regarding taxi depots, where taxis are stored on the premises, the standard should be the same as for small offices plus one car space for each cab to be stored.

Radio masts may be associated with taxi offices. These are not permitted development under the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 2015 and may require a separate Planning application. In some instances, a temporary Planning permission of one year only may be granted for a taxi office in order to gauge the effects of possible interference on local radio and television transmission from any associated radio mast.