

RCT School Walking Route Assessment

Hirwaun to YG Rhydywaun

March 2025





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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Policy Alignment	2
3. Procedures	4
4. Site Location & Walking Route	5
5. Pedestrian / Traffic Surveys	18
6. Social Issues	20
7. Collision Data	21
8. Route Overview	22
9. Conclusions and Recommendations	24

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Redstart has been commissioned by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to undertake an assessment to determine the availability of the following walked routes in Hirwaun:
- **Main Route** – Hirwaun to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun.
 - **Sub Route 1** – Penderyn Road to Brecon Road (joins the **Main Route** to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun).
- 1.2 A route is considered to be available and safe for a learner to walk alone or, if appropriate for the age of the learner, accompanied by an adult. In determining the comparative safety of a walking route, an assessment of the risks that escorting parents/guardians and learners might encounter along the route between home and school needs to be made.
- 1.3 Such assessments will follow the Welsh Government Statutory Provisions on the Risk Assessment of Walked Routes to School, as laid down within the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014.

2. Policy Alignment

- 2.1 The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 sets out the legal framework within which travel provisions are made for learners travelling from home to school. In June 2014 the Welsh Government published the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance to aid local authorities in the implementation of the Measure.
- 2.2 Local authorities are under a legal duty to assess the travel needs of learners who walk to school. The Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance enables local authorities to determine whether a route to school is 'available' (safe) to walk or is deemed 'unavailable' (unsafe) and the safeguards that could be put in place to ensure that the route is or can become 'available' (safe) to walk.
- 2.3 The Welsh Government document requires the following issues to be considered in assessing a route;

For a route to be classed as available (safe) the route needs to be;

- A continuous adequate footway on roads which carry medium to heavy traffic; **or**
- "Step offs" on roads which have low traffic flow but adequate sight lines to provide sufficient advance warning to drivers and pedestrians; **or**
- On roads with very low traffic flow, no "step offs", but sufficient good sight lines to provide adequate advance warning.

If there is a need to crossroads it is recommended that there should be one of the following safety measures:

- Pedestrian refuge; **or**
- Visibility – it should be good enough to allow vehicles to stop safely (given the 85th percentile speed rule, vehicle stopping distances are as those set out in the Highway Code); **or**
- Sufficient gaps in the traffic flow and sight line to allow enough opportunities to cross safely; **or**
- Sufficient crossing facilities (for example, zebra, pelican crossings); **or**
- Sufficient pedestrian phases at traffic lights (including necessary refuges); **or**
- Sufficient School Crossing Patrols (lollipop people).

- 2.4 The following information should be considered as detailed in the Learner Travel document and summarised below;
- a) Speed limits around or near schools;
 - b) Two-way traffic flows recorded in Passenger Car Units (PCUs) - low traffic flow is determined below 400 vehicles in a 1-hour period, medium traffic flows between 400 to 840 and heavy traffic flows over 840 vehicles per hour. Below 240 vehicles per hour is assessed as safe to cross, equivalent to 1 vehicle every 15 seconds;
 - c) An analysis of gaps in traffic during 5 consecutive minutes is required. 4 gaps within such a 5-minute period is considered acceptable. At a walking speed of 1 metre per second most people will be able to cross two lanes of normal urban traffic in 4 to 6 seconds whilst others may need a larger gap of around 10 to 12 seconds;
 - d) A minimum of previous collision history for 3 years;
 - e) Footpath / footway width, condition, and visibility. On roads of low traffic flow a verge that can be stepped on by a child and accompanying parent when traffic is passing can normally be assumed to provide an available route;
 - f) Where roads need to be crossed, it is recommended that the availability of crossing facilities such as central refuges, pedestrian crossings or traffic signals be taken into consideration;
 - g) Potential flooding and, if necessary, safety features including signing, lighting, safety barriers should be considered;
 - h) Any planned changes to the area that may have an impact on pedestrian routes;
 - i) Level crossings;
 - j) Social danger caused by any potential anti-social behaviour;
 - k) Any changes to the characteristics of the people walking the route.
- 2.5 Social Danger is open to different interpretations and is subjective. In terms of quantifying social danger, the existence of any such dangers should be supported by evidence.
- 2.6 In conducting risk assessments, it is recommended that local authorities work in partnership with organisations/agencies which have expertise in (including responsibility for) tackling and quantifying social danger. The Police or Police Community Support Officers have responsibility for crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour, whilst the Local Safeguarding Children Boards have responsibility for safeguarding/child protection matters.
- 2.7 Their involvement includes the exchange of information, assessment, and management of any such risks. Therefore, Redstart have not been commissioned to identify issues of social dangers caused by anti-social behaviour.

3. Procedures

3.1 Site Visit

3.1.1 A walking site assessment was undertaken to investigate the route and to identify hazards / possible remedial works required in order to provide a safe walking route. The route was walked at times to capture typical traffic conditions during the time that school children were walking the route.

3.1.2 Listed below are examples of typical site hazards that will be considered as a result of the walking assessment:

- Inter-visibility between drivers and pedestrians, both along the route and at minor junctions;
- Potentially high volumes of traffic at crossing points and types of vehicles using the route;
- Condition of footway surface, usable width, and connectivity between adjacent footways;
- Any overgrown foliage hindering pedestrian movements/narrowing the usable width;
- Vehicles parking on the footway causing an obstruction/narrowing the usable width.

3.2 Information to be Provided

3.2.1 The following information is to be provided as part of the assessment:

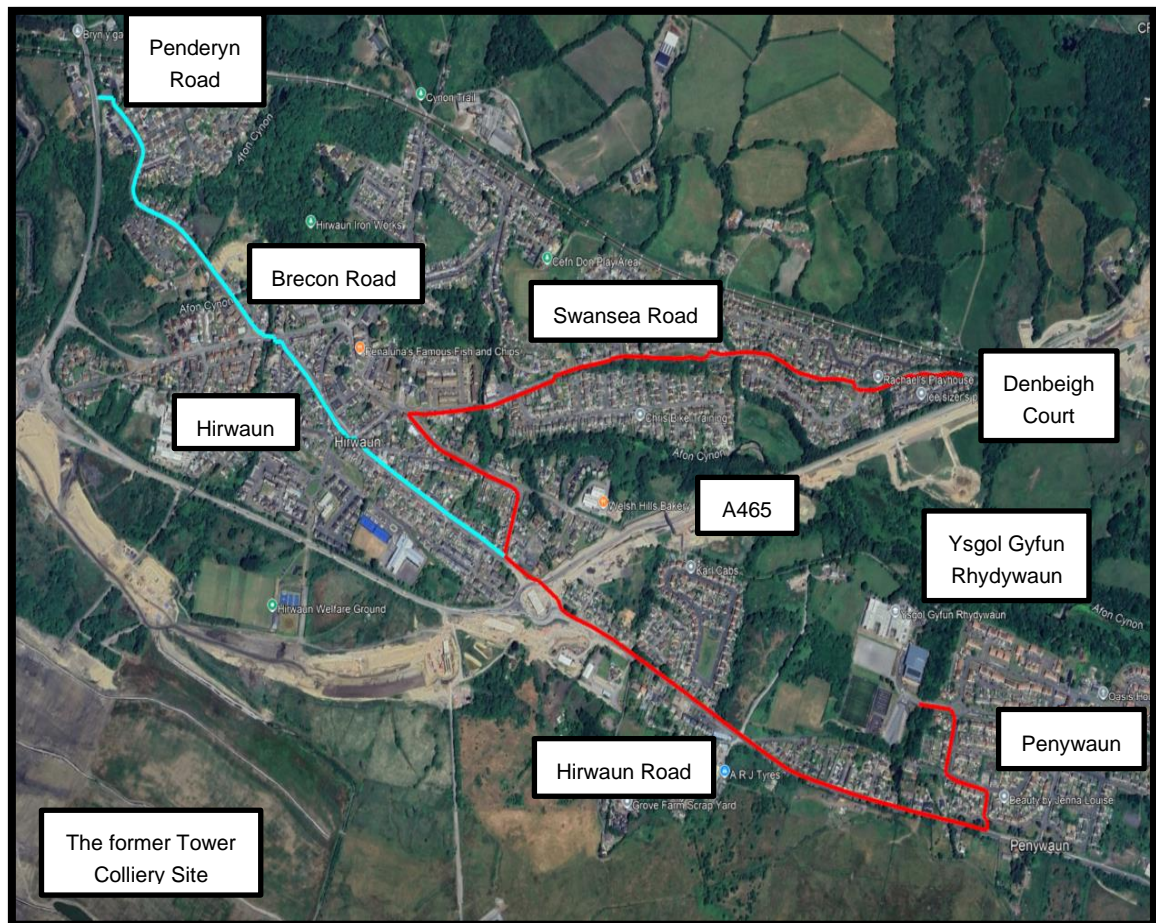
- a) A plan showing the routes assessed;
- b) A report identifying potential hazards/risks and possible remediation for each potential hazard identified.

4. Site Location & Walking Route

4.1 Route Overview (Main Route and adjoining Sub Routes)

- 4.1.1 The **Main Route** commences to the east of Hirwaun and ends at Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun. A further Sub Route has also been assessed as part of the report, with both routes shown in **Image 4.1** below.

Image 4.1 – Routes to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun (Image © 2024 Airbus)



- **Main Route** - Denbeigh Court to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun via, Denbeigh Court, Maesycynon, Swansea Road, Tramway, Cynon Terrace, Brecon Road, Hirwaun Road, Heol Uchaf, Derwyn, Lawrence Avenue, Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun.
- **Sub Route** – Penderyn Road to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun via, Penderyn Road, Rhigos Road, Brecon Road (joins the **Main Route** to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun).

4.2 **Main Route** - Denbeigh Court to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun

- 4.2.1 There are continuous lengths of footway, with crossing opportunities and street lighting present along the length of the route. Generally, footways along the route are sufficiently wide allowing pedestrians to pass each other without issue. This reduces for some short sections with the need for pedestrians to either give way to each other or cross to the other side of the road. The route between YG Rhydywaun and both Hirwaun and Penderyn are already available and in daily use. Links to / from Primary Schools in these areas are also already available and in daily use. Where side roads were required to be crossed vehicular/pedestrian conflict was considered low risk.
- 4.2.2 Connectivity between footways is provided throughout by zebra, signal control and other defined uncontrolled crossing points.
- 4.2.3 The speed limit along this route varies between a 20mph and 30mph, with vehicle flows observed to be low to moderate along the residential areas and moderate to high along the A4059 Hirwaun Road.
- 4.2.4 In places, vegetation needs to be cleared to improve the usable footway width and visibility for pedestrians
- 4.2.5 Photographs 4.1 to 4.16 were taken along the walking route and are shown below.

Photograph 4.1 – Start of the route from Denbeigh Court with footway available along the southern side of Swansea Road



Photograph 4.2 – Uncontrolled crossing point linking the northern and southern footways and bus stops across Swansea Road



Photograph 4.3 – Parked vehicles reducing visibility to the uncontrolled crossing point on Maesycynon



Photograph 4.4 – Uncontrolled crossing point linking the northern and southern footways to the bus stops on Swansea Road



Photograph 4.5 – On street parking restricting access to uncontrolled crossing point at the junction with Bryncynon



Photographs 4.6 & 4.7 – Footway narrowing along Swansea Road outside nos. 35-40, where good visibility, low traffic flows and speeds allowed pedestrians to step into the carriageway to pass one another when required



Photograph 4.8 – Vehicles parked on footway causing an obstruction and visibility issues to uncontrolled crossing point along Swansea Road



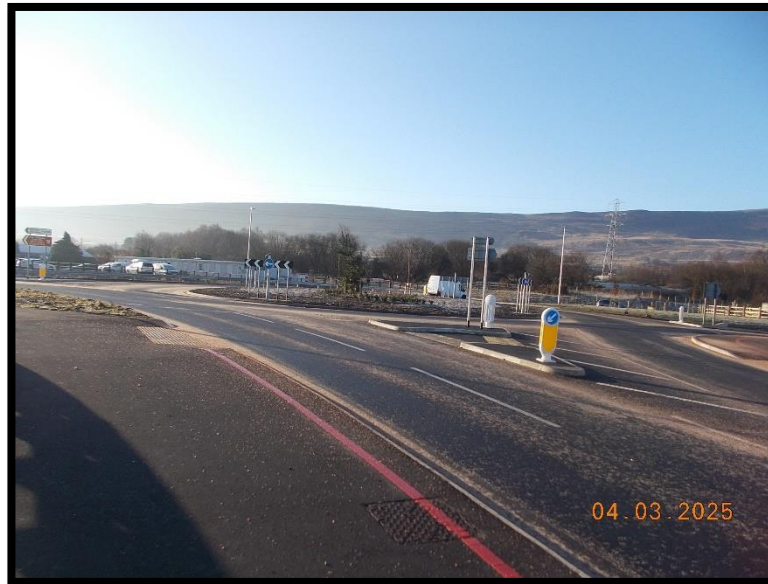
Photograph 4.9 – Trees overhanging the footway on Merthyr Road



Photograph 4.10 – Abrupt end to the footway on Cynon Terrace, however it is noted that there is an available footway opposite with crossing opportunities before this point is reached



Photograph 4.11 – Uncontrolled crossing point with pedestrian refuge link to the new active travel route at the roundabout connecting with the Heads of the Valleys Road



Photograph 4.12 – Signal controlled crossing on Hirwaun Road near the junction with Trenant



Photograph 4.13 – Uncontrolled crossing point linking the bus stop from the northern and southern footways along Hirwaun Road



Photograph 4.14 – Footway link from Hirwaun Road to Perthlwyd and Heol Uchaf



Photograph 4.15 – Vehicles parked on Heol Uchaf footways reducing the usable width



Photograph 4.16 – Footway approach to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun school gates



4.3 Sub Route – Penderyn Road to Brecon Road (joins the Main Route to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun)

- 4.3.1 There are continuous lengths of footway, with crossing opportunities and street lighting present along the length of the route. Generally, footways along the route are sufficiently wide allowing pedestrians to pass each other without issue. This reduces for some short sections with informal 'pedestrian give way sections' or by crossing to the other side of the road. The route between Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun and both Hirwaun and Penderyn are already available and in daily use. Links to / from Primary Schools in these areas are also already available and in daily use.
- 4.3.2 Where side roads were required to be crossed vehicular/pedestrian conflict was considered low risk.
- 4.3.3 Connectivity between footways is provided throughout by zebra, signal control and other defined uncontrolled crossing points.
- 4.3.4 The speed limit throughout this sub route is 20mph with vehicle flows observed to be low to moderate.
- 4.3.5 Photographs 4.17 to 4.23 were taken along the walking route and are shown below.

Photograph 4.17 – Footway ramp and steps linking the A4059 with Penderyn Road



Photograph 4.18 – Overgrown trees and vegetation narrowing the usable footway width on Bute Terrace



Photograph 4.19 – Proposed new signalised crossing (under construction at the time of the assessment) at Rhigos Road



Photograph 4.20 – Signalised crossing on Brecon Road (near the Co-Op)



Photograph 4.21 – Existing Zebra crossing and footway (undergoing improvement works at the time of the assessment) outside the Prince of Wales (PH) on Brecon Road



Photograph 4.22 – Uncontrolled crossings with vehicles parking on the wide footways along Brecon Road reducing the usable width.



Photograph 4.23 - Vehicles parking on the wide footways along Brecon Road reducing the usable width.



5. Pedestrian / Traffic Surveys

- 5.1 Learner Travel Guidance states: Where roads need to be crossed, it is recommended that the availability of crossing facilities such as central refuges, pedestrian crossings or traffic signals be taken into consideration. Where there are no crossing facilities, the route's risk assessment ought to consider each required road crossing, bearing in mind traffic speed and flows, sight lines etc.
- 5.2 If there is a need to cross roads there ought to be:
- Sufficient gaps in the traffic flow and sight lines to allow enough opportunities to cross safely. The gap time analysis should be used where necessary **or**
 - Pedestrian refuges **or**
 - Crossing facilities (e.g., zebra, pelican, puffin crossing etc.) **or**
 - Pedestrian phase at traffic lights **or**
 - School Crossing Patrol.
- 5.3 If a road needs to be crossed the visibility at the location should allow a vehicle to stop, given the 85th percentile speed (the speed at which 85% of the vehicles travel below) of the traffic flow. Vehicle stopping distances should be taken as those given in the Highway Code. In many rural areas, the exercise of continuous judgement is likely to be required. No criteria can provide all the guidance or answers to every situation that may be encountered.
- 5.4 If roads have to be crossed to use a footway or to improve sight lines, it may be necessary to advise on safe crossing places. On some country roads the footway may not be continuous.
- 5.5 An informed judgement will have to be made about the availability of "step off" points.
- 5.6 The difficulty of crossing at a site can be assessed by considering the number of gaps in the traffic flow that are acceptable to pedestrians. Free flowing traffic may provide gaps randomly and fairly frequently, but speeds tend to be higher, and gaps would need to be longer in order to cross the road safely.
- 5.7 An acceptable gap to cross from kerb to kerb varies with each person. Most people will be able to cross two lanes of normal urban traffic in 4 to 6 seconds. Others may need larger gaps of around 10 to 12 seconds.
- 5.8 It is recommended that the survey records the number of gaps in each 5 minute period that are longer than the road crossing time, using one metre per second as the walking speed. Four gaps in each 5 minute period indicate a road that can be crossed without too much delay. Longer gaps could be classified as multiple gaps rather than as just 1 gap.
- 5.9 The Learner Travel Statutory Guidance and Operational Guidance – June 2014 outlines what is required when assessing Traffic Flow on Roads.
- 5.9.1 Low Traffic flow occurs on roads that have a traffic flow below 400 vehicles in a 1 hour period; medium traffic flow occurs on roads with traffic flow between 400 to 840 vehicle per hour; and heavy traffic flow occurs on roads with a traffic flow of over 840 vehicles per hour.

- 5.9.2 Most people will be able to cross two lanes of normal urban traffic in 4 to 6 seconds. Four such gaps within a 5 minute period are considered acceptable. For this report, we have used 6 seconds and where the gap is more than or equal to 12 seconds this has been counted as 2 or more gaps.
- 5.10 The walking assessment concluded that either:
- Footways presented as well connected, with sufficient crossing facilities present (both controlled and uncontrolled) and pedestrian phases at traffic lights for pedestrians to cross safely, **or**
 - Where there are no crossing facilities present, the report has considered traffic flows & speeds, sight lines and where footways and or step-offs are available to allow pedestrians to wait until conditions are such that it is safe to cross.

As a result, no further traffic flows or gap survey information was requested.

6. Social Issues

- 6.1 No areas along the route were noted or showed signs of Anti-Social Behaviour during the times when school children would be walking to school.
- 6.2 There may be other issues that are not obvious from a walked assessment, which may be identified by other user groups. The local authority would need to consider these aspects with the Police and other safeguarding agencies.

7. Collision Data

- 7.1 Pedestrian collision data for the 5 years from 2020 to 2024 (verified) have been investigated through Crashmap.co.uk and Police Recorded Road Collision data. Note that the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance requires assessors to incorporate 3 years of collision history into the assessment of a route.
- 7.2 The collision data has been investigated during the times that school children would be walking the route to capture typical traffic conditions during the time. These times have been set at 07:00 – 09:30 for the AM journey, and 14:30 – 17:00 for the PM journey.
- 7.3 There were no collisions on the main route during the period assessed.
- 7.4 The following collision occurred on the [Sub Route](#)
- One Fatal collision on Brecon Road. The casualty of this collision was a child pedestrian. Date 29/02/2024.

8. Route Overview

8.1 Main Route – Denbeigh Court to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun

- 8.1.1 The route lies within 20mph and 30mph speed limits.
- 8.1.2 There are footways present in reasonable condition along the route. Some sections of footway along Swansea Road and Cynon Terrace were noted to end abruptly. Pedestrians will be required to cross the carriageway at these locations. Visibility is good and there were sufficient gaps in traffic that met the criteria outlined in the Learner Travel Guidance.
- 8.1.3 Footway widths are reduced due to overhanging trees and overgrown vegetation along sections of the route on Swansea Road and Merthyr Road . Ongoing maintenance is required to maximise footway width and ensure pedestrians can pass one another safely.
- 8.1.4 There are discrete sections of footway along the northern side of Swansea Road where the footway width reduces. Pedestrians will be required to step into the carriageway to pass one another at this location. Visibility is good and there were sufficient gaps in traffic that met the criteria outlined in the Learner Travel Guidance.
- 8.1.5 On street parking obstructs visibility along the walking route and vehicles parking on the footways along Swansea Road, Merthyr Road and Tramway restricts access. Local neighbourhood policing teams are working with residents to help reduce the risks posed to pedestrians by indiscriminately parked vehicles.
- 8.1.6 Street lighting is present throughout the route, although ongoing tree maintenance is required in some areas to ensure that lighting levels are not compromised.
- 8.1.7 Investigation into pedestrian collisions has been undertaken between 2020 and 2024. There were no collisions that involved pedestrians during the times assessed.
- 8.1.8 At side roads, the observed conditions were considered to provide a safe environment for pedestrians to cross with vehicular / pedestrian conflict assessed to be low risk noting sufficient crossing gaps to comply with Learner Travel Guidance. At the time of the site visit, when pedestrians were observed to cross, they were able to do so without issue.
- 8.1.9 There are controlled crossing facilities at the following locations:
- Signalised Crossing – Outside on Hirwaun Road.
- 8.1.10 There are no areas that raised concerns for anti-social behaviour during the site walkover visit along the Sub Route.
- 8.1.11 Traffic data and pedestrian crossing gap analysis were not deemed to be required, as the walking route appeared well catered for by controlled crossings for pedestrians wishing to cross the main roads.

8.2 Sub Route – Penderyn Road to Brecon Road (joins the Main Route to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun)

- 8.2.1 The route lies within 20mph and 30mph speed limits.
- 8.2.2 There are continuous sections of footway present in reasonable condition along the route.
- 8.2.3 There are instances of vehicles parking on the footways along sections of the route which can also impact upon pedestrian comfort levels. Local neighbourhood policing teams are working with residents to help reduce the risks posed to pedestrians by indiscriminately parked vehicles.
- 8.2.4 Trees and bushes were observed to be overhanging localised sections of footway along the route. Ongoing maintenance is required to maximise footway width and ensure pedestrians can pass one another safely.
- 8.2.5 Street lighting is present throughout the route, although ongoing tree maintenance is required in some areas to ensure that lighting levels are not compromised.
- 8.2.6 Investigation into collisions that resulted in a pedestrian casualty for the 5 years between 2020 and 2024 has been undertaken. The data shows that 1 collision resulted in 1 fatal pedestrian casualty during the period assessed.
- 8.2.7 At side roads, the observed conditions were considered to provide a safe environment for pedestrians to cross with vehicular / pedestrian conflict assessed to be low risk noting sufficient crossing gaps to comply with Learner Travel Guidance. At the time of the site visit, when pedestrians were observed to cross, they were able to do so without issue.
- 8.2.8 There are controlled crossing facilities at the following locations:
- Signalised Crossing (currently under construction) – Outside no. 1 Rhigos Road.
 - Zebra Crossing – Outside no. 80 Brecon Road.
 - Zebra Crossing – Outside the Prince of Wales (PH) on Brecon Road.
- 8.2.9 There are no areas that raised concerns for anti-social behaviour during the site walkover visit along the Sub Route.
- 8.2.10 Traffic data and pedestrian crossing gap analysis were not deemed to be required, as the walking route appeared well catered for by uncontrolled and controlled crossings for pedestrians wishing to cross the main roads.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 **Main Route** – Denbeigh Court to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun

9.1.1 The route meets the criteria and is considered available to walk in line with the Learner Travel guidelines.

9.1.2 Further enhancements to the walked route **should be considered** to improve conditions for route users and for the route to become available, these include the following:

- Monitor footway obstructions. Where footways widths and visibility to crossing points continue to be restricted by parked cars, action be taken in conjunction with the appropriate Council Department / local neighbourhood policing teams.

9.1.3 Further enhancements to the walked route **could be considered** to improve conditions for route users. These include the following:

- Monitor the condition of overhanging trees and foliage. Where trees and/or foliage overhang or encroach into footways, these areas should be cut back to improve the usable width, sight lines and natural surveillance. In addition to this leaf debris should be removed from footways when required.

9.2 **Sub Route** – Penderyn Road to Brecon Road (joins the **Main Route** to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun)

9.2.1 The sub route meets the criteria and is considered available to walk in line with the Learner Travel guidelines.

9.2.2 Further enhancements to the walked route **could be considered** to improve conditions for route users. These include the following:

- Monitor the condition of overhanging trees and foliage. Where trees and/or foliage overhang or encroach into footways, these areas should be cut back to improve the usable width, sight lines and natural surveillance. In addition to this leaf debris should be removed from footways when required.
- Monitor footway obstructions. Where footways widths continue to be restricted parked cars, action be taken in conjunction with the appropriate Council Department / local neighbourhood policing teams.

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