



### LED & HID Headlight Conversion Now Legal

A surprising announcement by the UK Government on headlamp conversions was made through the release by the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency as an MOT Special Notice.

#### MOT Special Notice 01-21: Headlamp Conversions

The special notice released on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021 says for class 3, 4, 5 and 7 vehicles, the MOT defect "Light source and lamp not compatible" only applies to vehicles first used on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 1986. Should a vehicle be presented for an MOT test with headlamp conversions before 1<sup>st</sup> April 1986 they must not be failed with immediate effect. Vehicles presented with converted halogen headlamp units first used on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 1986 will continue to be failed. Headlamps must comply with all other requirements of the test and headlamp aim. This is to avoid dazzle. The cars and passenger vehicles MOT inspection manual will be updated shortly.

#### Vehicles which were first used before 1<sup>st</sup> April 1986

They are no longer covered by the requirement of the **Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989**. It is therefore legal to fit LED and HID lights as upgrades as long as all other MOT Test requirements are met. To quote directly from the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website:

- **Existing headlamp conversions**  
Section 4.1.4 of the current [MOT inspection manuals](#) for both motorcycles and cars and passenger vehicles states "Existing halogen headlamp units should not be converted to be used with high intensity discharge (HID) or light emitting diode (LED) bulbs. If such a conversion has been done, you must fail the headlamp."
- **Changes to current rules**  
From 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 these rules are changing so that not all motorcycles and vehicles will fail the MOT test if their halogen headlamp units have been converted to be used with HID or LED bulbs.

#### Class 1 and 2 motorcycles

- Class 1 and 2 motorcycles must not be failed for the defect 'Light source and lamp not compatible'.
- Headlamps must comply with all other requirements of the test and headlamp aim.
- The motorcycle inspection manual will be updated shortly, and the ability to select the defect within the MOT testing service will be removed.

#### Class 3, 4, 5 and 7 vehicles

For class 3, 4, 5 and 7 vehicles, the defect "Light source and lamp not compatible" only applies to vehicles first used on or after 1 April 1986.

Vehicles presented with **converted halogen headlamp units first used on or after 1st April 1986 will continue to be failed.**

Headlamps must comply with all other requirements of the test and headlamp aim.

The cars and passenger vehicles inspection manual will be updated shortly.

Most cars, including the MGBGT V8, are included in Class 5.

#### Note

The picture shows the difference in lighting between sealed beam and halogen headlights. LEDs and HID produce a significant improvement over halogen bulbs so are much brighter.

#### Current MOT inspection manuals

Section 4.1.4 of the current MOT inspection manuals for both motorcycles and cars and passenger vehicles states 'Existing halogen headlamp units should not be converted to be used with high intensity discharge (HID) or light emitting diode (LED) bulbs. If such a conversion has been done, you must fail the headlamp.'

For classic MGBs and derivatives, the defect 'Light source and lamp not compatible' only applies to vehicles first used on or after 1st April 1986. Should a vehicle be presented for an MOT test with conversions before 1st April 1986 they must not be failed with immediate effect. Vehicles presented with converted halogen headlamp units first used on or after 1 April 1986 will continue to be failed. Headlamps must comply with all other requirements of the test and headlamp aim. The cars and passenger vehicles MOT inspection manual will be updated shortly.

#### Surprising Government U turn

In something of a surprise, the Government has announced an effective U Turn and has now aligned the MOT rules with existing UK legislation.

The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 gives various dates from which any light has to be approved and carry an approval mark and we mention many. Not mentioned is that the requirement for headlamp bulbs to carry an approval mark commenced for vehicles first used from 1st April 1986 and that means cars first used before that date do not have to use approved bulbs.

The amended MOT rules effective from 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 now permit the conversion of any headlamp from an original filament type bulb to either HID or LED conversion as long as all the other MOT requirements in respect of beam pattern and control are met. The main concern here is possible dazzle where an LED bulb does not suit the reflector. Please see MOT special notice 01-21: headlamp conversions - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

This ruling also finally gives definitive clarity to the vexed question of the legality of the wide range of HID and LED headlamp conversions and puts in place the sensible situation that if the converted lamp doesn't dazzle and complies with all MOT testing requirements it is acceptable to use on these older cars that are the most restricted in their standard headlamp performance.

Under certain circumstances, LED and HID headlight conversions are now legal.