

FAQs Regarding Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge's Response to the Brighter Futures School Transport Consultation

1. What is the Brighter Futures School Transport Consultation?

Brighter Futures for Children as part of Reading Borough council have launched a consultation to review their current School Transport Policy. This is a process initiated to gather feedback and input regarding proposed changes to school transport policies and services aimed at enhancing accessibility, efficiency, and inclusivity. The consultation was launched on 19 February 2024 and closes 17 March 2024.

2. What is Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge's position on the consultation?

Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge is actively engaged in the consultation process and will provide a comprehensive response outlining its concerns and recommendations regarding the proposed changes to school transport arrangements. We will work closely with our whole school community to support them in making their views heard.

3. What is Maiden Erlegh Trust's position and response?

Jon Peck (CEO) and Andy Johnson (Director of Secondary Education) have met with Brian Grady (RBC's Director of Education) to gain a greater understanding of the proposal and its impacts. The Trust will also be submitting a formal response to outline the potential impacts.

4. What are the primary concerns raised by Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge?

MECE is concerned by the proposed changes to remove the provision of free transport to pupils in RG4 and in particular the timeline outlined. Furthermore, the concern around what the transport provision would consist of if free passes were withdrawn.

In short:

- Students currently at MECE should not be forced to change setting mid-way through their 5 year school career by placing a charge on their journey to school.
- Students holding an offer for September 2024 made their choices in good faith that free bus provision would be in place. As such this should be upheld for the school career.
- Parental choice of schools should be respected and supported. Educational Operating Authorities should place the needs of the child at the centre, rather than concerning themselves with county boundaries.
- There is a current national crisis with school attendance at secondary schools. Adding another barrier for families and young people is immoral. Those who are already economically under-resourced in parts of RG4 will be forced into decisions about schooling that will incur long walking commutes e.g.

From Weller Centre (Amersham Road Estate) to:

River Academy (Y7 only in 2024)	40 mins
Highdown	45 mins
The Wren	1hr
Maiden Erlegh in Reading	1hr
Kings Academy Prospect	1hr 30

- It is unclear what the capacity to absorb additional pupils is at these schools, further reducing parental choice.

- It is unclear how students whose families chose to purchase a bus pass to continue their education at MECE would be accommodated – would this be on the public 25 route or via dedicated school services?

5. What recommendations has Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge offered?

In its response to the consultation, Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge has made its position on the proposal clear:

- ALL current students and those with offers for September 2024 should have their bus provision retained for the entirety of their school career.

In effect this equates to a 5 year roll out of the proposed withdrawal of the RG4 bus pass scheme.

6. How is Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge contributing to the consultation process?

Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge is actively participating in the consultation process by providing feedback and recommendations based on its expertise and experience in education and community engagement. The school is committed to fostering constructive dialogue and collaboration to develop effective & realistic school transport policies that prioritise the well-being and educational success of all students.

7. How can you help?

You are encouraged to contact Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge with any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding the Consultation. If you require support to complete the consultation, then this is available.

School will be completing a piece of work with all current students so that their views are captured and shared as part of this consultation.

8. What is Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge's view on the process and communication from Reading Borough Council?

We have been frustrated by the poor communication with the school and Trust regarding this issue from Reading Borough Council.

There are factual errors contained in the papers issued to the Council with respect to size and name of school & that the school & parents were aware of the discussions around this proposal.

The timeline for implementation is of huge concern. If the most financially efficient option were to be agreed the impact from September 2024 would be hugely significant.

We share the frustrations of our community at the accessibility of the documentation for completion.

9. When are the community engagement events?

We have been informed that Reading Borough Council / Brighter Futures have the following events:

Monday 4 March	Online at 6.30pm
Wednesday 6 March	Online at 10am and Civic Centre Reading at 6pm
Thursday 7 March	Civic Centre Reading at 6pm
Friday 8 March	Online at 9.30am and 4.30pm

In order to attend you have to book via email to
School.Transport@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

We strongly advise you to attend if you are able.