

**APPEAL FOR FREE TRANSPORT ON GROUNDS OF ROUTE SAFETY FROM
ROWDE TO DEVIZES SCHOOL**

Purpose of Report

1. To ask Members to consider the safety of the walking route from Rowde to Devizes School.

Background

2. Devizes School is the designated secondary school for students living in Rowde.
3. Students living in the Bunnies Lane area of Rowde have a journey of approximately 2.6 miles to the school, which is below the qualifying distance for free school transport of 3 miles.
4. An appeal has been made that free school transport be provided due to the walking route from Bunnies Lane, Rowde being considered unsafe by the applicant.
5. Approximately 30 to 40 students in years 7 to 11, living in Rowde, travel to school on a public service bus. The bus fares have recently increased for an 11-journey ticket from £5.50 to £7.50. Other students are transported by car to the school by their parents. It is unknown as to how many currently walk.
6. The recent increase in bus fares would appear to be a significant factor in the appeal for free transport. However, the bus company held back from increasing fares previously and this new fare is a reasonable cost and works out at less than 70p a journey.
7. The County Council Education Transport Policy considers issues of safety as set out in County Council Guidelines. These are attached as **Appendices 1, 2 and 3**.

Main Considerations

8. Previous route safety assessments were completed on this route by officers of the WCC Transport Unit and by a Senior Road Safety Officer. These are attached at **Appendices 4(a) and 4(b)**. Each of these assessments agreed that the walking route was safe for a child accompanied, as necessary, by an adult. A map showing the area of Rowde is attached at **Appendix 5**.

9. Members should be aware that this issue does not affect a previous decision made for other residents in Rowde. Following a route safety assessment in July 2003 between 19 Marsh Lane, Rowde, and Devizes School, free transport was provided due to the lack of a pavement in the area of the property and the speed of the vehicles in Marsh Lane. The result of this assessment is shown at **Appendix 6**. Students from this location would travel down Marsh Lane to the A361, Caen Hill and would not use the A342, Devizes Road. Therefore, this does not include or affect the safety of the route taken by residents of Bunnies Lane.
10. A further enquiry regarding the safety of the route from Bunnies Lane was made at the start of this academic year. The Area Highways Manager looked at the route, along with the Local Member, and found there was vegetation encroaching onto the pavement. However, this is currently being addressed.
11. A letter requesting a re-assessment has been received from the parents of a Devizes schoolchild living in Bunnies Lane, Rowde, attached at **Appendix 7**. The appellants have requested that their daughter is allowed to accompany Members if they decide to walk the route. A letter of support from the Headteacher at Devizes School is attached at **Appendix 8**.
12. The Local Member supports a further inspection of the route and this reassessment also has the support of the Cabinet Member for Education.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

13. None.

Risk Assessment

14. The original route safety assessments at **Appendices 4(a) and 4(b)** are both risk assessments of the route.

Financial Implications

15. There would be financial implications. However, these are not a relevant consideration to the decision regarding route safety.

Reasons for Recommendation

16. This is the final stage of the appeal procedure for considering the safety of a walking route to school.

Recommendation

17. Members are asked to:
 - (i) Determine whether they endorse the officer's original decision that the route from Rowde to Devizes (along the A342) is safe for a child of secondary school age to walk accompanied, as necessary, by a responsible adult.or

- (ii) To carry out their own final inspection of the route using the assessment guidelines at Appendices 1, 2 and 3 and confirm whether, as has been requested, members of the family can be present.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None