



Have your
Say!

Draft Open Spaces

Strategy

Consultation Document

We're reviewing the Open Spaces Strategy to make sure our parks, reserves, playgrounds, and public spaces continue to meet the needs of our communities now and into the future. This strategy will guide how we protect, improve, and plan our open spaces as our district grows and changes. We want to hear your thoughts.

We are accepting feedback until Tuesday 7 April



Learn more and share
your thoughts at

ItsOurPlace.nz

Introduction



Ashburton District's Open Spaces play a big role in our everyday lives.

Our parks, playgrounds, sports fields, cemeteries, gardens, walkways, and public conveniences are places where people connect, play, celebrate, reflect, stay active, and enjoy the outdoors. These spaces also help protect our environment, support biodiversity, and contribute to the unique character of our towns and communities.

The Council is now reviewing its Open Spaces Strategy to make sure we have the right mix of accessible, welcoming, and resilient spaces for everyone who lives in or visits our district.

The draft strategy sets a clear direction for the next ten years. It explains why open spaces matter, how they support community wellbeing, and what principles and priorities will guide our decisions about parks, cemeteries, public conveniences, and other outdoor areas we look after.

It's time for you to have your say on the draft Open Spaces Strategy. Your feedback is important and will help shape the final strategy. Whether you use our open spaces every day or only occasionally, we want to hear what matters to you and what you'd like to see in the future.

If you'd like to find out more, we encourage you to read the full draft strategy on [ItsOurPlace.nz](https://www.itsourplace.nz)

Have your
Say!

The easiest way to share your feedback is at [ItsOurPlace.nz](https://www.itsourplace.nz)

Why do we need a strategy?

We need an Open Spaces Strategy to help us plan for the future of our parks, cemeteries, playgrounds, and other shared outdoor places.

A strategy sets out a clear vision, goals, and actions so we can make good, long-term decisions. With a growing population, changing district needs, and increasing environmental pressures, it's important that we plan carefully for how these spaces will be provided, managed, cared for and support community well-being in the future.

This strategy provides a roadmap for how we will protect, improve, and invest in these spaces so they remain welcoming, functional, and resilient for current and future generations. It helps us create vibrant public places, look after the environment, and make sure our communities stay connected and supported.



A bit of background

Open Spaces in the Ashburton District

The draft strategy defines open spaces as the following;

“Council managed or owned areas of land or water that is accessible to the public and set aside primarily for amenity, recreation, nature conservation, reflection or enjoyment for people in the district.”¹

Council manages around 429 hectares of open spaces across the district. These include parks, reserves, sports fields, lakes, walkways, cycleways, civic spaces, cemeteries, and public toilets. This network also features over 137 open spaces that offer a wide range of recreation and nature-based opportunities.

In the draft strategy, Ashburton District's parks and open spaces are grouped into following eight categories. These categories help explain the main purpose and key features of each type of space, and they guide how we plan for and look after them in the future.

Category	Example of locations
Civic Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baring Square East & West • East Street Green – Central Business District (CBD) • Mona Square
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tinwald Domain • Mount Somers Domain • All Cemeteries • Ng King Brothers Market Garden Settlement, Ashburton
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awa Awa Rata Reserve • Lake Camp (Ōtautari) • Wakanui Beach • Harris Scientific Reserve
Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntingdon Ave Playground Reserve • Rakaia Salmon Site • Methven Dog Park • Digby Park Ashburton
Outdoor Adventure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Hood Middle • Lake Hood South • Ashburton Motorcycle Park
Public Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashburton Domain and Gardens
Recreational and Ecological Linkage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallbone Drive Reserve • Thyme Stream Walkway • Archibald Street Reserve, Main South Road • Riverstone Park
Sport and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argyle Park & Ashburton Domain • Methven Domain • Chertsey Domain • Mayfield Domain • Robilliard Park

¹ For the purpose of this strategy, it excludes buildings and swimming pools, but includes cemeteries, public conveniences and playgrounds located in open spaces.

What have we done so far and who else is involved?

Since the adoption of previous Open Spaces Strategy in 2016, Council has made good progress in the provision and management of open spaces across the district. Notable achievements include:

- Achieving a Four-Star Garden of Significance award for the Ashburton Domain in 2025.
- Completion of an omnibus Reserve Management Plan in 2024 for all open spaces across the district.
- Completion of the Recreation Facility Utilisation Study in 2023, which identifies current and future growth trends to support better planning.
- Completion of the Ashburton Domain Development Plan in 2020 that outlines how Ashburton domain will be developed and enhanced over the next 30 years.
- Progressing major projects from the 2016 strategy, including the completion and opening of Ng King Brothers Market Garden Settlement and new walking links along Mill Creek.
- Maintaining high resident satisfaction with parks, cemeteries, playgrounds, and the Ashburton Domain over the past ten years.
- Indigenous planting at reserves like Taylors Stream and Bowyers Stream strengthening ecological connections and enhanced rural character.

Council is largely responsible for the Open Spaces Strategy, and our Open Spaces team leads the work to deliver its actions, with help from other Council teams and other local and government agencies. The Council works closely with community groups and other organisations that own or manage open spaces to ensure consistent planning and management across the district.

How has this strategy been prepared?

This strategy builds on the previous Open Spaces Strategy, including analysis of responses from the past ten years of the Annual Resident Survey, and being shaped by community feedback gathered through past consultations on related strategies, including the:

- Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2025
- Reserve Management Plan 2024,
- Biodiversity Strategy 2024,
- Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy 2022,
- Ashburton Domain Development Plan 2020,
- Walking and Cycling Strategy 2020, and
- Long Term and Annual Plans since 2016

A workshop with Council's Open Spaces Team held in October 2025 also highlighted issues and opportunities across different types of open spaces.

Based on above analysis, we have identified the following as community preferences:

- Improved accessibility and inclusion across the open spaces
- Restoring and protect our natural environment by enhancing biodiversity and promoting sustainable practices.
- Strengthening community identity by reflecting local heritage and culture in our open spaces.
- Improving walking and cycling connections to create a well-linked network across the district.
- Providing safe, modern, and diverse play spaces for children and young people.
- Ensuring all communities have fair access to quality open spaces across the district.



Proposed vision, principles, and goals

Our vision:

“Resilient, inclusive open spaces that support community wellbeing, protect nature and heritage, and connect people across the Ashburton District.”

Our principles:

The following principles will help guide us as we work towards achieving objectives and actions set out in this strategy:

- 1. People first:** Design for everyday use—comfortable, welcoming, accessible.
- 2. Nature positive:** Protect and restore habitats, waterways, and biodiversity.
- 3. Partnership & Kaitiakitaka:** Work with others to enhance our open spaces, and care for place with mana whenua, respecting mātauraka Māori.
- 4. Access for all:** Remove barriers; provide equitable, inclusive experiences where practicable.
- 5. Safety by design:** Safe routes, visibility, and upkeep.
- 6. Local identity & heritage:** Reflect our stories, landscapes, and cultural values.
- 7. Climate resilience:** Plan for floods, heat, and drought; use resilience planting.
- 8. Connected network:** Link towns, schools, parks, rivers, and trails.
- 9. Value over time:** Look after our assets well and replace them at the right time so we get the best value for money over their whole life.
- 10. Evidence-led & adaptive:** Use data, monitor outcomes, improve continuously.

Our goals and objectives:

The strategy includes the following four key goals:

GOAL 1:

Inclusive, Accessible, and Safe Open Spaces.

Open spaces are welcoming, accessible, and safe for everyone, reflecting the diverse needs, cultures, ages, and abilities of our communities.

GOAL 2:

Positive Ecological, Environmental, and Cultural Outcome

Open spaces protect, restore, and celebrate the Ashburton District's natural and cultural values.

GOAL 3:

A Connected and Functional Open Space Network

Open spaces form a well connected and functional network across the district.

GOAL 4:

Community Wellbeing, Resilience, and Partnership

Open spaces support long term community wellbeing and resilience through adaptable design, sustainable management, and strong partnerships

GOAL 1:

Inclusive, Accessible, and Safe Open Spaces

Open spaces are welcoming, accessible, and safe for everyone, reflecting the diverse needs, cultures, ages, and abilities of our communities.

Goal one means we will provide inclusive environments for play, recreation, gathering, and cultural expression that remove barriers to access, support everyday use, and are designed with safety and comfort in mind.

Principles Supporting Goal One:

- ✓ People first
- ✓ Access for all
- ✓ Safety by design
- ✓ Partnership & Kaitiakitaka

How we plan to achieve this goal:

- 1.1 Shortfalls and surpluses in open spaces across the district are identified and remedied by maintaining and analysing mapping data identifying surpluses and shortfalls.
- 1.2 Ensure open space provision responds to demographic changes, population growth, and increased residential density by supporting ongoing development of open spaces and keeping Reserve Management Plan and Activity Management Plans under continuous review.
- 1.3 Where practicable design and upgrade open spaces to be inclusive, accessible, and safe for all users, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities by regularly review playgrounds provisions for adequacy, accessibility, and potential efficiencies in maintenance and provision.
- 1.4 Enable mana whenua and diverse community groups involvement in planning, design, and care of open spaces by collaborating with various community groups such as Hakatere River Trail Group, and Ashburton Domain User Group.
- 1.5 Promote public awareness and encourage community use of open spaces through events, education, signage, and digital tools. This will be achieved by implementing actions such as implementing a new signage strategy, preparing promotional materials, and adding more open space venues to Bookable (the venue booking website).
- 1.6 Ensure cemeteries are maintained as respectful, safe, and accessible spaces that support remembrance, cultural practices, and connection to local heritage, while meeting all legal and regulatory requirements including the Burial and Cremation Act 1964. We plan to achieve this by developing cemeteries development plans to assess capacity and future needs, and by making cemetery records more publicly accessible.
- 1.7 Ensure public conveniences and playgrounds are provided and maintained to a high standard across open spaces, supporting accessibility, safety, and comfort for all users by implementing an ongoing programme to upgrade, replace, or renew facilities so they:
 - ✓ reflect regular condition assessments
 - ✓ are environmentally appropriate for their location
 - ✓ meet sanitary, safety, accessibility, and customer service standards
 - ✓ Align with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles

GOAL 2:

Positive Ecological, Environmental, and Cultural Outcomes



Open spaces protect, restore, and celebrate the Ashburton District's natural and cultural values.

Goal two means we will strengthen ecological resilience and cultural outcomes through native planting, biodiversity corridors, nature-based infrastructure, and interpretive elements that reflect local heritage, mātauraka Māori, and the stories of place.

Principles Supporting Goal Two:

- ✓ Nature positive
- ✓ Partnership & Kaitiakitaka
- ✓ Local identity & heritage
- ✓ Climate resilience

How we plan to achieve this goal:

- 2.1 Protect and promote heritage, cultural, and natural features in open spaces through design, signage, and interpretation to help people understand and value the stories of place by implementing actions like:
 - ✓ ensuring existing and potential heritage features are managed and enhanced to support both open space and heritage values
 - ✓ prioritising the acquisition of open spaces with recognised heritage values
- 2.2 Enhance biodiversity through native plantings, habitat creation, and the development of ecological corridors across open spaces to support plants and healthy ecosystems. This will be achieved by integrating biodiversity principles into open spaces activities and undertaking revegetation and restoration plantings in reserves with important ecological linkages.
- 2.3 Enhance access to scenic, heritage, and natural open spaces in ways that are appropriate and do not compromise biodiversity by undertaking consultation with other organisations, including the Department of Conservation and Environment Canterbury.
- 2.4 Ensure pest and weed control through partnerships and outreach. This will be achieved by continuing pest management programs in all Council reserves and open spaces, and by promoting weed prevention through using non-invasive plant species.
- 2.5 Enhance walking connections and visual amenity by developing blue-green networks that link open spaces and neighbourhoods across the Ashburton District, by:
 - ✓ continuing to work with developers and community organisations to incorporate blue-green networks into new developments and to pursue future opportunities.

GOAL 3:

A Connected and Functional Open Space Network



Open spaces form a well-connected and functional network across the district.

Goal three means we will link neighbourhoods, town centres, schools, waterways, and natural areas through safe, accessible trails, green corridors, and open space connections that support walking, cycling, and everyday movement.

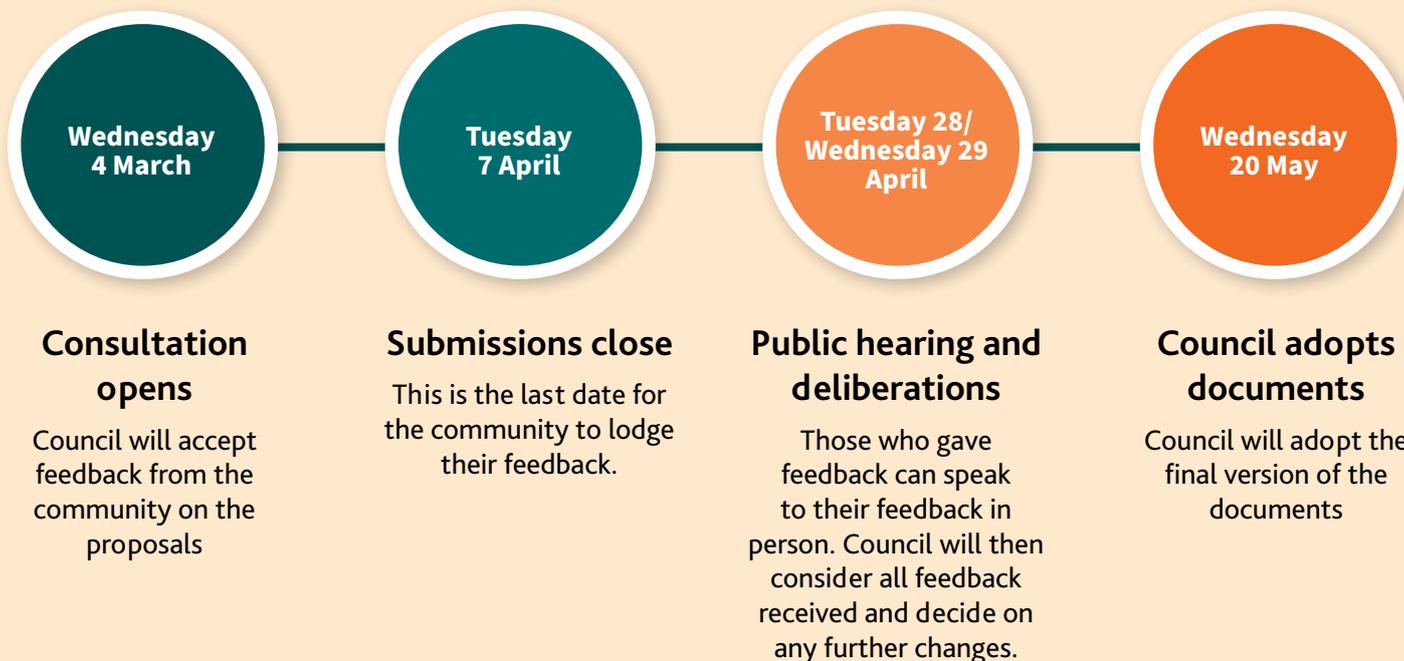
Principles Supporting Goal Three:

- ✓ Connected network
- ✓ Safety by design
- ✓ Value over time

How we plan to achieve this goal:

- 3.1 Build partnerships with Reserve Boards, community groups, and other organisations to create efficiencies in the provision and management of open spaces, by:
 - ✓ facilitating ongoing relationships with Reserve Boards to enable clear enabling communication and timely responses to issues, and working with the Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury, and the Ministry of Education to maximise connections between open spaces.
- 3.2 Build collaboration with land management agencies (e.g. DOC, LINZ, Ministry of Education) to maximise open space use by maintaining spatial awareness of open spaces by other agencies to identify gaps and plan accordingly.
- 3.3 Where appropriate, support district wide connectivity by maintaining, improving, and developing walking and cycling trails/networks in open spaces by developing opportunities within existing reserves for walking and cycling.
- 3.4 Assess and prioritise land acquisitions and vested land that contribute to network connectivity by integrating this strategy's goals in the Design and Construction Standards for Open Spaces and Streetscapes.

What happens next?



Have your
Say!

What's the best option for our community? Let us know!

Submissions close Tuesday 7 April

Fill out the attached short survey and return it via:



FREEPOST

Ashburton District Council
Freepost 230444
PO Box 94
Ashburton 7740



IN PERSON

Dropping it off at:
Ashburton District Council
2 Baring Square East

You can also provide feedback:



ONLINE

ItsOurPlace.nz



EMAIL

submissions@adc.govt.nz



The easiest way to
provide your feedback
is online at

ItsOurPlace.nz



7 What improvements or changes would you like to see in public conveniences across the district in the future?

Area or Location:

8 Do you have any other comments or feedback?

Please explain:

You can return your submission by:



FREEPOST

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PO Box 94
Ashburton 7740



IN PERSON

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2 Baring Square East



ONLINE

[ItsOurPlace.nz](https://www.itsourplace.nz)



EMAIL

submissions@adc.govt.nz

YOUR DETAILS

Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Address (optional):

Phone: Email:

Do you wish to speak in support of your submission at the hearing?

(if no boxes are ticked, it will be considered that you do not wish to be heard)

Yes: The hearing is expected to be held in Hine Paaka (Council Chamber) on 28 or 29 April 2026. Please note that hearings will be live-streamed to our online channels.

If yes, do you wish to present: In Person Virtually

No: I do not wish to speak in support of my submission and ask that the following written submission be fully considered.

Please note that submissions are public documents and will be made available on Council's website, including names of submitters (but not contact details). Find out more at [ashburtondc.govt.nz/privacy](https://www.ashburtondc.govt.nz/privacy)

Submissions presented in the form of a petition or accompanied by multiple signatures will be processed as a single submission.

Your feedback

Have your
Say!

Open Spaces Strategy Review

Consultation Document

Vision

Our vision for the future of Open Spaces in the district is:

"Resilient, inclusive open spaces that support community wellbeing, protect nature and heritage, and connect people across the Ashburton District."

1 Do you support this vision?

Support Partially support Do not Support

Please explain:

2 Do you support the four goals and their objectives of the strategy?

GOAL 1: Inclusive, Accessible, and Safe Open Spaces.

Open spaces are welcoming, accessible, and safe, reflecting the diverse needs, cultures, ages, and abilities of our communities.

Support Partially Support Do not Support

Please explain:



The easiest way to provide your feedback is online at

[ItsOurPlace.nz](https://www.itsourplace.nz)

GOAL 2: Positive Ecological, Environmental, and Cultural Outcome

Open spaces protect, restore, and celebrate the Ashburton District's natural and cultural values.

- Support Partially support Do not Support

Please explain:

GOAL 3: A Connected and Functional Open Space Network

Open spaces form a well-connected, and functional network across the district.

- Support Partially support Do not Support

Please explain:

GOAL 4: Community Wellbeing, Resilience, and Partnership

Open spaces support long-term community wellbeing and resilience through adaptable design, sustainable management, and strong partnerships.

- Support Partially support Do not Support

Please explain:

3(a) Do you agree with our draft action plan for the future of open spaces in the Ashburton District over the next 10 years? (see page 23-34 of the draft strategy)

Agree Disagree

Please explain:

3(b) Are there any actions in the draft plan (pages 23–34 of the draft strategy) that you think we should prioritise?

Please explain:

4 Are there any other actions Council should be focusing on or including in the final strategy?

Please explain:

5 Think about your local park or reserve and let us know, what improvements or changes would you like to see in the future?

Park or Reserve Name:

6 What improvements or changes would you like to see in your local cemetery in the future?

Cemetery:

 **Have more to say?** Feel free to attach additional pages to your submission.



Learn more and share
your thoughts at

ItsOurPlace.nz

