

# RCT School Walking Routes Assessment

## Ystrad to Treorchy Comprehensive 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 Ystrad Sports Centre, Ystrad and Treorchy Comprehensive School, Treorchy.
- 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.

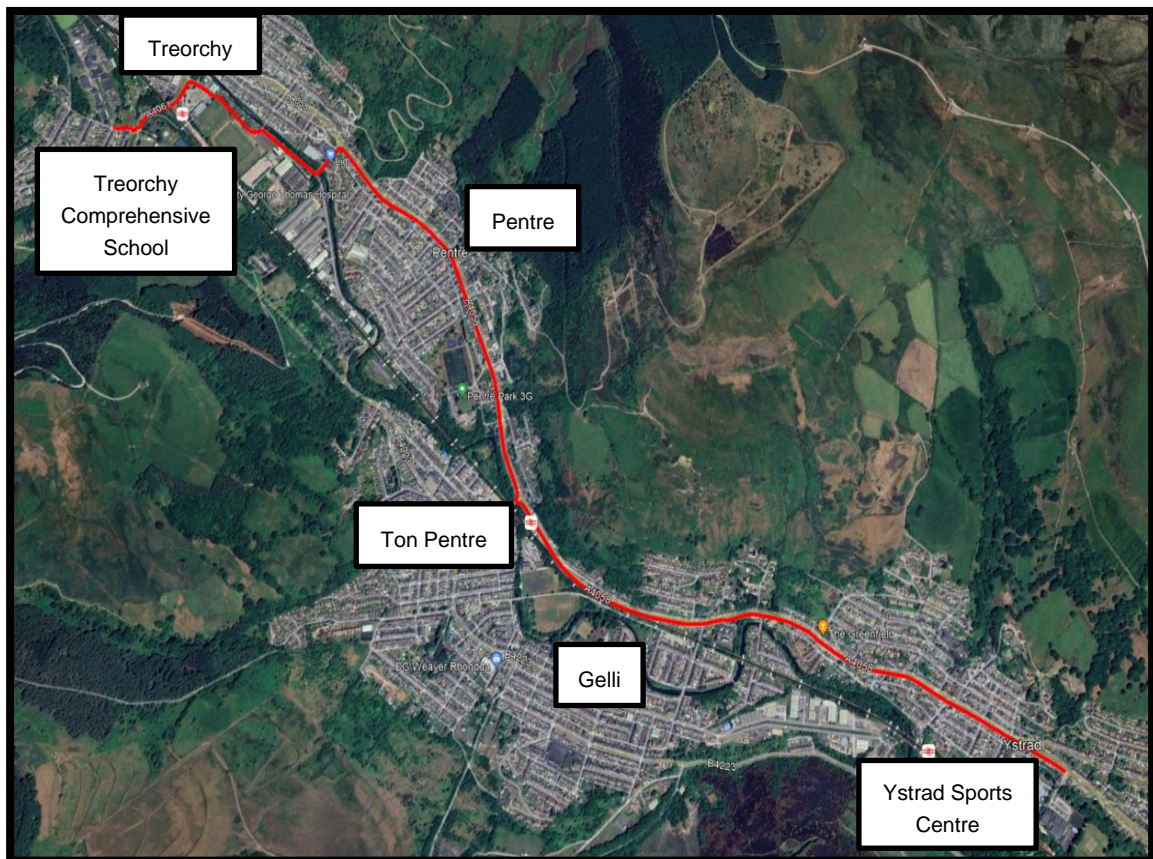


## 4. Site Location & Walking Route

### 4.1 Route Overview

- 4.1.1 The route commences at Ystrad Sport Centre, CF41 7SY which is situated on the A4058 Tyntyla Road, Ystrad Rhondda. The route proceeds westwards along the following roads Tyntyla Road, Gelligaled Road, William Street, Ystrad Road, Llewellyn Street, Carne Street, High Street, Lidl Access Road, River Bridge, Community Road passing Treorchy RFC, Station Road passing Pencelli Hotel to the main gate of Treorchy Comprehensive on Conway Road, Cwmparc CF42 6UL, as shown in **Image 4.1** below.

**Image 4.1 – Ystrad Sports Centre to Treorchy Comprehensive School (Image © 2024 Airbus)**



- 4.1.2 Generally, footways along the route are sufficiently wide allowing pedestrians to pass each other without issue. This reduces for some short sections with the requirement for pedestrians to either give way to each other or cross to the other side of the road. Secondary Pupils are currently walking from Pentre Inn bus stop and Ton Pentre and the route from here is already available and in daily use. Links to / from Primary Schools in Ton Pentre, Bronllyn, Gelli, Ystrad and Treorchy 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 There are continuous lengths of footway, with crossing opportunities and street lighting present along its length.



- 4.1.5 Connectivity between footways is provided throughout by zebra, signal control, and other defined uncontrolled crossing points.
- 4.1.6 A 20mph speed limit is in place along most of the route, where vehicle flows were noted to be moderate to high.
- 4.1.7 In places, vegetation needs to be cleared to improve the usable footway width and visibility for pedestrians.
- 4.1.8 Photographs 4.1 to 4.19 taken along the walking route are shown below:

**Photograph 4.1 – Signal Controlled Crossing at St Stephens Church Hall on A4058 Ystrad Rd**



**Photograph 4.2 – Zebra Crossing outside Bodringallt Court on A4058 Ystrad Road**



**Photograph 4.3 – Overhanging vegetation on the approach to Gelli Primary School**



**Photograph 4.4 – On-street parking issues outside the old Railway Inn on A4058  
Ystrad Road**



**Photograph 4.5 – Instantaneous footway narrowing at lighting columns on A4058  
Ystrad Road**



**Photograph 4.6 – Signal Controlled Crossing at the junction of Church Rd/A4058  
Ystrad Rd**





**Photograph 4.7 – Signal controlled crossing outside Pentre Town Hall on A4058**



**Photograph 4.8 – Signal controlled crossing outside Moriah Capel Y Bedyddwyr on A4058**



**Photographs 4.9 & 4.10 – River bridge access from Lidl's to the Treorchy Oval car park  
from A4058 High Street**



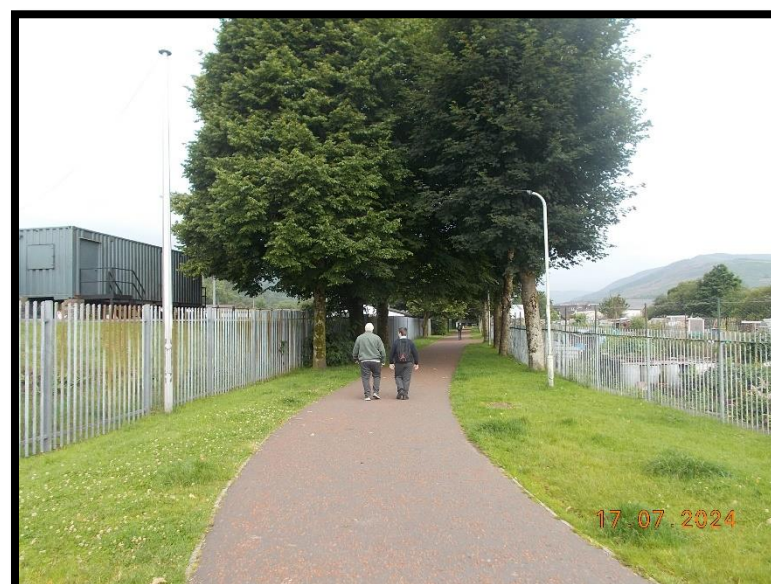
**Photograph 4.11 – Alternative route via Rees Street 'cut through' to the Treorchy Oval  
car park from A4058**



**Photograph 4.12 – Alternative route via Rees Street ‘cut through’ to the Treorchy Oval car park from A4058**



**Photograph 4.13 – Active Travel Footway link adjacent to the Oval Rugby Field**





**Photograph 4.14 – Active Travel Footway link leading to the Co-op carpark**



**Photograph 4.15 – Alternative walking route through the Co-op carpark**





**Photograph 4.16 – A4061 overhanging trees on the approach to Treorchy Comprehensive School**



**Photograph 4.17 – A4061 Raised zebra crossing link to Treorchy Comprehensive School with overhanging trees on the approach**



**Photograph 4.18 – Footway adjacent to the Pencelli Hotel leading to Treorchy Comprehensive School**



**Photograph 4.19 – Treorchy Comprehensive School main gate on Conway Road, Cwmparc**



## 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 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 adjacent footways presented as well connected along the length of the route. With sufficient crossing facilities present (both controlled and uncontrolled) and pedestrian phases at traffic lights for pedestrians to cross safely. As a result, no traffic data or gap survey information was needed.



## 6. Social Issues

- 6.1 The Co-op site carpark was noted to be a gathering point where groups of school children congregate, with some loud behaviour noted. However, this appeared as well 'policed' by the Co-op internal security staff **see photograph 6.1** below.

**Photograph 6.1 – The CO-OP site carpark congregation point**



- 6.1.1 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 20/30mph speed limits.
- 8.2 There are continuous footways present in reasonable condition along the route.
- 8.3 There is a length of footway for circa 300m along the A4058 Ystrad Road (between the old Railway Inn and the Texaco garage) where the footway width reduces to circa 0.8-1m metre instantaneously at street lighting columns. This can be managed by pedestrians with a simple give-way to let oncoming pedestrians pass or by using the footway opposite.
- 8.4 Trees were observed to be overhanging the footway at the following locations:
- The westbound footway approach to Gelli Primary School
  - The westbound footway approach to the signalised junction at Church Rd/Ystrad Rd
  - The Active Travel link at the Oval car park at Treorchy RFC
  - The southbound footway approach to the Zebra crossing on the A4061 at Treorchy Park
- 8.5 There is a busy road crossing at the junction of Ty Isaf Road and A4058 Ystrad Road. It is noted however, that there is also an available route on the footway opposite.
- 8.6 There are sections along the A4058 Ystrad Road (near the old Railway Inn) where vehicles parked on footways restricts the usable 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.
- 8.7 Street lighting is present throughout the route, although ongoing tree maintenance is required in some areas to ensure that lighting levels are not compromised.
- 8.8 Investigation into pedestrian collisions has been undertaken between 2020 and 2024. There were no collisions that involved pedestrians during the times assessed.
- 8.9 Crossing of side roads was observed to be achieved safely, with vehicular/pedestrian conflict unlikely with sufficient crossing gaps to comply with Learner Travel Guidance.
- 8.10 There are controlled crossing facilities at the following locations:
- Signalised Crossing – A4058 east of the junction of Trafalgar Terrace & A4058 Ystrad Road.
  - Zebra Crossing – Outside Bodringallt Court on A4058 Ystrad Road.
  - Signalised Crossing - At the junction of Church Rd/A4058 Ystrad Road.
  - Signalised Crossing - Outside Pentre Town Hall on the A4058 Ystrad Road.
  - Signalised Crossing - Outside Moriah Capel Y Bedyddwyr on A4058 Llewelyn Street.
  - Zebra Crossing – At Pencelli Hotel link to Treorchy Comprehensive School on A4061
- 8.11 One section along the route is not overlooked by residential or commercial properties, but is noted to be well used by pedestrians and overlooked by allotment gardens:
- The wide footway between the Oval car park and the Co-op for circa 200m.
- 8.12 Traffic counts and gap surveys 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.



## 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 are restricted by parked cars, action be taken in conjunction with the appropriate Council Department / local neighbourhood policing teams.

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