

Staffordshire County Council
Walking Route Assessment Criteria
October 2011

The criteria for determining the availability of a walking route assumes that a child walking the route will be accompanied by a responsible adult and are as follows:

Footways and roadside strips

For all sections of road where there is a footway or roadside strip of reasonable width and condition, the route is considered to be available for that part of the journey; where a roadside strip is taken into account as part of the assessment availability will be assumed in all cases where the distance between the kerb or edge of the road and the extent of any hedge or fence is at least 1 metre. Where a footway or roadside strip exists, but is less than 1 metre in width, the route may be considered available if the Assessing Officers consider that there is sufficient width for the walk to be undertaken safely.

Where there is no suitable footway or roadside strip on roads where the maximum two-way peak traffic flow is less than 240 vehicles per hour, the route may still be considered available if

- there are verges which provide a “step off” for pedestrians when vehicles are passing, or
- if in the opinion of the Assessing Officers – having regard to the width of the carriageway, the observed speed, volume, and composition of traffic, and to visibility – the route is available. (In most such cases the route will only be normally considered available where the observed 85th percentile speed of traffic is 40 mph or less and where the 2-way peak vehicle flow is less than 240 vehicles per hour.)

In all cases it is assumed that pupils and the accompanying adult will cross a road to make use of suitable footways, roadside strips, and verges, and that they will observe the Highway Code at all times.

Crossing points

Where it is necessary to cross a road, the following circumstances will be considered:

All marked pedestrian crossings, pedestrian refuges, signal controlled junctions (with a pedestrian phase), and locations with a School Crossing Patrol will be considered available.

At locations where there is no such facility, crossing points on sections of roads with a maximum two-way peak traffic flow of greater than 240 vehicles per hour will be assessed to ensure there is a suitable crossing point where there is sufficient visibility.

When assessing a route, officers will make a note of where there is a need to cross a road along with their opinion of where it is appropriate to cross and the visibility at that point. A crossing point will also be considered available where the maximum two-way peak traffic flow is fewer than 240 vehicles per hour and there is sufficient visibility.

Other routes

An “available route” can include roads, metalled or otherwise, public byways, footpaths, bridleways, and canal towpaths. Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Public Byways and Canal Towpaths which provide a suitable walking surface free from overhanging vegetation will normally be considered to be available.

Street lighting

The presence of street lighting is not a consideration in assessing the availability of a section of route.

Road junctions and slip roads

Where the walking route crosses road junctions and slip roads, the criteria relating to crossing points will apply. The assessing officers will exercise judgement regarding the most appropriate point to cross a road at such locations.

Footway, road surface, and roadside strip condition

The assessing officer will take into account the condition of all walking surfaces; in any case where remedial work may be necessary the route will be reassessed as soon as this has been completed.

Assessment of accident data

Accident data will be taken into account for locations where it would be necessary to cross a road at an uncontrolled location, or where the assessment involves the use of sections of road where there is no footway or verge. In the case of any location where there have been 3 or more personal injury traffic accidents during the most recent available 3 years data and where no subsequent remedial work has been undertaken the assessing officer will seek advice from colleagues in the Travelwise Road Safety Unit before making any recommendation.

SUMMARY

For a route along or adjacent to a public highway to be considered available, there normally needs to be both:-

A continuous adequate footway or roadside strip on roads which carry normal to heavy traffic, or

Step offs on roads which are lightly trafficked but have adequate visibility to provide sufficient advance warning or:

On roads with low traffic flows, no step off, but adequate visibility to provide sufficient advance warning and:

If there is a need to cross roads there must be:-

Crossing facilities (Zebra or Signalised pedestrian crossings)

Pedestrian phases at traffic signals (including pedestrian refuges)

School Crossing Patrols

Traffic calming (sufficient to enable safe road crossing)

Pedestrian refuges

Or Sufficient gaps in the traffic flow and adequate visibility to allow enough opportunities to cross safely.

Assumptions

The County Council assumes that all children walking the route will be accompanied by their parent or another responsible adult, that they will wear suitable clothing and footwear, and that they will comply with all aspects of the Highway Code relating to pedestrians. Parents may want to consider the use of fluorescent or light coloured clothing and a torch.

A route will not be reassessed within ten years unless there have been substantial or significant changes which may affect its availability.

The assessment will be undertaken only from a road safety perspective and does not assess "personal security". Consideration is therefore given only to danger relevant to traffic/highway conditions.

APPENDIX A: TRANSPORT ENTITLEMENT POLICY SUMMARY – 2011/12

1. Home to School – Free Transport (not income assessed)

- Pupil is of statutory school age, resides within Staffordshire and lives within the designated catchment area of the school, or is attending their nearest suitable school (determined by the LA)
and:
- Lives over walking distance from the school (over 2 miles up to end of year 6 and over 3 miles for years 7 to 11) using the shortest available walking route.

2. Home to School – Free Transport on Income Assessed Grounds

- The family is on low income, which is defined as the pupil being registered for free school meals, or the family are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit and either:
- Pupil is in year group 7 to 11, attending one of their three nearest qualifying schools, where the school is between 2 and 6 miles from home or:
- Pupil is in year group 7 to 11, attending their nearest qualifying school which is more than 2 miles but less than 15 miles from home, preferred on the grounds of the parent's religious or philosophical beliefs. The parent must be able to demonstrate adherence to the faith of the school if it is a denominational school. For Catholic schools proof would be by either the Catholic certificate of baptism or the certificate of reception.

NB Free transport offered on income assessed grounds is subject to an annual reassessment, for each academic year. Free transport will be withdrawn at the start of the next academic year if the child no longer qualifies on low income grounds.

3. Transport for Pupils with Special Needs

- There are no specific statutory provisions relating to the transport of children with special needs. The policies are therefore as indicated above and the pupil must be attending the nearest available provision of the type which is appropriate to meet the child's needs.
- In addition, free transport will be provided if the pupil lives within walking distance of the school and would be unable to walk even if accompanied by a responsible adult because the pupil has:
 - a physical or sensory impairment which prevents them from walking safely.
 - a severe, profound or multiple learning difficulty or disability, which prevents them from walking safely.
 - a disability which places them on the autistic spectrum which prevents them from walking safely.
 - a disability, which prevents them from accessing the transport generally available from that area.

OTHER INFORMATION

4. Walking Distance

- Walking distance is measured using the shortest available walking route from the pupil address where it meets the public highway to the nearest available gate to the school site, using the Geographical Information System (GIS) held within the School Admissions and Transport Service. When considering a walking route it is assumed that the pupil will be accompanied as necessary. Where parents are working at the time their child will travel to and from school, it is a parent's duty to make other arrangements for someone to accompany their child, as necessary.

6. Mode of Transport

- Transport will normally take the form of a school bus or other vehicle hired by the LA, such as a minibus or taxi, or a travel pass on public transport. The LA will determine the mode of transport.
- Pupils may be expected to change vehicles to complete their journey.
- Children may be required to walk, accompanied as necessary, up to one mile to a pick-up point.
- Where no transport exists, or it is more cost effective a travel allowance may be offered. The allowance for use of a car, or a cycle is currently £0.25 per mile.
- Where possible the total journey time between leaving home and arriving at school will not exceed one hour, however this is not always possible, particularly for some special needs contracts or post 16 transport.

7. Temporary Vacant Seat Scheme

- Where a vehicle hired by the LA has more seats than are needed for pupils entitled to free or subsidised transport, places may be made available to other pupils under this scheme.
- The cost of purchasing a seat under the scheme is £430 per annum (2011/12). This can be paid in instalments. The charge is reviewed annually. The charge for 2012/13 will be £500.
- The provision may be removed if the seat is required for a child or student entitled to transport assistance. Seats are therefore not guaranteed to be available for purchase, throughout a child's education at the school, and may have to be withdrawn at short notice.

8. LA Contacts

- Authorising requests for transport – entitlement to transport to mainstream schools is authorised by the School Admissions and Transport Service
- Entitlement to transport for a pupil with special needs, including a statemented pupil with special transport needs in mainstream education, is authorised by the Senior Assessment Officer at the District Education Office.
- Entitlement to assistance for post 16 students is authorised by the Integrated Transport and Planning Unit.
- Applications for the Temporary Vacant Seat Scheme are administered by the Integrated Transport and Planning Unit.
- The issuing of bus passes, public transport enquiries and all day to day operational issues relating to transport are dealt with by the Integrated Transport and Planning Unit.
- Further details relating to the Home to School Transport policy and all relevant contact details can be found on our website:
www.staffordshire.gov.uk/schooltransport

School Admissions and Transport Service - email

transport.entitlement@staffordshire.gov.uk telephone 01785 278593

Integrated Transport and Planning Unit

Email student.transport@staffordshire.gov.uk

West of county including Stone, Stafford and South Staffs – 01785 278718 or 278719

East of county including Lichfield, Tamworth and Uttoxeter – 01785 278678

North of county including Ashley, Leek and Cheadle – 01785 278679

District Education Offices

Newcastle and Moorlands – 01782 297524

Stafford and South Staffs – 01785 356949

Lichfield and Cannock – 01543 512050

East Staffs and Tamworth – 01283 239755

Appendix B – Definitions

Before an assessment of any routes is made assessors should ensure they are familiar with the following definitions.

Footway

A 'footway' or roadside strip is one which is of adequate useable walking width for the circumstances and is normally defined as one 'at least one metre wide, and in reasonable condition, suitable for walking on'. (Useable – clear of overgrowth i.e. shrubs/trees overhanging the footway.)

Step-off

The term 'step-off' refers to the facility for pedestrians to easily be able to 'step off' clear of the roadway onto a reasonably even and firm surface.

Available Route

An 'available route' is a road, metalled or otherwise, and footpaths, pathways, bridleway, RUPPs (roads used as public paths), public roads or public land maintained by the local authority.

Highway

'Highway' includes all 'public rights of way' (footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic and 'roads used as public paths') and all 'public roads' (whether surfaced or unsurfaced).

Public Rights

'Public Rights of Way' are legally classified as footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic and roads used as public paths. Many public rights of way have come into existence through 'deemed dedication' at common law or under the provisions of the Highways Act 1980.

Public Footpath

A 'public footpath' is a highway over which the right of way is on foot only. It is a civil wrong to ride a bicycle or a horse on a footpath. The user could be sued by the landowner for trespass or nuisance. It is a criminal offence under Section 34 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to drive a motorised vehicle on a footpath.

Public Bridleway

A 'public bridleway' is a highway over which the right of way is not only on/by foot, on horse, donkey or mule and on a bicycle. Cyclists must give way to walkers and riders. A horse, donkey or mule must also be led. There may

also be a right to drive animals other than horses. It is a criminal offence to drive a motor vehicle on a bridleway.

Public Byway

A 'public byway open to all traffic' (BOAT) (often open to all traffic simply termed 'byway') is a highway over which the right of way is on foot, horseback or bicycle, or by wheeled vehicles of all kinds including horse-drawn and motorised vehicles. Any such vehicles must be properly taxed and fit for use on the public roads. Their drivers must be licensed and insured. Byways open to all traffic differ from roads in that they are primarily used for walking and riding rather than use by vehicles.

Roads used as Public Paths

Where 'roads used as public paths' (RUPPs) are still recorded, highway authorities are under a duty to reclassify them as bridleways or byways open to all traffic or footpaths, according to the public rights which already exist over them. In the meantime they must have at least bridleway status. Landowners must be notified of any reclassification proposal.

Public Roads

Public roads include motorways, trunk roads, A, B and C (classified) roads, and many other minor (unclassified) roads which may or may not be surfaced with tarmac or stone. Public roads primarily carry vehicles, but they may also be used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders if the status of the road allows.

Green Lane

The term 'green lane' has no legal meaning. It simply describes an unsurfaced path which may or may not also be a highway (e.g. an unsurfaced public road, byway open to all traffic, bridleway or footpath).

A Child Journey

Case law presumes that children will be accompanied as necessary, as stated in the Education Act 1996 [Section 504(4)].

Behaviour of 'Road User'

It is presumed that all road users will behave reasonably and responsibly.