

Headteacher hits out over bus row

stephen.exley@cambridge-news.co.uk

A LIVID headteacher has lambasted a council's "absurd" plans to axe free bus places for pupils.

Youngsters who live in parts of Girton and Oakington will no longer be entitled to free travel to Impington Village College from September under current proposals.

Cambridgeshire County Council says work on the footpath and cycleway between the villages is now complete and the route is totally safe for youngsters - despite the 60mph speed limit in place.



Pupils and parents in the area protest the moves.

The remaining spaces on the school bus are now available for £120 per term, but at least 50 pupils as young as 11 will have to travel up to three miles on their own.

Robert Campbell, college principal, said: "It's an accident waiting to happen. If I was a parent I'd be looking at hiring a barrister to take the council to court. Impington Village College was certainly not

involved in any consultation - I think it's appalling.

"This will severely damage schools' faith in the council's ability and their relationship with the authority."

And the News has learned another school bus, which takes 18 children as young as four from Rampton to Cottenham Primary School, is set to be axed in September.

Louise Adams, who helps out on the bus, said: "We're very upset. They are doing work on the route to the school now, but I know the road and I don't think it's safe."

Speaking about the problems at Impington, Mr Campbell told the News he believes the decision was purely to save cash, and questioned the council's claims the route was safe for youngsters.

He said: "It is an absurd decision, and would be an environmental disaster. It's clearly not been made for pupils' wellbeing or safety, so it must be a cost-cutting decision.

"It will mean adults bringing an extra 60 or 70 vehicles into the already-congested village every day.

"It is fair to say that I am furious about it, and the college will be doing everything it can to persuade the council to change its mind.

"I have been running on the route myself, and I don't think it's safe. It is very isolated, the speed limit is 60mph and the pathway peters out as you come into Histon."

Anna Lloyd-Griffiths, a Girton parent against the decision not to provide bus places for youngsters who live within three miles of the school, said: "Obviously this is a cost-cutting exercise disguised as a 'safer route to school' or green issue."

Speaking about the angry reactions to the changes for the Cottenham and Impington schools, a council spokesman said pupils within three miles of a secondary school - or two miles of a primary school - were no longer eligible for free transport if the walking route was safe.

Appeals against the decisions must be registered by April 11.