

Dog Control Bylaw & Policy

Consultation Document

We're reviewing our Dog Control Bylaw and Dog Control Policy and proposing some changes. As part of this review, we're also proposing a small change to our Cemeteries Bylaw. We want to hear what you think.

We are accepting feedback until Wednesday 15 July.

Have your
Say!



Learn more and share
your thoughts at

ItsOurPlace.nz



Ashburton
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Introduction

There are over 6,300 dogs registered in the Ashburton District. It's clear that we love dogs, but it's also important that they are managed responsibly.

Under the Dog Control Act 1996, Council must have a Dog Control Policy, and a Bylaw to enforce this policy. We're reviewing both and want to hear your feedback on the changes we're proposing. We want to hear what matters to you and what you'd like to see happen in the future.



6,300

Dogs registered in the
Ashburton District

Have your
Say!

Submissions close Wednesday 15 July

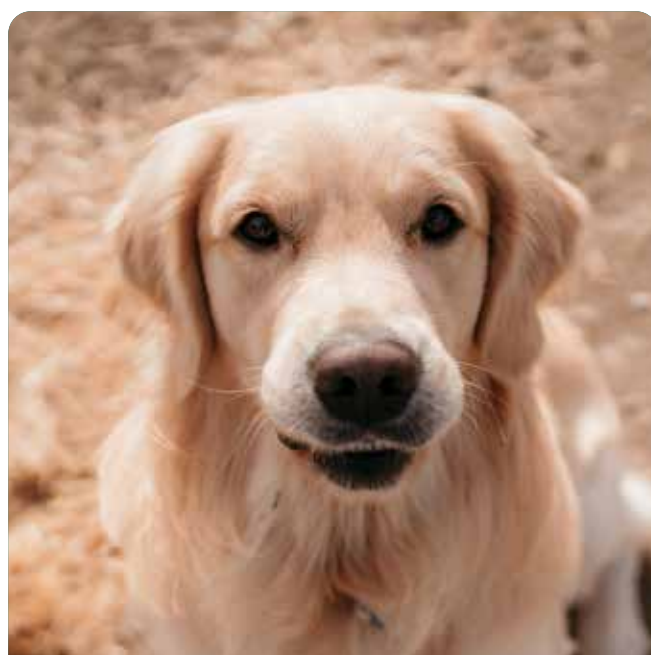
Why are a bylaw and policy needed?

The policy and bylaw work together to regulate dog control matters in the community.

The policy outlines how dogs are managed in our district. It promotes responsible ownership, provides for the needs of dogs (such as dog parks), and minimises the risk of danger or nuisance to people and other animals.

The bylaw enables enforcement of the policy and regulation of dog related matters.

Both must be reviewed at the same time.



The purpose of our bylaw and policy is to minimise the potential for dogs to cause harm, distress or nuisance, while also providing for the recreational needs of dogs and their owners.

Our aim is to find a healthy balance between these two objectives.

What's being proposed?

We think our current policy and bylaw are generally working well and contain the right tools to address the dog control issues we commonly see in our district.

However, there's still room for improvement. Recent serious dog incidents elsewhere in New Zealand have renewed public and government concern and highlighted the importance of effective dog control.

At the start of the year, we asked the community to share their thoughts about Council's rules for dogs. From that feedback, we noted a few recurring themes that have helped shape this review.

We've also updated and tidied both documents to make sure they're clear, consistent with our other bylaws, and include any updated practices which have worked effectively elsewhere.



Between December 2025 and January 2026, we asked the community whether our current rules were working and the feedback we received has helped inform these proposed changes.

83%

of respondents said they think our current rules for dogs in public places are sufficient.

74%

of respondents thought that we had about the right amount of off-leash areas.

We're proposing to make five key changes

You can read more about these on the following pages, and we'd love to hear your feedback on each topic.

- 1** **Effective control**
- 2** **Exercise areas – Removals and reductions**
- 3** **Exercise areas – Extensions**
- 4** **Exercise areas – New additions**
- 5** **Changes to prohibited areas**

Key change one:

Effective control

Our bylaw requires dogs to be under effective control at all times in public places, whether or not they are on a lead. This rule helps to avoid or minimise any potential problems.

We want to better describe what it means for a dog to be under 'effective control'.

We're proposing to update the definition to include that the dog owner or person in charge of the dog must:

- ✓ be actively paying attention to the dog and what it is doing
- ✓ be close enough to quickly respond to any issues
- ✓ ensure that the dog remains responsive to commands, with prompt recall and
- ✓ ensure that the dog doesn't create a nuisance to other people, stock, poultry, domestic animal or protected wildlife.

The current bylaw definition states that a dog needs to be responsive to its owner's commands and not creating any sort of nuisance to people, domestic animals or other wildlife.

Nuisance includes behaviour such as barking, rushing, attacking or otherwise causing injury, damage, harm or distress.



Submissions close Wednesday 15 July

Why?

We can help reduce the potential for dog attacks or nuisance by promoting better control of dogs in public places.

The updated definition clearly explains what's expected of people with dogs and well-defined rules help our Animal Control staff and contractor more effectively enforce the bylaw. It also aligns with what other councils have in place.



Pros and cons

Why does this help?

- ✓ It makes the rule easier to understand
- ✓ It helps to reduce the potential for problems

What could be tricky?

- ! Having the rules further defined can reduce flexibility

What choices are there?



PREFERRED OPTION

Make the changes as proposed. This is our preferred option.

Make other changes. We looked at adding further criteria to what it means to have a dog under 'effective control', such as introducing a maximum leash length. However, we think that further improvements can be achieved through education, rather than more rules. Council will consider any additional ideas provided through public feedback. Depending on changes made (if any), further consultation may be required.

Make no changes to the existing bylaw and policy. This is not our preferred option as we would miss the opportunity to improve the control of dogs in public places.

Have your
Say!

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Key change two:

Exercise areas – Removals and reductions

The bylaw and policy include off-leash areas, where people can exercise their dog without a leash as long as they are under effective control. We're proposing two changes to the existing off-leash areas.

Pioneer Park

Pioneer Park is currently designated as an off-leash exercise area (**Map 1**). However, as it's a former cemetery this is inconsistent with our current rules which prohibit dogs from cemeteries (*we're thinking about changing this rule, see page 14*).

We're proposing to treat Pioneer Park the same as our other cemeteries and remove it from our list of exercise areas. This would mean that either dogs are prohibited from Pioneer Park (*if we stick with our current policy*) or allowed into the park on a leash (*if our proposed change to allow dogs in cemeteries is adopted*).

Smallbone Drive Reserve

We're also proposing to reduce the designated exercise area at Smallbone Drive Reserve (**Map 2**), leaving only the area east of Smallbone Drive as off-leash (**Map 3**). Under this proposal, dogs could still be walked in the reserve west of Smallbone Drive, but would need to remain on-leash.

Have your
Say!

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Pioneer Park – current off-leash area



Smallbone Drive Reserve – current off-leash areas



Smallbone Drive Reserve – proposed off-leash area



Why?

Pioneer Park is a closed cemetery, so it's inconsistent with our other rules to allow dogs off-leash in the park. Under the current bylaw, dogs would be prohibited in Pioneer Park, unless we update our rules for cemeteries (*see our proposed change to this on page 14*).

Since our last review, a popular disc golf course has been established in one part of Smallbone Drive Reserve and we think it's no longer appropriate to allow dogs off-leash in that area.



Pros and cons

Why does this help?

- ✓ It's consistent with our other rules and documents
- ✓ It helps to reduce the potential for problems by requiring dogs on lead in spaces where they compete with other users
- ✓ Helps to protect graves, landscaping and memorials
- ✓ Respects the purpose of the space

What could be tricky?

- ! It may have an impact on current users of Pioneer Park and Smallbone Drive Reserve

What choices are there?



PREFERRED OPTION

Make the changes as proposed. This is our preferred option.

Make other changes. Council may decide it's appropriate to approve one proposal but not the other. Council will also consider any additional ideas from public feedback. Depending on changes made (if any), further consultation may be required.

Make no changes to the existing bylaw and policy. This is not our preferred option as it's inconsistent with our other rules (in regard to Pioneer Park) and does not reduce the potential for issues or nuisance.

Key change three:

Exercise areas – Extensions

We're proposing to extend some areas where dogs can be exercised off-leash.

Argyle Park

The current arrangements at Argyle Park (*Map 4*) are confusing for users, so we're proposing to extend the off-leash area to include the entire park. Dogs would still be prohibited from the sports fields and within one metre of the playgrounds. They would need to be on-leash within the car parks (*Map 5*).

While not our preferred option, we could also consider changing the entire park to on-leash (*Map 6*), meaning Argyle Park would be removed as an off-leash area.

Company Road

We're also looking to extend the current exercise area located off Company Road behind the Ashburton Business Estate (*Map 7*). The proposed expansion would include the entire path connecting Ashford Ave and JB Cullen Drive at the Northpark Road end (*Map 8*). As part of the change, the name of the off-leash area would be updated to Ashburton Business Estate exercise area.

Why?

These proposed changes have been shaped by feedback we received from the community earlier this year.

We're proposing to extend Argyle Park because the current areas are confusing, with users unsure about where dogs need to be leashed and where they can be exercised off-leash. The proposed extension would allow dog walkers to have their dog off lead throughout the park (with the exception of the car parks, sports fields and playgrounds).

We're also seeking feedback on the alternative option of making Argyle Park on-leash only. This option has been considered due to potential safety concerns, as the park is popular with a wide range of users, including children, cyclists, walkers and those participating in sports.

We're proposing to extend the Company Road area due to requests from the community and because there's suitable space available.

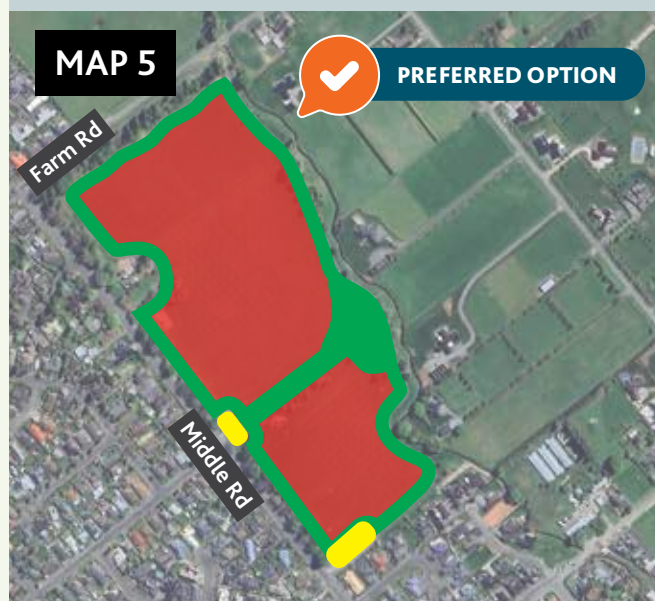


Argyle Park – current areas

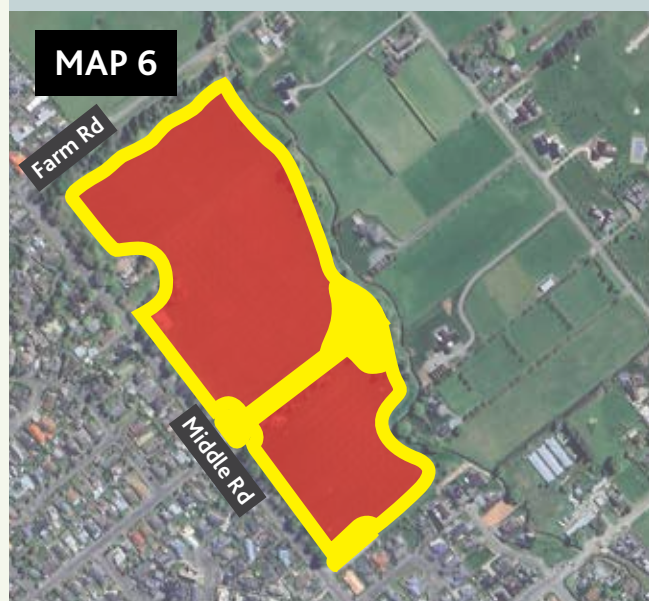


-  Dog off-leash
-  Dog on leash
-  Dog prohibited

Argyle Park – proposed areas



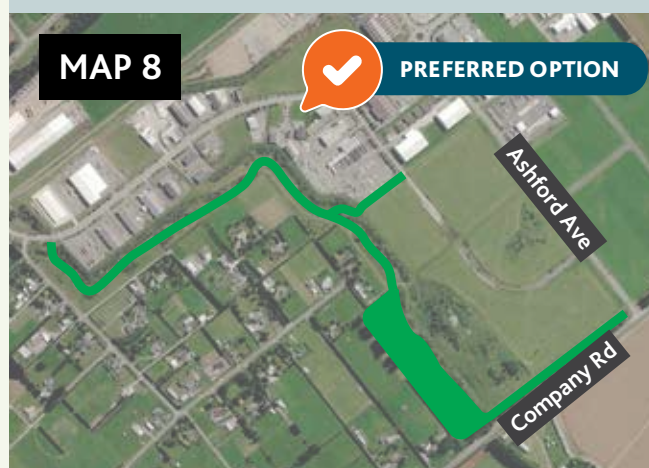
Argyle Park – alternative option with on-leash only



Ashburton Business Estate (Company Road) – current off-leash areas



Ashburton Business Estate – proposed off-leash areas



Pros and cons

Why does this help?

- ✓ Off-leash area at Argyle Park is easier to understand
- ✓ More area for dogs to be exercised off-leash
- ✓ Aligns with community feedback received during early engagement

What could be tricky?

- ! Both spaces are popular with other users meaning there is potential for issues to arise



What choices are there?



PREFERRED OPTION

Make the changes as proposed. This is our preferred option.

ALTERNATIVE OPTION

Remove Argyle Park as an off-leash area. Argyle Park could be removed as a designated off-leash area. Dogs would still be allowed on the paths around the park, provided they remain on-leash.

Make other changes. Council will consider any additional ideas provided through public feedback. Depending on changes made (if any), further consultation may be required.

Make no changes to the existing bylaw and policy. This is not our preferred option as we think the current areas are confusing and we had feedback supporting extension of the areas.

Have your
Say!

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Key change four:

Exercise areas – New additions

We're proposing to introduce new off-leash areas at the following locations:

Lake Hood – between Lake Hood Drive and the jumping platform (*Map 9*).

Braebrook – the swale off Braebrook Drive (*Map 10*).

Methven walkway – between Barkers Road and State Highway 77 (*Map 11*).

Why?

With the proposed removal of Pioneer Park, reduction of Smallbone Drive Reserve and our district's growing population, we think it's appropriate to look at introducing more off-leash areas to meet community needs.

- **Lake Hood** – The lake is already a popular place for dog walking and we think it could benefit from an off-leash area.

Dogs are still prohibited from being within 1m of a playground, so would not be allowed near the jumping platform at Lake Hood.

- **Ashburton** - Braebrook in east Ashburton has been included because there is an appropriate off-leash area available and the surrounding area has grown with recent developments such as Strowan Fields.
- **Methven** - A section of Methven Walkway has been included because we think the township could benefit from additional off-leash areas and this space would be appropriate.

We're also proposing to list the Range Street, Ashburton Exercise Area and Rakaia Dog Park as off-leash areas as they are not currently included in our policy or bylaw. *See page 16* for more.



Lake Hood – proposed off-leash area

MAP 9



Braebrook – proposed off-leash area

MAP 10



Methven Walkway – proposed off-leash area

MAP 11



Pros and cons

Why does this help?

- ✓ Provides more spaces for dogs to be exercised off-leash
- ✓ Meets growing demand and requests for additional areas

What could be tricky?

- ! Some may not consider these areas to be appropriate
- ! Nearby residents may not agree with dogs being allowed off-leash in these areas

What choices are there?



PREFERRED OPTION

Make the changes as proposed. This is our preferred option.

Make other changes. Some areas may be considered more appropriate than others, so not all proposed off-leash areas may be approved. Council will also consider any additional ideas provided through public feedback. Depending on changes made (if any), further consultation may be required.

Make no changes to the existing bylaw and policy. This is not our preferred option as we would miss the opportunity to provide more exercise areas for dogs.

Key change five:

Changes to prohibited areas

We're proposing to remove cemeteries from our list of prohibited areas and extend the prohibited area at Ashton Beach. We think dogs should remain banned in our other existing prohibited areas.

Our Cemeteries Bylaw currently states that all animals are prohibited from cemeteries within Ashburton District (except for disability assist dogs). Therefore, alongside the proposal to change the Dog Control Bylaw and Policy, we would also need to amend our Cemeteries Bylaw to allow dogs in cemeteries (provided they stay on-leash).

Why?

We recognise that many people consider their dogs to be part of the family and believe that dogs should be allowed within cemeteries provided they are on a leash. The change would mean that dogs can provide companionship and support for people during visits and aligns with what some of our neighbouring Councils do. All other rules would still apply, such as cleaning up after your dog. Council recognises that this is a sensitive area and are keen to hear the community's views before making any change.

We're also proposing to extend the prohibited area at the Ashton Beach / Hakatere River Mouth to protect the area's biodiversity and support the recent Ashburton River Hakatere Shorebird Habitat Management Strategy. The river mouth is a vital roosting area for kawau tikitiki (spotted shags) and other native birdlife.

We think that it's still appropriate to prohibit dogs from the other areas listed to the right. The Dog Control Act requires councils to be aware of the need to minimise danger, distress or nuisance to the community and the inherent danger in allowing dogs uncontrolled access to public places frequented by children.



Our prohibited areas

Dogs are currently prohibited from:

- ✗ All boat ramps and slipways
- ✗ All cemeteries (*proposed to change*)
- ✗ All playing surfaces of public sports grounds
- ✗ Within one metre of any playground or playground equipment
- ✗ In any public Council owned building
- ✗ Ashton Beach (*proposed to be extended*)
- ✗ Lake Camp reserve area
- ✗ Lake Clearwater hut area
- ✗ Lake Clearwater, Lake Heron & Māori Lakes shores

Note: Department of Conservation (DOC) owns and has control over the shores of Lake Clearwater, Lake Heron & the Māori Lakes. For further info about dog access on public conservation land, contact DOC directly.

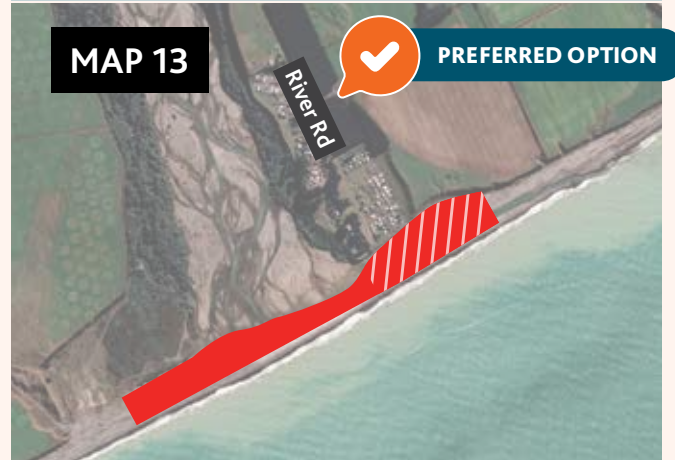
Ashton Beach – current prohibited area

MAP 12



Ashton Beach / Hakatere River Mouth – proposed prohibited area (preferred option)

MAP 13



Pros and cons

Why does this help?

- ✓ It helps to reduce the potential for problems
- ✓ It helps us to meet our legal requirements
- ✓ It helps to protect other users and biodiversity values
- ✓ Dogs can provide emotional support for those visiting cemeteries

What could be tricky?

- ! People who bring their dogs to Hakatere River Mouth may be unhappy with the proposed extension
- ! Some people may be uncomfortable with dogs being allowed in cemeteries, including for religious or cultural reasons
- ! Potential for damage and hygiene issues in cemetery spaces

What choices are there?

PREFERRED OPTION

Make the changes as proposed. This is our preferred option. Under this option, the Cemeteries Bylaw will also be amended to reflect this change.

Make other changes. The proposal could be adopted with additional rules, (e.g. dogs not allowed near headstones or prohibited from certain areas of cemeteries, such as the Muslim burial area). Council will also consider any other ideas provided through public feedback. Depending on changes made (if any), further consultation may be required.

Make no changes to the existing bylaw and policy. Dogs will continue to be prohibited from cemeteries, and no change will be made to the Cemeteries Bylaw.

Other changes

Council is also considering other changes that are smaller or more administrative in nature. We welcome your feedback on these.

	Clause	Change detail
Changes to both Bylaw and Policy	- Definitions (bylaw & policy)	A new definition for 'registration tag', and updates to definitions for 'dog park', 'nuisance', 'playground', and 'working dog' for clarity and to line up with legislation
	- Clause 7.2 (bylaw) - Clause 3.5 (policy)	Advisory note added to clarify that if your dog does not consistently respond to commands then they must be kept on a leash
	- Clauses 7.2, 7.4, 11.2 and 13.2 (bylaw) - Clause 3.2 (policy)	Wording 'or person in charge' added for clarity
	- Clause 7.3 (bylaw) - Clause 3.6 (policy)	New clause added to allow dogs to be considered as under control when owner is absent (under conditions)
	- Section 8 (bylaw) - Clause 3.10 (policy)	New section about diseased dogs and dogs in season to reduce the potential for problems
	- Section 12 (bylaw) - Clause 9.3 (policy)	New section to allow temporary reclassifications and advisory note to clarify that dogs may not be permitted at events
	- Clause 17.3 (bylaw) - Clause 12.2 (policy)	New clause to clarify that Dog Control Officers (with the Police) may work to release dogs suffering in hot vehicles
	Schedule 2 – Part B (bylaw & policy)	Inclusion of Range Street, Ashburton Exercise Area and Rakaia Dog Park as off-leash areas, and corresponding advisory notes
Bylaw only	Definitions	Definition added for 'private way' for clarity
	Clause 7.5 & 7.6	Removal of unnecessary words
	Section 10	Re-worded for clarity
	Section 18	Removal of unnecessary words
	Clause 20.2	Removal of unnecessary words
	Clause 20.3	Removal of unnecessary words
	- Clause 21.1 & Schedule 2	Removed. Considered unnecessary as these are covered in the Dog Control Act 1996
Policy only	Clause 1.5	Update to the registration classifications table for clarity
	Clause 1.7	Removal of requirement to complete a 'working dog declaration form' to line up with current practice
	Clause 4.2	Change of wording for consistency with other sections of the policy
	Clause 6.1	Removal of date as it's no longer required
	Clause 7.1	Addition of (permanent or temporary) next to 'playground equipment' for clarity
	Clause 8.4	Wording changes for clarity and consistency
	Clause 8.7	Added to increase awareness of care needed when children are taken to dog parks
	Clause 9.1	New section added about conservation areas for consistency with the Dog Control Act
	Clause 9.2	New section added about dog friendly businesses
	Section 10.1	Minor wording changes to reflect current practice
	Clause 14.3	Minor wording changes to reflect current practice

The full draft bylaw and policy reflecting these changes can be found on [itsourplace.nz](https://www.itsourplace.nz)



About bylaws

When councils are making or changing bylaws, the law requires us to make sure that the rules are necessary, comply with the law and protect people's rights and freedoms.

Has Council looked at other ways to fix the problems?

Yes. When a bylaw is reviewed, the Council must think about four possible choices:

1. Change the current Bylaw
2. Revoke the Bylaw and make a brand new one
3. Revoke the Bylaw and not replace it
4. Keep the Bylaw exactly the same

After considering these options, Council decided that changing this current Bylaw (Option 1) was the best way to address current issues. Creating a whole new bylaw (Option 2) would be costly and less efficient, and revoking the Bylaw (Option 3) or keeping the Bylaw the same (Option 4) would not see any improvements to dog management in our district.

Section 155 tests

Council must also consider three legal tests under Section 155 of the Local Government Act 2002 when reviewing bylaws. Council considered these tests and decided that the proposed amendment to the Bylaw is:

- the best available way to fix the problems; and
- the best available form of bylaw; and
- creates no implications under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act.

What happens next?

Monday 15 June



Consultation opens

Council will accept feedback from the community on the proposals.

Wednesday 15 July



Submissions close

This is the last day for the community to submit their feedback.

**Tuesday 18 and
Wednesday 19
August**



Public hearing and deliberations

Those who gave feedback can choose to speak to their submission in person. Council will then consider all feedback received and decide on any further changes.

**Wednesday 23
September**



Council adopts bylaw and policy

Council is expected to adopt the final version of the bylaw and policy.

Have your
Say!

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

Submissions close Wednesday 15 July

Fill out the attached survey and return it via:



FREEPOST

Ashburton District Council
Freepost 230444
PO Box 94
Ashburton 7740



IN PERSON

Drop 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

Dog Control Bylaw & Policy Review

Feel free to answer as many questions as you like. You don't need to complete every question. You can view the full draft bylaw and policy at itsourplace.nz

Submissions close Wednesday 15 July

1 Do you support the Dog Control Policy & Bylaw as presented?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure / Other *Please explain:*

2 Key change one: Effective control

We're proposing to update the definition of effective control to include that a dog owner or person in charge of a dog must:

- be actively paying attention to the dog and what it is doing
- be close enough to quickly respond to any issues
- ensure that the dog remains responsive to commands, with prompt recall and
- ensure that the dog doesn't create a nuisance to other people, stock, poultry, domestic animal or protected wildlife.

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

Please explain why you chose that option and/or any other change you'd like to propose.

3 Key change two: Exercise areas – removals and reductions

3.1 Pioneer Park

- We're proposing to remove Pioneer Park as an off-leash area, as it is closed cemetery with people buried there (*see map 1*).

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

3.2 Smallbone Drive Reserve

- We are proposing to reduce the off-leash area at Smallbone Drive Reserve, so that dogs are required to be on leash in the space used for disc golf (*see maps 2-3*).

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

Please explain why you chose these options and/or any other changes you'd like to propose.

4 Key change three: Exercise areas – extensions

4.1 Argyle Park

- We're proposing to extend the off-leash area to go the entire way around the park (*see map 5*).
- An alternative option is to Argyle Park as an off-leash area and require dogs to remain on-leash around the park (*see map 6*).
- Please note that for both options, dogs will still remain prohibited from sports fields and within 1 metre of playgrounds, and be required to remain on-leash in the car parks.

☐ I support extending off-leash areas ☐ I support removing off-leash areas ☐ Not sure / Other

4.2 Company Road / Ashburton Business Estate Area

- We're proposing to extend the off-leash area at Company Road to include the entire path connecting Ashford Ave and JB Cullen Drive at the Northpark Road end (*see map 8*).

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

Please explain why you chose these options and/or any other changes you'd like to propose.

5 Key change four: Exercise areas – new additions

5.1 Lake Hood

- We're proposing to introduce a new off-leash area at Lake Hood, between Lake Hood Drive and the jumping platform (see map 9). Please note dogs will remain prohibited within one metre of the jumping platform area

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

5.2 Braebrook, Ashburton

- We're proposing to introduce a new off-leash area at Braebrook in Ashburton, a swale just off Braebrook Drive. (see map 10).

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

5.3 Methven Walkway

- We're proposing to introduce a new off-leash area at the Methven Walkway, the section between Barkers Road and State Highway 77 (see map 11).

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

Please explain why you chose these options and/or any other changes you'd like to propose.



Have more to say? Feel free to attach additional pages to your submission.
You can also provide your feedback online at itsourplace.nz

6 Key change five – Prohibited areas

6.1 Cemeteries (including the amendment to Cemeteries Bylaw)

- We're proposing to allow dogs into cemeteries, provided they are on a leash. All other rules would still apply, such as cleaning up after your dog.
- Council recognise that this is a sensitive area and are keen to hear community views on it.

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

Please explain why you chose that option and/or any other change you'd like to propose.

6.2 Ashton Beach / Hakatere River Mouth

- We're proposing to extend the prohibited area at Ashton Beach / Hakatere River Mouth slightly northwards (see map 13).

☐ I support this change ☐ I don't support this change ☐ Not sure / Other

Please explain why you chose that option and/or any other change you'd like to propose.

7 Other changes

- We're proposing other smaller changes on as detailed on page 16.

☐ I support these changes ☐ I don't support these changes ☐ Not sure / Other

Please explain why you chose that option and/or any other changes you'd like to propose.



Have more to say? Feel free to attach additional pages to your submission.
You can also provide your feedback online at itsourplace.nz

8 Further comments

Do you have any further comments you'd like to make?

YOUR DETAILS

Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Address (optional):

Phone:Email:

Do you wish to present 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 Tuesday morning 18 August 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
Submissions presented in the form of a petition or accompanied by multiple signatures will be processed as a single submission.



Learn more and share
your thoughts at

ItsOurPlace.nz



Ashburton
DISTRICT COUNCIL