



Active
Travel
England

Designing for active school journeys



October 2026

Foreword

The journey to school should be a daily step towards independence, not a risk assessment for parents.

Every day, thousands of families make the same calculation: is the route safe enough? For too many, the answer depends not on a child's confidence or capability, but on the design of the streets outside their front door. That quiet inequality shapes health, independence and opportunity before the school day has even begun.

We know what happens when children and young people are able to walk or cycle to school; they arrive more alert, they grow in confidence, they build friendships and they develop a sense of belonging to the place they live. More widely, families feel less stressed and neighbourhoods feel calmer and more connected.

This advice note is about delivering those outcomes. It sets out the principles and practical steps local authorities and developers can take to ensure every child – regardless of postcode – has a safe, accessible and fun journey to school.

Because when we design places that allow children and young people to move freely and safely, we do more than improve a journey, we build healthier communities, stronger local economies and streets that work better for everyone.



Chris Boardman,
National Active Travel Commissioner

Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Background	4
1.2 Objectives	5
1.3 Policy and guidance alignment	6
1.4 The case for action	7
2. Designing for the school journey	8
2.1 Design principles	8
2.2 New school location	10
2.3 Routes to school	11
2.4 Front of school	15
2.5 Access and parking	20
3. Plan-making and decision-making	22
3.1 Spatial planning	22
3.2 Planning applications	24
4. Delivering active school journeys	32
4.1 Co-design and engagement	32
4.2 Behaviour change initiatives	33
4.3 Monitoring	34



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 This guidance applies to England only. It has been prepared by Active Travel England (ATE), supported by consultants Phil Jones Associates (PJA) and the University of the West of England (UWE). It has been produced in consultation with representatives from the development sector, local authorities and the Department for Education.

1.1.2 This guidance is intended for stakeholders involved in the planning, design and delivery of:

- new, extended or redeveloped schools
- residential developments that will generate a significant number of school trips
- access, frontage and safety improvements around existing school sites

1.1.3 Chapter 2 outlines the core design principles that should guide planning and design decisions to support active journeys to school.

1.1.4 Chapter 3 explains how this guidance should be applied by local authorities, and by design and transport consultants, when spatial plans, transport plans and planning applications are being prepared.

1.1.5 Chapter 4 sets out how local highway authorities and schools should engage with local communities when delivering active school journey schemes and implementing behaviour change initiatives.

1.1.6 For the purposes of this guidance, 'schools' includes sixth-form and further education colleges and applies to education settings for students from Reception (age 4 or 5) up to those aged 16 to 19.



1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 This guidance sets out best practice for designing environments that enable children, young people and accompanying adults to travel to and from school actively and safely. It establishes a clear expectation that the spaces and streets around schools should prioritise active travel, and that investment in local transport networks should provide safe, coherent and attractive routes linking homes, schools and everyday destinations.

1.2.2 Its key objectives are to:

- enable local authorities, education providers and developers to plan and design effectively for active school journeys
- integrate active travel within plan-making, transport planning and spatial planning decisions
- support the delivery of the government's Safe Routes to School programme
- encourage a shift from car use to walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport
- contribute to national goals for carbon reduction, air quality and public health
- strengthen collaboration across education, spatial planning, transport planning and public health sectors

1.2.3 These objectives recognise that the school journey forms part of a wider network of daily movements. Streets and routes that work well for children and young people tend to work better for everyone, as child-friendly streets create safer, healthier and more sociable places.



1.3 Policy and guidance alignment

1.3.1 This guidance aligns with the government's wider objectives on spatial planning, health, education and active travel. It should be read alongside national planning policy and related planning guidance. It aligns with the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) – particularly chapters on well-designed places, sustainable transport and healthy communities – and the [Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance](#). It reflects the Department for Transport's design guidance in [Inclusive Mobility](#), [Manual for Streets](#) and [Local Transport Note 1/20](#) (LTN 1/20).

1.3.2 It supports the government's [third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy](#) (CWIS3), which sets a target for 60% of children aged 5 to 16 to usually walk or cycle to school by 2035.

1.3.3 This guidance is also consistent with the government's [Road Safety Strategy](#), which sets a target for a 70% reduction in the number of children (under 16) killed or seriously injured on roads in Great Britain by 2035.

1.3.4 It complements other key publications, including:

- [Securing Developer Contributions for Education](#) (Department for Education)
- [Design standards](#) and [guidance](#) (Department for Education)
- [School Streets: How to set up and manage a scheme](#) (Department for Transport & ATE)
- [Public Sector Equality Duty: Guidance for Public Authorities](#)
- [Building for a Healthy Life](#) (Homes England)
- [Active Design](#) (Sport England)
- [PAS 6463: Design for the Mind](#)

1.3.5 Local authorities, working with other local authorities where relevant, are encouraged to reference this guidance within their Local Plans and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), noting the duty of local authorities responsible for education to promote sustainable and active travel to school¹. It should inform masterplans, design codes and decision-making at planning application stage, ensuring that the needs of children, young people and families are considered from the earliest stages of development.



1. [Home-to-school travel and transport guidance](#). Department for Education, 2014.

1.4 The case for action

1.4.1 Encouraging more children and young people to travel actively to school delivers wide-ranging benefits. Daily physical activity improves physical and mental health, supports social interaction, increases childhood independence and can also improve concentration^{2,3}. Increasing active school travel also reduces motor traffic around schools, cutting congestion and emissions while creating safer, more pleasant neighbourhoods.

1.4.2 Despite these benefits, active school travel has declined in recent decades. Families frequently cite safety concerns, traffic dominance, inadequate infrastructure and convenience as barriers³. Much existing design guidance does not adequately reflect the needs of children and young people or, in particular, the experiences of women and girls, who may alter travel routes or choices due to concerns about personal safety and harassment.

1.4.3 Reversing this trend requires coordinated action across spatial planning, education and transport policy. This document seeks to narrow that gap.

51% of children and young people are taking less than the recommended 60 minutes of activity per day.⁴

"Making walking and cycling more practical and safer would go a long way toward removing barriers to improving physical activity levels and could significantly improve the health of England's population."⁵

Sir Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer

In 2025, almost half (47%) of children aged 5 to 10 usually walked to school. This compares to 42% of all children (aged 5 to 16) and 38% of secondary school children (aged 11 to 16).

Table 1: National Travel Survey – trips to and from school, 2025 (published September 2026).

Age	Trip length	Walk	Cycle	Car or van	Bus	Other
5 to 10	< 1 mile	79	2	17	0	1
5 to 10	1-2 miles	28	4	64	3	1
5 to 10	2-5 miles	0	0	82	14	4
11 to 16	< 1 mile	86	4	8	1	1
11 to 16	1-2 miles	58	6	25	11	1
11 to 16	2-5 miles	6	6	43	39	6

2. Science Nordic (2012), [Children who walk to school concentrate better](#), 30 November 2012.

3. Active Travel England (2026), [Evidence on the impact of active travel investment](#).

4. Sport England (2025), [Active Lives Children and Young People Survey: academic year 2024–25](#).

5. Department of Health and Social Care (2024), [Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2024: health in cities](#).

2. Designing for the school journey

2.1 Design principles

2.1.1 CWIS3 states that the government will focus on enabling millions more children to walk, wheel and cycle to school by providing safe and coherent networks that connect schools, high streets and homes.

2.1.2 LTN 1/20 recommends that active travel networks and routes should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive, with inclusive design and accessibility embedded across all five principles.

2.1.3 This guidance considers some of these principles together to reflect their close relationship in practice. In particular, coherence and directness, and comfort and attractiveness, are grouped alongside safety because they collectively influence whether children and young people feel confident and willing to use a route to school. This also aligns with key themes in CWIS3, Manual for Streets and Inclusive Mobility: that streets should provide clear routes, be safe to navigate and create an appealing environment.



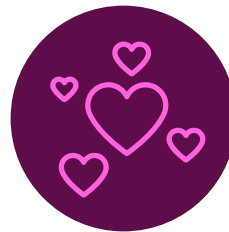
Safe



Coherent



Direct



Attractive



Comfortable

Safe journeys to school means ensuring safety from vehicles as well as personal safety and the fear of anti-social behaviour, harassment or crime. Both experienced and perceived safety concerns are important. This requires attention to vehicle speeds and volumes, crossing and junction design, lighting, natural surveillance and route legibility and choice.

Coherent and direct journeys to school means children, young people and adults can travel actively with ease, convenience and confidence. New schools should be at the heart of neighbourhoods, with networks of high-quality active travel routes converging on them.

Attractive and comfortable journeys to school means streets, routes and spaces that are green, playful and pleasant, so that children and adults want to walk, wheel or cycle to school. Routes should provide sufficient space, good surface quality and an environment that supports comfort for all users, including children, families and disabled people.

2.1.4 New developments and highway schemes should support these aims rather than simply complying with minimum standards.

2.1.5 The following sections provide design advice based on these principles at all spatial scales.

Chapter 2.2: New school location.



Chapter 2.3: Routes to school.



Chapter 2.4: Front of school.



Chapter 2.5: Access and parking.



2.2 New school location

2.2.1 For new primary schools, most pupils should be able to reach the school gate within 800 metres of their homes. For new secondary schools or further education settings, planners should seek to maximise journeys that fall within 1,600m.

2.2.2 Achieving these distances will typically mean locating schools in the centre of the neighbourhoods they will serve and ideally in close proximity to public transport nodes, playgrounds, public open space and local centres. See Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1: New school to serve single development site and existing communities – optimal location.

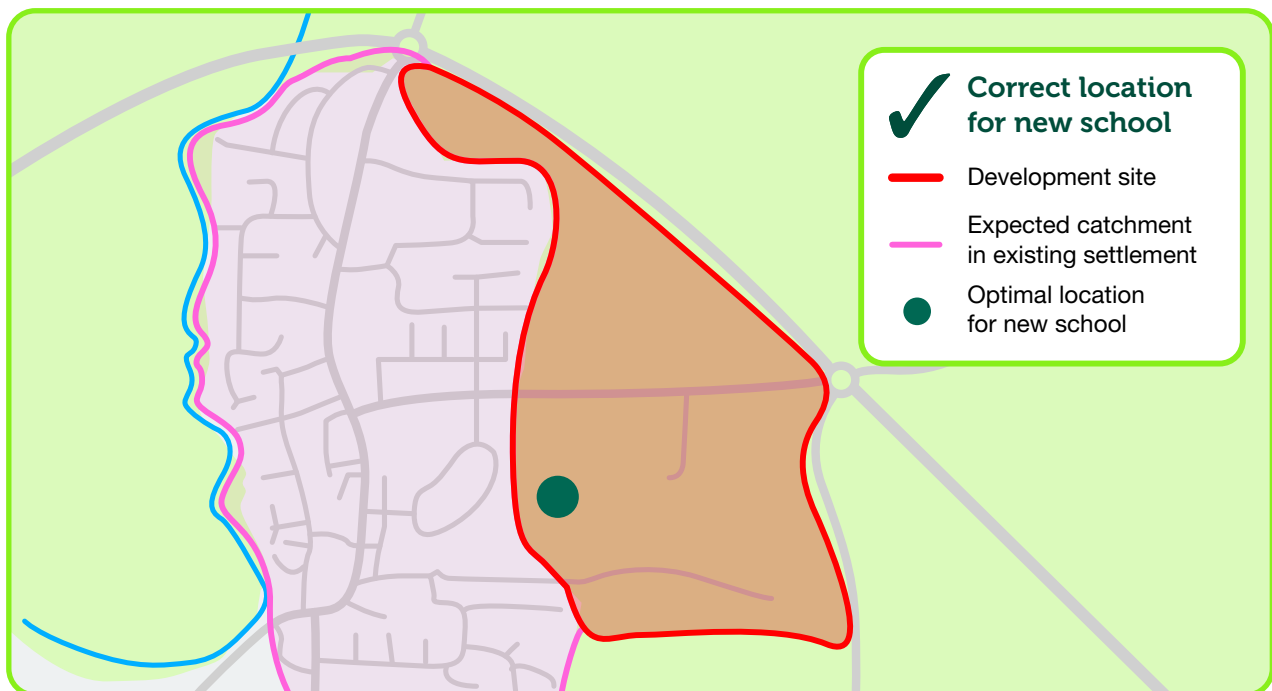
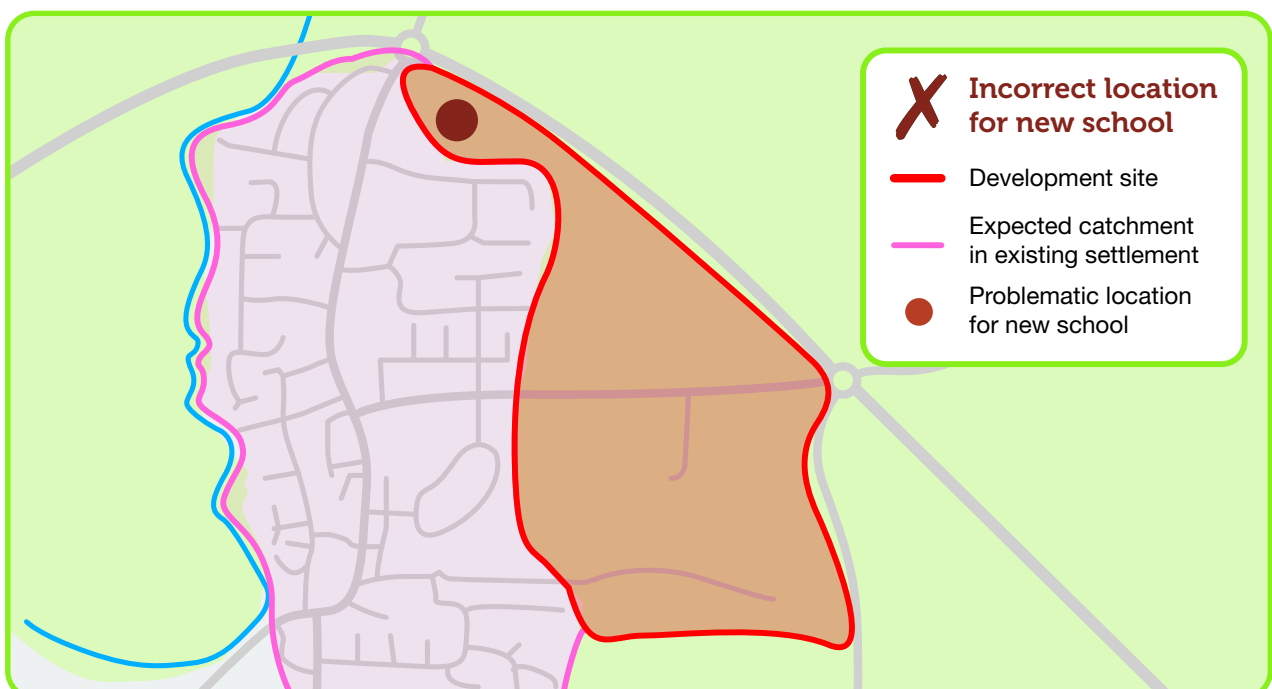


Figure 1.2: New school to serve single development site and existing communities – problematic location.



2.2.3 If new schools must be located outside of built-up areas and, for example, are accessed by streets with a speed limit above 30mph and/or poor-quality routes, they will need to be accompanied by comprehensive off-site infrastructure improvements to deliver safe access for children walking, wheeling and cycling to school.

2.3 Routes to school

2.3.1 The length and quality of routes to school are critical in determining whether walking, wheeling and cycling are realistic and attractive options for children and young people.

Length of routes

2.3.2 The following tables provide a high-level summary of the active travel and public transport provision that new developments should offer to support school journeys, based on different age settings and the distance from the homes they serve.

Table 2 – Primary Schools.

Distance from homes ⁶	Active travel potential	General considerations
0–800m	High	Should comfortably support walking, wheeling and cycling to school where routes are safe, or works are proposed to ensure this.
800–1,600m	Moderate	Potential for active travel where the routes and school frontages are consistently safe, coherent and attractive.
1,600m+	Low	Active travel is unlikely for most people. ⁷ Development proposals should demonstrate how sustainable transport is being maximised and justify the location.

Table 3 – Secondary Schools and Further Education Colleges.

Distance from homes	Active travel potential	General considerations
0–1,600m	High	Should comfortably support walking and cycling to school, and for wheeling over short distances, where routes are safe, or works are proposed to ensure this.
1,600–3,200m	Moderate Low	Potential for walking and cycling at the lower end of this range, where routes and school frontages are consistently safe, coherent and attractive. Cycling and public transport are critical at +2km and so high-quality cycling routes should be accompanied by frequent and direct public transport connections.
3,200m+	Low	Active travel is unlikely to be the main mode of travel. As a minimum, frequent, direct public transport should be provided to enable active travel as part of a multi-modal journey. Development proposals should demonstrate how sustainable transport is being maximised and justify the location.

2.3.3 For some rural, special, faith or independent schools, where longer journeys may be unavoidable, strong access to public or community transport will be essential to enable sustainable travel opportunities for as many pupils and staff as possible.

6. Distance thresholds are presented as actual travel distances, not straight-line distances. Transport Assessments for new developments should confirm the travel distance between school entrances and the centre of the development site.

7. This reflects NTS data and that accompanying adults will have onward, prior or return journeys.

2.3.4 Planners should prioritise safe, coherent and attractive routes to schools, with layouts that favour walking, wheeling and cycling over private vehicles. For existing schools, findings from route audits (see Section 3.2) should inform improvements in line with these principles. Key considerations are set out below.

Safe routes

2.3.5 Routes should reduce risk and build confidence for all users, addressing both road danger and wider perceptions of personal safety.

2.3.6 Design should:

- provide clear sightlines and consistent natural surveillance
- include high-quality lighting
- avoid narrow, enclosed or hidden routes
- use continuous footways and tight corner radii (0–4 m⁸) at side road crossings to reinforce pedestrian priority
- on key traffic-free routes, pursue physical segregation between pedestrians and cyclists as the first approach⁹
- apply LTN 1/20¹⁰ to determine appropriate levels of protection for cyclists along streets and at crossings and junctions

2.3.7 Where there is doubt, or where traffic volumes and speeds are close to threshold levels¹¹, designers should err on the side of greater protection when considering cycle lanes, crossings, buffers or widths. This may mean providing a zebra, parallel or signal-controlled crossing on or near a school route even where an uncontrolled crossing might otherwise be considered acceptable.



8. This will typically slow vehicle speeds to no more than 15mph.

9. Inclusive Mobility (Section 4.6) explains that it is particularly important to protect pedestrians who are most at risk and who, for example, might not be able to see or hear an approaching cyclist.

10. In particular Figure 4.1 and Table 10-2.

11. For example, when applying LTN 1/20 Figure 4.1, Table 5-2 or Table 10-2.

Coherent and direct routes

2.3.8 Routes should provide clear, continuous and legible connections between homes, schools and other everyday destinations, making active travel the most convenient option.

2.3.9 Design should:

- create opportunities for active travel routes to be shorter and more direct than for cars
- follow natural desire lines and avoid unnecessary detours
- provide continuous footways and paths with clear links between streets
- maintain clear sightlines, route legibility and consistent wayfinding
- minimise obstacles, pinch points and abrupt changes in quality
- ensure routes remain inclusive and easy to navigate for disabled people and those travelling with pushchairs, scooters or adapted cycles



Attractive and comfortable routes

2.3.10 Routes should make active travel pleasant, sociable and convenient, with environments that are accessible, welcoming and comfortable for everyday use.

2.3.11 Design should:

- provide generous footway/footpath and cycle lane/track widths¹² appropriate to demand and to facilitate children and adults travelling in groups
- create smooth, level and hard-bound surfaces, avoiding crossfalls at side roads and on footways across driveways, or minimising them to 1%
- ensure footways are protected from 'pavement parking', either through street design or parking restrictions
- create active streets for children with regular seating, routes that pass by playgrounds and formal or informal 'play on the way' features
- include and increase trees and other greenery on routes to school to provide shade and increase attractiveness
- consider the impact of noise and air pollution, as well as public realm quality, including their potential contribution to sensory overload

© Credit: Phil Jones



¹². Section 4.2 of Inclusive Mobility provides general guidance, and paragraph 2.4.10 of this guidance sets out considerations specific to school frontages.

2.4 Front of school

2.4.1 The space in front of the school is where children, young people and families will congregate at the beginning and end of the school day. At these peak times, when there will be high numbers of people, this space or street should prioritise creating a safe and attractive environment for children walking, wheeling and cycling.

2.4.2 For new residential developments that include a school, the school frontage is an opportunity to create playful, attractive and social spaces that encourage activity and becomes an asset to the whole new community.

Figure 2: A car-free, public forecourt that serves the school and new community. Alconbury Weald, Huntingdonshire District Council, [Location](#).



© Credit: Urban & Civic.

New schools

2.4.3 For major developments that include a new school, the masterplan should design a car-free public space at the school frontage. It should firmly prioritise the needs of children, young people and placemaking over motor vehicles.

2.4.4 This may take the form of:

- a fully pedestrianised street outside the school
- modal filters to limit access to the street to only people walking, wheeling and cycling, and public transport
- a traffic-free forecourt at the school entrance, separating the school from surrounding streets

Figure 3.1: Site layout graphic showing a traffic-free forecourt at school entrance, separating the school from surrounding streets.

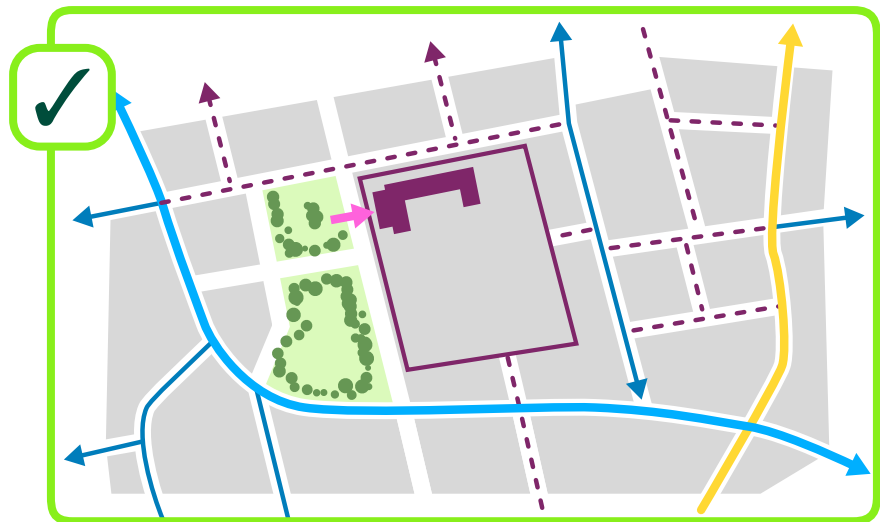


Figure 3.2: Site layout graphic showing primary street routed away from a school access to allow for full pedestrianisation or filtered for active and public transport only of school frontage.

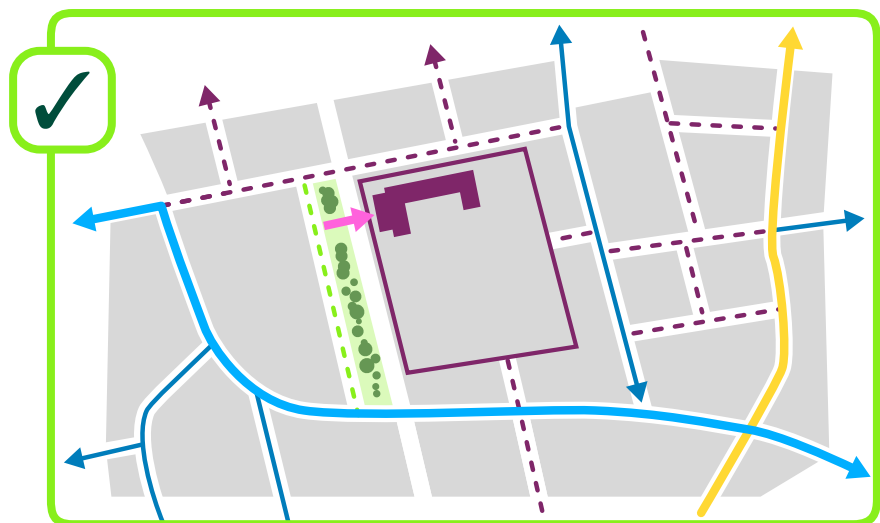
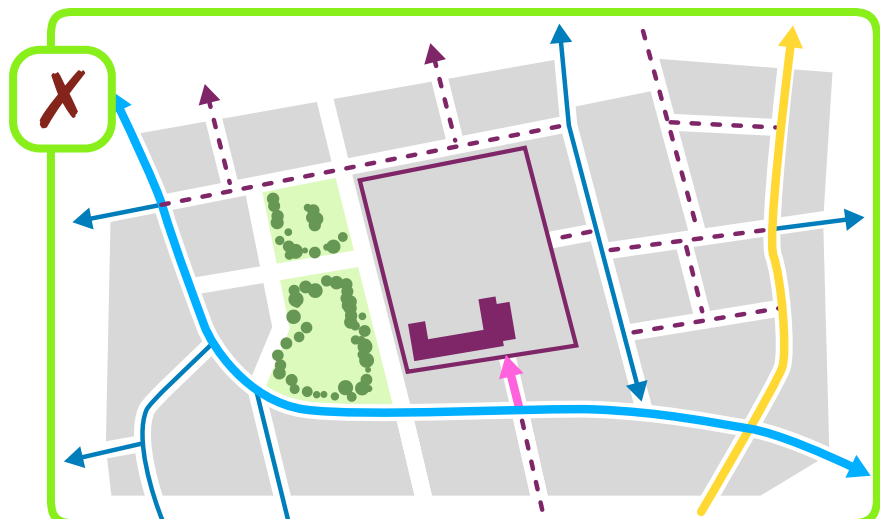


Figure 3.3: Site layout graphic showing a school entrance accessed directly from a busier street.



2.4.5 When a car-free space is achieved, the front of school environment can be a pleasant space for people to wait, meet and play. It should always provide:

- accessible seating
- cycle parking
- greenery and landscape features
- space for children to congregate



*Figure 4: Best practice in school frontages.**4.1 Ermine Street Church Academy.**4.2 University of Cambridge Primary School.**4.3 Trumpington Meadows Primary School.**4.4 East Thornhill Primary School.*

©ECD Architects and
Christian Trampenau

2.4.6 Managed access for disabled pupils travelling in motor vehicles should always be provided when a car-free front of school environment is designed.

2.4.7 Where a traffic-free school frontage is not feasible, designers and planners should apply the guidance in the following section.

Existing schools

2.4.8 Where a local highway authority is planning to remove motor traffic from outside of an existing school, this can be achieved through:

- permanent road closures or modal filter restricting car access; or
- 'School Street' schemes with no car access during school start and finish times

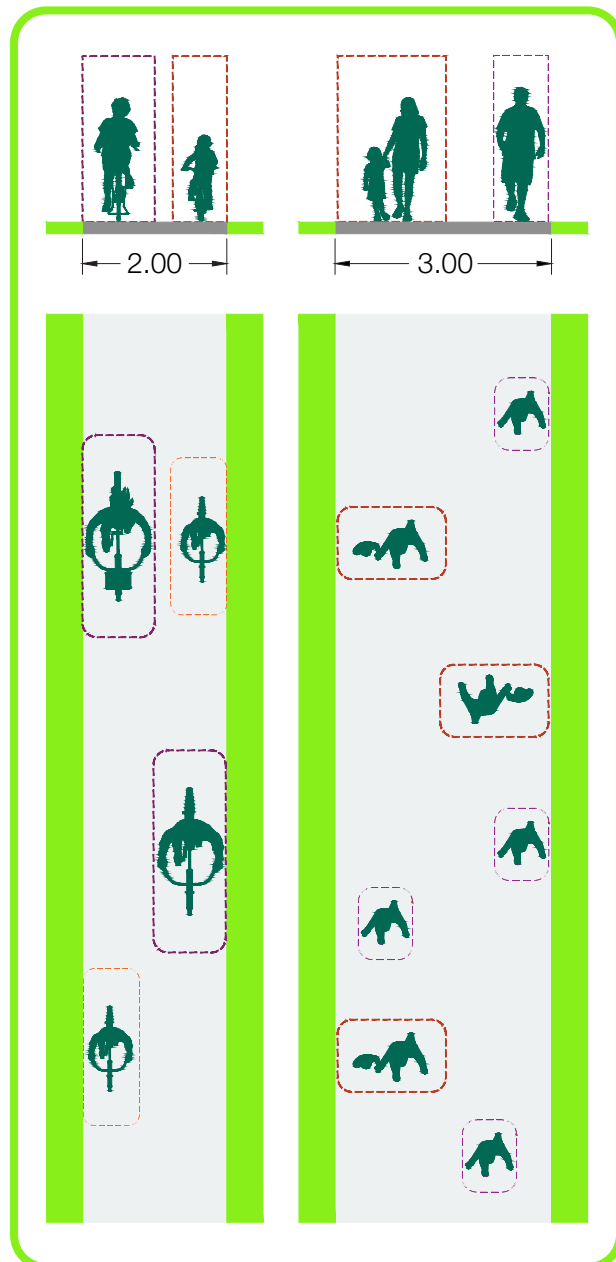
2.4.9 Where a traffic-free frontage is not feasible, the aim should be to improve surrounding streets for children and young people by reducing traffic speeds ($\leq 20\text{mph}$) and volumes ($\leq 2,500$ vehicles per day), and/or reallocating street space in line with the user hierarchy in Manual for Streets.

2.4.10 Appropriate space and protection for children walking, wheeling and cycling to school should be provided in accordance with LTN 1/20, Manual for Streets and Inclusive Mobility. Designers should recognise that minimum widths will often not adequately accommodate the volume of people walking, wheeling and cycling around schools at peak times or that children and adults will more regularly travel in groups and with pushchairs or scooters.

Therefore, outside of schools and on key routes close to schools, ATE recommends the following minimum widths as a starting point:

- footway/footpath – 3m¹³
- 1-way cycle lane/track – 2m¹⁴
- 2-way cycle lane/track – 3m¹²

Figure 5: 3m footway and 2m protected cycle lane.



2.4.11 [Designing Streets for Kids](#) sets out an approach to child-friendly street design, with examples and recommendations to help practitioners assess and improve street environments for children and young people. ATE has developed a Streets for Schools Tool, which evaluates the quality of existing school frontages and is based on Designing Streets for Kids' **Reclaim, Upgrade, Protect, Activate** principles. Local highway authorities should use this tool to identify and prioritise improvements on the streets outside schools.

Reclaim

Allocate space for people



Upgrade

Improve accessibility, safety and attractiveness



Protect

Design for appropriate speeds



Activate

Incorporate play and learning

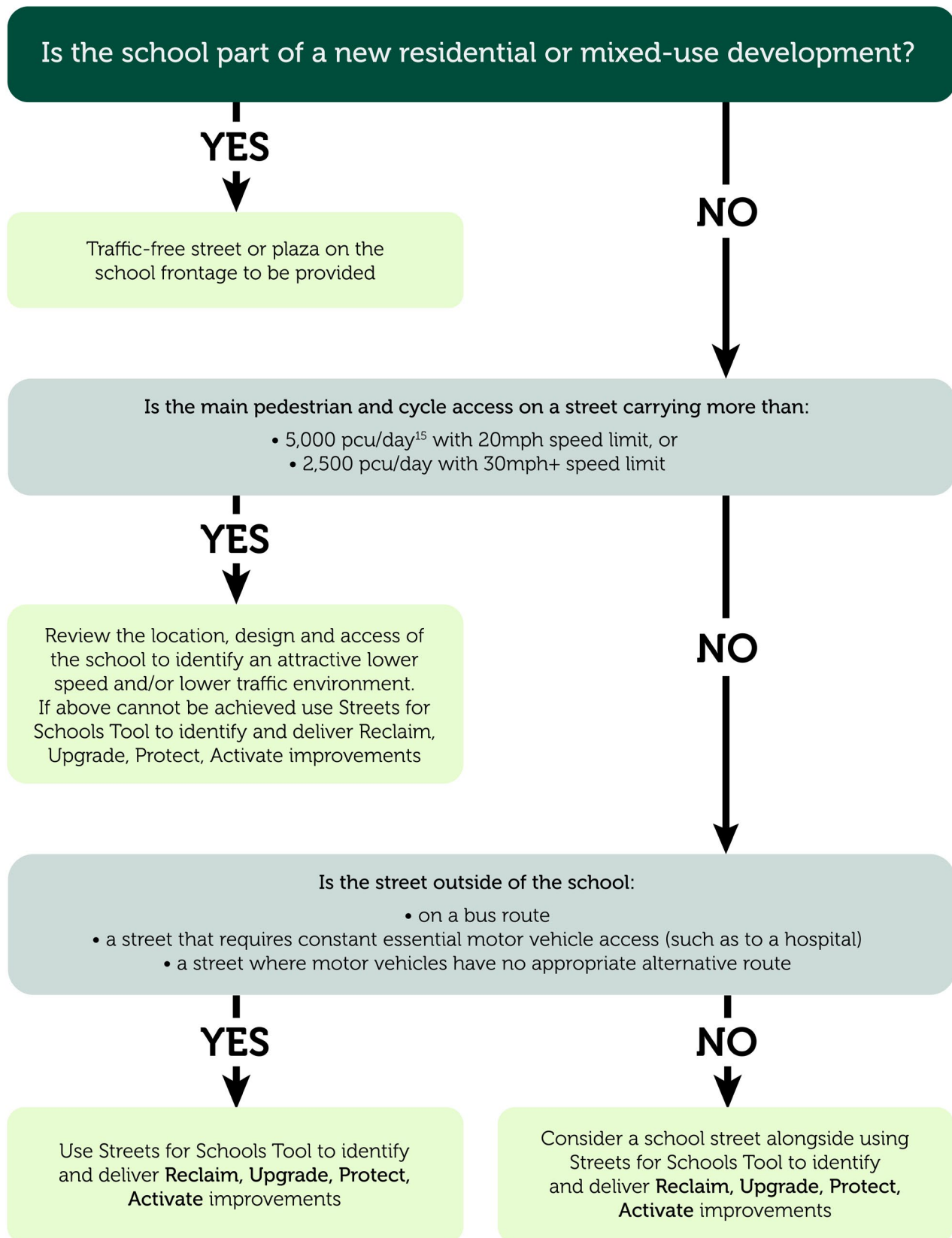


13. An additional 0.5m should be provided where a footway/footpath runs alongside a wall or other constraining vertical feature.

14. Greater widths in accordance with Table 5-2 of LTN 1/20 should be achieved in locations where there are targets for higher levels of cycling to school.

Front of school assessment framework

2.4.12 Figure 6: This flowchart guides designers and planners towards the most appropriate approach when considering traffic-free or low-traffic front of school environments.



15. Passenger Car Units per day is a way of measuring traffic volume by converting mixed vehicles into a single equivalent standard car unit.

2.5 Access and parking

Access points

2.5.1 All new schools should provide separate access points for motor vehicles (where required) and those walking, wheeling and cycling.

2.5.2 Access points for people walking, wheeling and cycling should have an open character, avoiding hidden corners, blind spots or enclosed spaces between boundary treatments, which could impact the perception of safety, particularly for women and girls.

2.5.3 Parents and carers should be provided with an accessible space to wait¹⁶, sit and gather at the school access. These should be covered or shaded, level and step-free. Some schools have incorporated purpose-built waiting shelters into their site, however seating on the school frontage or street should also be incorporated.

2.5.4 Guidance on access for pupils at special schools, and in inclusion bases within mainstream schools, can be found in [Inclusion bases in schools](#), [Inclusive education estates: supporting inclusive environments in mainstream settings](#), and [Building Bulletin 104](#).



Cycle and scooter parking

2.5.5 Cycle and scooter parking areas for pupils should be conveniently located, covered, well-overlooked and designed to accommodate a range of cycles.

2.5.6 Cycle parking provision should be generous to allow for growth and peak demand, including good weather and Bikeability training days. ATE recommends that the number of spaces provided meets the highest of the following calculations: any local cycle parking standards for schools, LTN 1/20 recommendations¹⁷, or at least 1.5 times the School Travel Plan cycling target.

2.5.7 Staff and visitor cycle parking should be provided in an accessible and secure location close to building entrances. Provision should exceed School Travel Plan staff targets. Schools should provide changing rooms, showers, lockers and drying spaces for staff.



16. Wheels for Wellbeing (2025), [Benches and seating in public spaces](#).

17. Table 11-1 and 11-2.

Park and Stride

2.5.8 A Park and Stride facility is a free car park, typically located 100m to 400m from the school. This allows children to walk, wheel, cycle or scoot part of their journey to school while also removing motor vehicles from the front of school environment.

2.5.9 In new developments, these facilities can be designed in from the outset and can serve multiple functions, such as supporting local centres, community uses or mobility hubs. For existing schools, opportunities may include partnerships with local businesses or community facilities to use existing parking areas.

2.5.10 Information on how to set up a Park and Stride can be found on the Living Streets website.



Parking, drop-off and pick-up

2.5.11 Staff parking should be located to the side or rear of the school and should not impact on the school frontage or key routes for active travel.

2.5.12 Park and Stride should be prioritised over on-site drop-off and pick-up provision. Where drop-off and pick-up facilities must be included at the school site, these should not occupy space on the school frontage. Safe and comfortable access for disabled pupils travelling in vehicles should be maintained.

Figure 7: An aerial view of Ermine Street Church Academy, Alconbury Weald and its design features.



3. Plan-making and decision-making

3.1 Spatial planning

Local Plans

3.1.1 Most local plans will include education policies, and these policies are an opportunity to ensure active school travel is central to the planning and delivery of new schools and strategic development sites.

3.1.2 Best practice education policies in local plans are encouraged to use clear language stating that:

- new schools should be in accessible locations central to the community or catchment they will serve, and make explicit reference to high-quality walking, wheeling and cycling access
- the design of schools, their frontage and routes to schools should prioritise active travel and placemaking over motor vehicle access and parking
- planning applications for new or expanded schools should be supported by a detailed travel plan that sets ambitious mode share targets and funded behaviour change initiatives
- major residential development proposals should forecast and audit routes to educational facilities and make financial contributions towards infrastructure improvements where necessary
- developments that are unable to deliver safe, coherent and attractive walking, wheeling or cycling routes to school will not be supported

3.1.3 ATE encourages the inclusion of an explicit reference to this document within new local plan education policies or their supporting text.

3.1.4 Local planning authorities should apply the Department for Transport's [Connectivity Tool](#) to understand relative connectivity to schools and inform the site allocation process.

Local Transport Plans (LTPs)

3.1.5 Local transport authorities should use LTPs to plan the wider local transport network in a way that supports and complements travel assistance to schools and colleges. This could include:

- considering the travel patterns and needs of children and young people attending schools, colleges and alternative provision
- working closely with education and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) teams to ensure early, joined up planning around school place planning, admissions decisions and education, health and care plan (EHCP) processes
- considering how public transport, supported bus networks and active travel infrastructure can better meet school travel needs

3.1.6 Guidance on LTPs can be found on [GOV.UK](#).



Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIPs)

3.1.7 Local authorities should consider identifying School Corridors within LCWIPs, ensuring that key routes to schools are prioritised for investment and enhancement.

3.1.8 LCWIPs are also expected to identify Core Walking Zones (CWZs). Authorities should consider defining CWZs around all schools to recognise these areas as places where pedestrian infrastructure, street conditions and the wider walking environment should be protected, managed and improved. The Greater London Authority and several London boroughs have taken positive steps in this direction through the [Schools Superzones Programme](#).

3.1.9 Where School Corridors or CWZs for schools are identified, and the necessary improvements are clearly defined and costed, local authorities will be in a stronger position to:

- prioritise delivery
- bid for funding
- negotiate contributions from developments that rely on those routes for school access

3.1.10 RoWIPs are expected to consider how they will provide a better experience for people walking, wheeling and cycling and should consider the needs of local people making daily local journeys. ATE recommends that RoWIPs should consider how improvements to Public Rights of Way can enable safer and more active journeys to school.

3.1.11 ATE's [Route Check and Area Check Tools](#) should be used to assist with producing LCWIPs and RoWIPs.



Design codes and supplementary plans

3.1.12 Design codes or supplementary plans should be used to translate a local plan's vision or policies into specific, visual and/or measurable design expectations and parameters. Local authorities can use authority-wide, area-specific and site-specific codes or supplementary plans to set clear parameters for:

- the location of new schools and access strategies
- traffic-free or low-traffic school frontages
- footway, corner radii, crossing and junction design
- cycling provision, protection and parking
- design speed and traffic management
- seating, planting and public realm quality
- play equipment, play on the way features and links to open space
- Park and Stride facilities

3.2 Planning applications

Trip generation, assignment and distribution

3.2.1 Vision-led Transport Assessments (TAs) will go beyond forecasting traffic impacts and demonstrate how the development will enable ambitious mode shares for active travel and public transport. For school travel this could include ambitious targets for school journeys, with consideration given to the government's overall target for 60% of children to walk, wheel or cycle to school by 2035.

New schools

3.2.2 Developments for new, expanding or redeveloped schools should establish baseline transport conditions for all modes. The following can be used to estimate travel patterns, define a study area and map pupil journeys: partial postcode data of existing/potential pupils, pupil surveys, relevant travel plan data, and the expected catchment. If these are not available, Census population data and National Travel Survey data could be used to estimate travel patterns.

3.2.3 This will place a TA in a strong position to identify key routes and junctions and then audit these routes, identify deficiencies and improvements, and set ambitious but achievable targets within the transport assessment and school travel plan.

New residential development

3.2.4 Major residential development that does not include a school will still generate school trips and should set objectives for as many of these to be walked, wheeled or cycled as possible.

3.2.5 The Department for Education's [Pupil Yield Dashboard](#) can be used to estimate the number of school-age pupils likely to be living within a new development, unless the local education authority advises differently. The TA will then be able to forecast, assign and distribute primary and secondary school trips from the development site. As above, the quality of these routes can then be audited, necessary off-site improvements identified and targets set.



Table 4.1: Example 1 – New residential development only.

New development quantum	New development pupil yield	Proposed education provision	Pupil trip generation
 400 houses	Secondary 72 pupils	Secondary 0 places	Secondary 72 outward
	Primary 144 pupils	Primary 0 places	Primary 144 outward
	Early Years 32 pupils	Early Years 0 places	Early Years 32 outward

Table 4.2: Example 2 – Residential development and new primary school. Majority of primary school trips are internalised, but significant outward trips to secondary and early years remain.

New development quantum	New development pupil yield	Proposed education provision	Pupil trip generation
 1,200 houses  200 flats	Secondary 226 pupils	Secondary 0 places	Secondary 226 outward
	Primary 452 pupils	Primary 420 places	Primary 32 outward, 420 internalised
	Early Years 102 pupils	Early Years 0 places	Early Years 102 outward

Table 4.3: Example 3 – Residential development and new primary school. The development will see more inward school trips than outward.

New development quantum	New development pupil yield	Proposed education provision	Pupil trip generation
 200 houses	Secondary 36 pupils	Secondary 0 places	Secondary 36 outward
	Primary 72 pupils	Primary 420 places	Primary 348 inward, 72 internalised
	Early Years 16 pupils	Early Years 0 places	Early Years 16 outward

Route audits

3.2.6 An audit of the key walking and cycling routes to schools should identify barriers and opportunities for active travel and present these visually through route mapping that is supported by photographs.

3.2.7 Route audits should be guided by the needs of the people who will use them. In this context, they should therefore provide a critical assessment of how safe, coherent and direct, and attractive and comfortable routes are for children, as well as the distance of these routes. Findings from the audit should inform targeted, deliverable improvements for school travel.

Safe routes

3.2.8 Audits should examine both highway safety and personal safety. This should include traffic speed and volume, the location and quality of crossings and junctions, pedestrian priority at side roads, and whether cycling provision provides appropriate separation from motor traffic¹⁸. Uncontrolled crossings on busy or higher-speed streets should be reviewed for potential upgrade¹⁹, and kerbs, tactile paving and lighting should be assessed²⁰.

3.2.9 Audits should also consider whether routes feel safe and welcoming to use, recognising that perceptions of safety vary between people and that women may feel less safe walking alone²¹. Sightlines, natural surveillance, and the presence of isolated, enclosed or poorly overlooked sections should therefore be reviewed, with improvements identified where needed.

Coherent and direct routes

3.2.10 Audits should consider whether routes form a continuous and intelligible network between homes, schools and other everyday destinations. This should include whether routes align with likely desire lines, avoid unnecessary detours and maintain a consistent standard of provision. Audits should also consider whether routes are accessible by people using wheelchairs, mobility aids, adapted cycles or scooters, as well as by those travelling with pushchairs or with sensory or cognitive differences.



18. LTN 1/20 Fig 4.1.

19. ATE's [crossing selector tool](#) can assist assessments.

20. Section 4.11 and Chapter 6 of Inclusive Mobility.

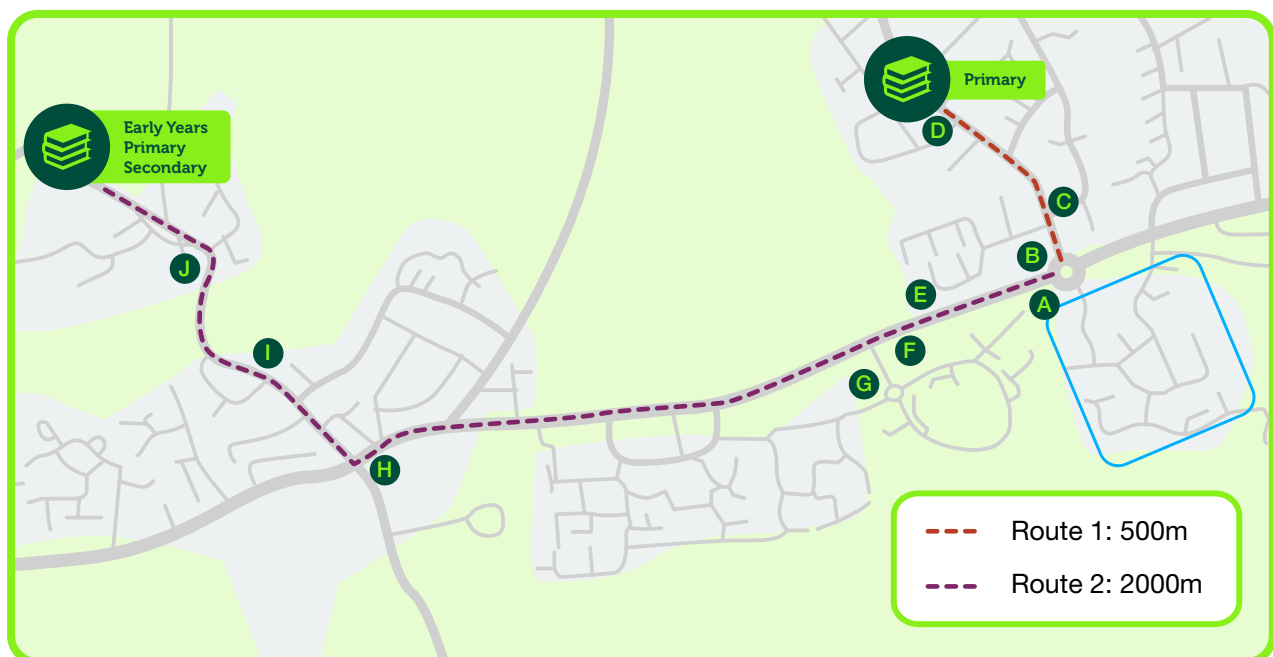
21. Office for National Statistics (2022), [Perceptions of personal safety and experiences of harassment, Great Britain](#): 16 February to 13 March 2022.

Attractive and comfortable routes

3.2.11 Audits should consider whether routes are sufficiently comfortable and appealing to support regular active travel. This should include whether they are step-free, avoid steep gradients, are uncluttered and free from indiscriminate parking, and provide smooth, hard-bound surfaces of adequate width. Any surface damage, poor drainage, maintenance or trip hazards should be identified.

3.2.12 Audits should also consider environmental quality, including noise, greenery, legibility and the condition of the public realm. Excessive traffic noise or vibration, which may be particularly discouraging for neurodiverse people, should be identified, alongside opportunities to improve the route through planting, screening, play features or other enhancements.

Figure 8: For illustrative purposes only. A qualitative audit that assesses existing conditions for people walking, wheeling and cycling to school.



Reference	Image	Comment
A		Crossings on the roundabout are uncontrolled and over busy 30mph highway (~15,000 daily vehicles). Detour to signalised crossings to the east and west is approximately 350m. Roundabout crossing unlikely to be safe for all primary school aged children to use independently.
B		Short section of shared use path with white line segregation before cyclists rejoin carriageway. Pedestrians sharing with cyclists next to busy junction and carriageway. Footway a good width and quality beyond this point. Transition for cyclists is incoherent with dismount required sign. Cyclists are then on carriageway where 20mph zone begins and volumes are lower (~3,000 vehicles per day).
C		Eastern side road junction has very wide radii (approx. 15m) and uncontrolled crossing is a detour from desire line. Poor priority and service for pedestrians.
D		Uncontrolled, implied crossing over two lanes at school frontage provides limited priority and may have safety concerns. No seating or shading at school entrance. 20mph zone in place. Evidence that footway parking does occur in the area.
E		Toucan crossing.

Reference	Image	Comment
F		Separate footway and cycle track along linear section of the street. Widths are generally between 2m and 3m, with a green buffer to the carriageway for the majority of the route. Regular seating and bins. Carriageway is lit, which may overspill to footway and cycle track.
G		Side road junction to business park has wide radii and requires people walking, wheeling and cycling to cross two lanes in one movement with no priority. Potential for larger vehicles to use this junction.
H		Signalised junction includes pedestrian and cycle crossings on all arms. All include staggers and multiple phases to cross.
I		Footway only to one side of the street with a width that narrows to <1.5m in moments. Also on a steep slope. May cause comfort and/or safety issue for wheelchair users or those travelling with pushchairs, particularly if they met travelling in opposite directions.
J		Narrow footway (<1m) on western side of the carriageway. Footway on eastern side is 2m. 20mph zone in place.

Design of new streets and neighbourhoods

3.2.13 The design of new streets and other routes throughout a development should follow guidance set out in Manual for Streets, Inclusive Mobility, LTN 1/20 and the Design and Placemaking PPG. Chapter 2 of this guidance should be applied when designing new streets close to schools and on key routes to schools, which complements the above guidance.

3.2.14 The strict application of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) to local roads is inappropriate for street design in built-up areas, particularly on streets with a 20mph or 30mph speed limit as it will likely lead to over-specification and poor outcomes for active travel. Manual for Streets, and local guidance that aligns with it, is the principal document to be used in the design of local streets, especially those which will form part of routes used by children walking, wheeling or cycling to school.

School Travel Plan

3.2.15 It is important that every new or extended school is accompanied by a comprehensive School Travel Plan, which can form part of the school's wider climate action plan. The travel plan may be secured by planning condition or obligation and ATE recommends it includes:

- **school details** – name of school, pupil and staff numbers, school day timings, and details of the catchment area
- **audit of transport infrastructure and initiatives** – qualitative review of existing sustainable and active travel measures both on-site (for example, cycle parking) and on key routes to and from the school, identifying current issues and opportunities
- **current mode share and travel attitudes** – pupil and staff data collected through surveys with pupils, parents/ carers and staff on how people currently travel, and their attitudes toward sustainable and active modes. Reliable and robust data-led approaches to understanding school travel patterns and opportunities should be encouraged
- **objectives** – a clear set of aims outlining what the plan seeks to achieve (for example, increasing walking or cycling)
- **targets** – annual SMART targets (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound), including ambitious active travel mode share targets
- **actions** – defined measures to achieve the objectives and targets, covering behaviour change, infrastructure improvements and monitoring. Each action should include start and end dates, responsibilities and required resources
- **review dates** – timelines for reviewing the travel plan, typically including an annual review and a full renewal every three years



3.2.16 The monitoring of travel plans is also very important and can be undertaken through annual mode share surveys (for both staff and pupils) carried out at the same time each year. ATE recommends collecting disaggregated data, for example by gender, so that the impact of interventions on women and girls can be understood. Where targets are not met, causes should be investigated and further measures considered.

3.2.17 Where a travel plan is in place, all new staff, pupils and parents/carers should receive Welcome Packs promoting the School Travel Plan. These will typically include:

- information on accessing the school by sustainable and active modes, including cycle/scooter parking provision
- maps of key routes and any Park and Stride locations
- details of local public transport services and any travel plan initiatives such as walking, wheeling and cycling buses

3.2.18 Provision of these packs should be included as a formal action within the School Travel Plan.

3.2.19 [Modeshift STARS Education](#), supported by ATE, provides a framework for schools to create, monitor and achieve accreditation for their School Travel Plan.



4. Delivering active school journeys

4.1 Co-design and engagement

4.1.1 Successful active travel schemes that improve the journey to and from school are those developed with, rather than for, the people who use them. Engagement should be proportionate to the scale of the intervention, but should always be inclusive, meaningful and transparent.

4.1.2 Pupils and parents are often able to identify hazards or opportunities that professionals may overlook. Their lived experience provides valuable insight into how routes and places are actually used. Local highway authorities should engage early with children and young people, as well as with school leaders, the local community and local businesses. They should also engage groups representing disabled people and others who may be disproportionately affected by changes to access, parking or street layout.

4.1.3 Schools play an important role in facilitating engagement. Headteachers, governors and school travel champions can help communicate objectives, coordinate participation and sustain involvement.

4.1.4 Communication should be clear, accessible and tailored to the audience. Any changes to access, parking or traffic management should be clearly explained using plain language and wherever possible supported by visual materials. Temporary trials or demonstration projects can also help communities experience proposed changes before they are made permanent, providing opportunities to test, learn and refine designs based on lived experience.

4.1.5 Engagement should continue through delivery and post-implementation to capture feedback and adapt interventions where needed. A record of engagement activities and feedback should be maintained.

4.1.6 The below toolkits and resources can help in undertaking street design assessments and engagement activities, including with children and young people:

- ATE's Streets for Schools Tool
- [ATE's best practice guide to community consultation and engagement](#)
- [Modeshift Active Travel Inspectors](#)
- [Voice Opportunity Power toolkit](#)
- [Healthy Streets tools](#)



4.2 Behaviour change initiatives

4.2.1 Infrastructure alone will not deliver the full benefits of active travel. New or improved routes and streets should be supported by behaviour change initiatives that build confidence, awareness and routine habits among children, parents/carers and staff.

4.2.2 Behaviour change measures should be planned alongside highway schemes from the outset and delivered before, during and after implementation, as appropriate. They should be embedded within the School Travel Plan and aligned with the objectives of the scheme.

4.2.3 Schools, supported by local authorities and ATE, should take opportunities to embed active travel within the curriculum and culture of the school community. This can include:

- **[Bikeability](#) training** – ensuring that pupils have the skills and confidence to cycle safely and independently
- **walking, wheeling and [cycling buses](#)** – where groups of pupils travel together along agreed routes under adult supervision

- **in-school campaigns and events** – such as [Living Streets](#)’ WOW Travel Tracker and Walk to School Week, ‘Bling Your Bike’ competitions, or inter-class challenges using digital tools
- **curriculum-linked projects** – exploring themes of transport, health, wellbeing or climate into lessons
- **parent and carer engagement** – using clear, positive messaging about the benefits of active travel

4.2.4 Local highway authorities can support schools by providing officer support, templates, small grants, promotional materials and coordination through programmes such as Modeshift STARS Education (see paragraph 3.2.19).



4.3 Monitoring

4.3.1 Monitoring and evaluation are essential to assess whether a highway scheme is achieving its intended outcomes and identifying where further changes may be needed. Local highway authorities and schools should agree a monitoring and evaluation strategy at the outset of the scheme, including baseline data where possible.

4.3.2 Monitoring will be most effective when combining quantitative and qualitative data and where possible data should be disaggregated by gender. Data collection methods should be consistent to facilitate comparison and analysis.

4.3.3 Quantitative monitoring may include:

- mode share data for pupils and staff
- pedestrian and cycle counts at school entrances and on key approach routes, using a consistent methodology and at similar times of year
- traffic speed and volume data on surrounding streets
- parking and vehicle access observations, including compliance and displacement
- air quality or related environmental data, where relevant

4.3.4 Qualitative monitoring may include:

- surveys capturing community perceptions and experiences, such as whether journeys feel safer, easier and more pleasant
- focus groups or interviews with pupils, parents and carers, staff and local residents
- pupil-led audits, mapping or place-based exercises
- feedback from school leaders and delivery partners on how the scheme is operating in practice

4.3.5 It's important that transport outcomes are considered alongside wider benefits and against strategic objectives when evaluating the success of schemes.

4.3.6 Where possible, baseline and follow-up monitoring should align with School Travel Plan reviews to support consistency and avoid duplication.

4.3.7 Local highway authorities should maintain clear and proportionate records for every scheme. This could include baseline conditions, engagement activity, design decisions, monitoring data, operational issues, complaints, mitigation measures and lessons learned. Findings should be shared with schools and communities and used to inform updates to School Travel Plans, LTPs, LCWIPs and wider local authority strategies and programmes.

4.3.8 Local highway authorities should consider reviewing and report on active school journey schemes regularly, for example annually or biennially, to support continuous improvement and future investment.





Active
Travel
England