

RCT School Walking Route Assessment

Tylorstown to Ferndale Community School

March 2025





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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Redstart has been commissioned by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCT) to undertake an assessment to determine the availability of the walked route between Tylorstown Surgery and Ferndale Community School.
- 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 cross roads 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

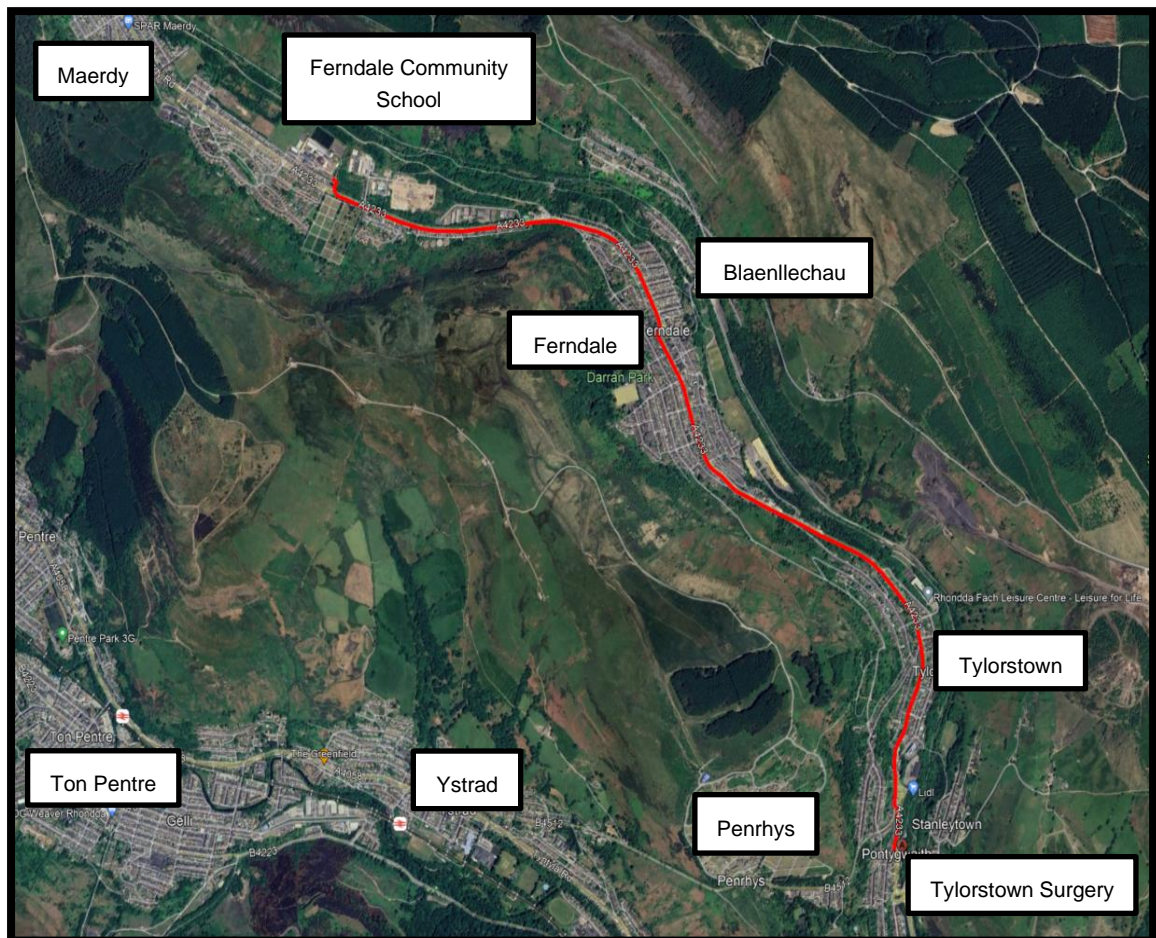
- 3.2.1 The following information is to be provided as part of the assessment:
- a) A plan showing the routes assessed;
 - b) A report identifying potential hazards/risks and possible remediation for each potential hazard identified.

4. Site Location & Walking Route

4.1 Route Overview

- 4.1.1 The **Main Route** commences at Tylorstown Surgery CF43 3HB, which is situated on the A4233 Ferndale Road, Tylorstown. The route proceeds along the following roads Ferndale Road, Pleasant View, East Road, Duffryn Street, High Street, Rhondda Road, North Road, The Parade to the gate of Ferndale Community School, Excelsior Terrace, Maerdy, Ferndale CF43 4AR, as shown in **Image 4.1** below. There are continuous lengths of footway, with crossing opportunities and street lighting present along its length.

Image 4.1 – Tylorstown Surgery to Ferndale Community School (Image © 2024 Airbus)



- 4.1.2 Footways along the route are sufficiently wide allowing pedestrians to pass each other without issue. Secondary pupils are currently walking part of this route, and from Ferndale Clinic it is already available and in daily use. Links to / from Primary Schools in Tylorstown, Darran Park and Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwyn Y Forwyn are already available and in daily use.
- 4.1.3 Where side roads were required to be crossed vehicular/pedestrian conflict was considered low risk.

- 4.1.4 Connectivity between footways is provided throughout by zebra, signal control, and/or other defined uncontrolled crossing points.
- 4.1.5 Speed limits vary along the routes from 20mph to 30mph, however a 20mph speed limit is in place along most of the route and vehicle flows were noted to be moderate.
- 4.1.6 In places, vegetation needed clearance to improve the usable footway width and visibility for pedestrians.
- 4.1.7 Photographs 4.1 to 4.18 taken along the walking route are shown below:

Photograph 4.1 – Overhanging vegetation at the bus stop on Ferndale Road



Photograph 4.2 – Vehicle parking into the junction of Pleasant View with the A4233 Ferndale Road.



Photograph 4.3 – Uncontrolled crossing near the Lidl's roundabout on the A4233 East Road



Photograph 4.4 – Signal controlled crossing near the junction of Edmondes Street with the A4233 East Road



Photograph 4.5 – Uncontrolled crossing point outside no.54 on the A4233 East Road



Photograph 4.6 – Uncontrolled crossing at the junction of Brynbedw Road and the A4233 East Road



Photograph 4.7 – Overhanging vegetation along the western footway of the A4233 East Road



Photograph 4.8 – Zebra controlled crossing near the junction of Brook Street and the A4233 Dyffryn Street



Photograph 4.9 – Signal controlled outside the Co-Op on the A4233 High Street



Photograph 4.10 – Zebra controlled crossing near the Arts Factory on the A4233 Strand



Photograph 4.11 – Zebra crossing opposite the Hwb on the A4233 Strand



Photograph 4.12 – Uncontrolled crossing at the junction of Rhondda Road with the A4233 North Road



**Photograph 4.13 – Overhanging trees and vegetation along the A4233 The Parade
opposite the Murco Garage**



Photograph 4.14 – On street parking on the footway along the A4233 Ffaldau Terrace



Photograph 4.15 – Constrained footway width on the southern footway of Ffaldau Terrace (back-to-back kerbs and drainage channel)



Photograph 4.16 – Zebra crossing outside Ferndale Cemetery.



Photograph 4.17 – Zebra crossing outside Ferndale Cemetery showing trees overhanging the footway and obscuring the crossing beacon.



Photograph 4.18 – Ferndale Community School gated entrance.



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 one gap.
- 5.9 With the above criteria in mind, traffic surveys were undertaken to establish flows, 85th%tile speeds and crossing gaps at the following locations:

- 5.9.1 The uncontrolled crossing on the approach to the A4233 Lidl roundabout from Penrhys Road. Whilst pedestrians are required to cross at this location to achieve connectivity between adjacent footways, they are guided behind the bus stop in Pleasant View to the bus stop in Penrhys Road, where the crossing is at its narrowest with improved visibility.



- 5.10 RCT Transport Officers undertook traffic counts at this location on Penrhys Road.
- 5.11 The Learner Travel Statutory Guidance and Operational Guidance June 2014, outlines what is required when assessing Traffic Flow on Roads.
- 5.11.1 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.
- 5.11.2 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.
- 5.12 Traffic counts were undertaken at this location on 10th September 2024, with counts carried out between 07:30 and 08:30 and 15:15 and 16:15. In accordance with Learner Travel Guidance the period that recorded the highest traffic volumes has been "revisited" to confirm reliability of data:
- 5.12.1 **Location – B4512 Penrhys Road on the downhill approach to the Lidl Roundabout - 10/09/2024**
- ❖ **AM:** 556 vehicles per hour, medium traffic flow. Gaps of 6 seconds during each 5-minute period ranged from 4 to 29, with a total of 178 gaps over the 1-hour period.
 - ❖ **PM:** 679 vehicles per hour, medium traffic flow. Gaps of 6 seconds during each 5-minute periods ranged from 5 to 16, with a total of 124 gaps over the 1-hour period.
- 5.12.2 **Location – B4512 Penrhys Road on the downhill approach to the Lidl Roundabout - 12/09/2024**
- ❖ **PM:** 694 vehicles per hour, medium traffic flow. Gaps of 6 seconds during each 5-minute periods ranged from 7 to 12, with a total of 116 gaps over the 1-hour period.

The traffic flows and gaps at this location for both AM and PM meet the criteria outlined in the Learner Travel Guidance.

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 that involved pedestrians along the route during the period assessed.

8. Route Overview

- 8.1 The route lies within a 20mph speed limit.
- 8.2 There are continuous footways present in reasonable condition along the route.
- 8.3 Trees were observed to be overhanging the footway at the following locations:
- The footway at the bus stop on Ferndale Road, opposite Tylertown Surgery.
 - The southern footway along the A4233 East Road.
 - The southern footway along the A4233 North Road.
 - The southern footway at the zebra crossing on the A4233 Highfield Road.
- 8.4 Here is a busy road crossing at the junction of Pleasant View with the A4233, where it is noted vehicles park right up to the junction entrance. This blocks pedestrian crossing movements across the junction, with no available footway present on the other side of the road. However, with visibility generally good and low traffic levels turning into and out of Pleasant View, the crossing can be made more safely by doing so at right angles. Alternatively, the crossing of the junction at this location can be avoided by walking up the steps between Ferndale Road and Deri Terrace to join Pleasant View and then cross away from the junction.
- 8.5 There are discrete sections along the A4233 where parking on footways restricts the usable footway width. Vehicles obstructing footways can also impact upon walking routes, but the local neighbourhood policing teams are working with residents to help reduce the risks posed to pedestrians by indiscriminately parked vehicles.
- 8.6 Street lighting is present throughout the route although ongoing tree maintenance is required in some areas to ensure that lighting levels are not compromised.
- 8.7 No occurrences of ant-social behaviour have been noted along the scheme corridor.
- 8.8 Investigation into pedestrian collisions has been undertaken between 2020 and 2024. There were no collisions that involved pedestrians during the times assessed.
- 8.9 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.
- 8.10 There are crossing facilities at the following locations:
- Pedestrian refuge crossing (uncontrolled) – Opposite the old County Police Station on A4233 Ferndale Road.
 - Signalised Crossing – Near the junction of Edmondes Street and the A4233 Ferndale Road.
 - Crossing Buildouts (uncontrolled) – At the junctions of Brynbedw Road and Hirwaun Place with the A4233 Ferndale Road.
 - Zebra Crossing – Outside Williams & Sons Funeral Director on the A4233 Ferndale Road.
 - Zebra Crossing – Outside no. 3 Highstreet on the A4233.
 - Signalised Crossing – Outside the Co-op on the A4233 Highstreet.
 - Zebra Crossing – Outside the Arts Factory on the A4233 Highstreet.
 - Zebra Crossing – Outside the Côt Melbion Morlais on the A4233 Highstreet.
 - Zebra Crossing – Outside Ferndale Cemetery on the A4233 Highstreet.

- 8.11 Traffic counts were undertaken at one location as detailed in Section 5, with counts carried out between 07:30 and 08:30 and 15:15 and 16:15. A revisit was undertaken on a different day in the afternoon, where the traffic count was the highest:

- Location - B4512 Penrhys Road before Roundabout with the A4233

The traffic flows and gaps at this location for both AM and PM times, meet the criteria outlined in the Learner Travel Guidance.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 The route meets the criteria and is considered available to walk in line with the Learner Travel guidelines. However, 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 are restricted by parked cars, action be taken in conjunction with the appropriate Council Department / local neighbourhood policing teams.

REDSTART

Quest House
St Mellons Business Park
Fortran Rd, St. Mellons
Cardiff
CF3 0EY

www.redstartwales.com

