

Guidelines for Assessing Walking Routes

Parental Responsibility

- It will be assumed that the child or young person (CYP) is to be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult where necessary.
- It is a parents' responsibility to ensure that a CYP has suitable clothing and equipment for the journey (for example, boots, wet weather clothing, reflective bands, and torch). Conditions such as muddy footpaths or lack of lighting do not mean that a route is not acceptable and it is expected that these issues can be overcome through the use of suitable clothing and equipment.
- It may be that free transport is allocated to a CYP in particular individual circumstances because the CYP cannot be accompanied by an adult as a result of special educational needs and/or a disability and/or mobility problems that prevents them from accompanying the CYP as necessary. Such a decision will not set a precedent for the route or mean that the route is deemed hazardous for other CYP.

The Council will take the following factors into account:

We will consider:
Road width, visibility and the severity of bends
Existence of 'safe refuge' including footpaths and verges, road markings at the side of the road
Existence of Rights of Way, Permitted Paths and Bridle Paths
In the absence of a footway, verge, roadside strip, and/or formal crossing points along the route, the Council will consider: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The volume of traffic at the relevant period of day2. The type of traffic and its relative speed3. Difficulty of road crossings4. The accident record along the route5. Visibility between the pedestrian and oncoming vehicles.
Nature of road (urban/rural) and driver expectation
The presence or otherwise of speed limits and other warning signs

We will not consider:
Isolation of route
Weather conditions
Transient events - road closures, construction work, seasonal weather (e.g. flooding, snow, ice)
Temporary surface conditions (e.g. mud, puddles)
Lack of street lighting
The presence of uncut hedges
Difficult terrain/arduousness of the route - steep hills are not a hazard

Footpaths

- Where there is a footpath or roadside strip, the route will normally be considered suitable. A verge, which can be stepped onto, will also be regarded normally as rendering the route safe for walkers.

Width of Road

- Even without a footpath, a road which is wider than 5.5 metres will normally be considered safe for walkers.
- A narrow road is not necessarily dangerous simply because it is narrow. If the width is less than 5.5 metres, traffic frequency and vehicle types will be considered.

Traffic Frequency

- The traffic frequency at the beginning and end of the school day is the relevant traffic frequency. This is likely to be the busiest period.
- Where a route or part of a route does not have a footway, traffic frequency will be considered together with the composition of the traffic, the width of the road and the provision of refuges for walkers.
- In the absence of a formal crossing point, where the two way (one way of a dual carriageway) traffic flow is below 240 vehicles per hour the road is assessed as safe to cross. This is based on the original County Road Safety Officers Association criteria and is equivalent to 1 vehicle every 15 seconds and allows a reasonable gap time to cross a 7m wide road at a walking speed of 3ft per second. If the site assessment shows that the traffic flow is in excess of the above, and limits the opportunity to cross, then a gap count may be undertaken.

Road Crossing

- Where a route involves crossing a road, the route will normally be considered acceptable where official crossing points are provided.
- In other cases, traffic flow, vehicle speed, road width and visibility in both directions will be taken into account.