

Staffordshire County Council Walking Route Assessment Criteria July 2016

The home to school travel policy can be found in full at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/schooltransport . Routes availability assessments will only be carried out on the catchment or nearest suitable school.

Assumptions

As laid down in law the County Council assumes that all pupils will be accompanied by their parent or another responsible adult as necessary, and it is for the parent to arrange such accompaniment. It is presumed that all road users will behave reasonably and responsibly and that they will wear suitable clothing and footwear. 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.

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 there is no suitable footway or roadside strip the route may still be considered available if there are verges which provide a ‘step off’ for pedestrians when vehicles are passing, and adequate sight lines to provide sufficient advance warning of approaching traffic. The width of the carriageway, traffic speed, type of traffic and traffic volume will also be taken into account. 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.

Many available routes may lie along roads that have neither footway nor verge. On such roads, we will consider if the width of the carriageway, traffic volume, traffic speed and composition (such as frequent long/heavy goods vehicles) and visibility (i.e. sharp bends with high hedgerows or other obstructions to visibility) is sufficient to allow space and time to step aside for vehicles to pass.

Crossing points

Where it is necessary to cross a road 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 will be assessed to ensure there is a suitable crossing point with sufficient visibility and traffic gaps to cross in reasonable safety.

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.

Available route

An available route may 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 may also be included where we consider this appropriate (see Appendix A – definitions).

Street lighting

The presence or absence of street lighting is part of the overall assessment of the availability of a route. The absence of street lighting is not a factor on its own that would determine a route to be unavailable.

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 for the route over the previous 3 years will be taken into consideration where available.

SUMMARY

For a route along or adjacent to a public highway to be considered available, there normally needs to be a continuous adequate footway or roadside strip or step offs/step aside with adequate visibility to provide sufficient advance warning, taking into consideration the width of the carriageway, traffic speed, type of traffic and traffic volume

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 visibility and traffic gaps to cross in reasonable safety.

Appendix A – Definitions

Available Route

An available route includes any highway, public right of way, or other path or track over which public access is permitted and the use of which does not constitute a trespass. This includes roads, surfaced or unsurfaced, footpaths, canal towpaths, bridleways or public land.

Footway

A footway or roadside strip is one that is of adequate usable walking width for the circumstances. To be usable it should be clear of overgrowth, i.e. shrubs and trees obstructing the footway.

Highway

Highway includes all public rights of way and public roads.

Step-off

A step-off is where pedestrians can step clear of the roadway onto a reasonably even and firm surface such as a roadside verge. On roads that have neither footway nor verge, we will consider if the width of the carriageway, traffic volume, traffic speed and composition (such as frequent long/heavy goods vehicles) and visibility (i.e. sharp bends with high hedgerows or other obstructions to visibility) is sufficient to allow space and time to step aside for vehicles to pass.

Public Bridleway

Bridleways are highways over which the right of way is on foot, bicycle or on horseback

Public Byway

Byways are open to all traffic however they are primarily used for walking and riding.

Public Footpath

Footpaths are highways over which the right of way is on foot only.

Public Rights of Way

Public Rights of Way are public footpaths, bridleways and byways open to all traffic

Public Roads

Public roads include motorways, trunk roads, A, B and C (classified) roads as well as other unclassified roads that may or may not be surfaced.