

Do you wish to speak in support of your submission?: Yes  
Do you support the draft Dog Control Policy as presented?: No  
Let us know why: Submission as per the uploaded file  
Do you support the draft dog Control Bylaw as presented?: No  
Let us know why: Submission as per the uploaded file  
Do you have any further comments?:  
I understand that all submissions are public documents and will be made available on Council's website with the names of submitters included: Yes  
Supporting Document: MY SUBMISSION and supporting documents.pdf, type application/pdf, 146.5 KB

**Personal Details**

Full Name: Megan McAtamney

## MY SUBMISSION- Otago Daily times article and Council Meeting notes appear in the pages following my submission.

**I do not** support the proposed changes to the current bylaw/policy. Please find included my reasons for this, and supporting documents referred to. I have photos and some examples to support my objection which I will bring to the hearing.

**Reason:** You have proposed a designated area for dogs not on leads, but without this area being fenced off, the space continues to be part of the public area currently used by many people with or without dogs. Regardless of their nature, dogs can be unpredictable given certain circumstances, and with no physical barrier between the proposed area and the rest of the Business Estate, safety for all cannot be guaranteed if a dog is not on a lead and under the complete control of its owner.  
If you cannot guarantee the reaction of your dog given any circumstance it may be faced with (and this would be most owners), then the commonsense and safe approach would surely be for dogs to be on leads or behind a fence.

As a frequent user of the Business Estate I witness the following wide range of activities on a regular basis (some of which you may not find in urban dog exercise areas):

- Walkers with other dogs
- Runners
- Family groups with small children
- Horse riders, and horse and carts
- Cyclists
- Livestock on neighbouring properties
- Rabbits/Hares
- Council mowers and maintenance vehicles

**Point 1:**

New proposals should not disadvantage users who are currently enjoying the facilities and abiding by the law. I believe this will occur as the proposal includes the current sealed pathway used by many people as part of the loop walking track. Dogs that are off-lead are not going to be any more under the control of the owner just because they will now be in a 'designated area'. With no fencing or physical change, this area continues to be in the same public space where complaints have been received for dog poo, dogs rushing and chasing, or attacking. (See Jane Donaldson's comments in the attached Otago Daily Times report).

**Point 2:**

I am confused as to why you are now referring to this overall area as two areas - the Ashburton Business Estate AND North East Ashburton - when they are one and the same. Paths, dogs on leash signs, grass maintenance etc are a feature of this whole area – and used as such by many. In the Otago Daily times article and the Council Meeting Notes combined there are 7 references made to the Business Estate.

**Point 3:**

From talking to several people who support dogs being off a leash, I believe that the proposed dog exercise area misses the brief. I believe the dog owners want the freedom to use the entire sealed pathway route for their own fitness at the same time as exercising their dog. Hence, not even FENCING an area will guarantee the correct use and therefore safety of everyone.

**Point 4:**

I believe it is unlikely that owners who are currently objecting to having their dogs on a leash will use a leash to get to and from the designated area. I believe it is no coincidence that the current signage has constantly been vandalised, and question whether those responsible for this damage will be prepared to obey the restrictions of the proposed policy.

**Point 5:**

Please refer to the highlighted notes from a recent [Council meeting \(19 May 2021, see below\)](#). All the 'conflicting activities' listed here currently occur in the newly proposed area because of the network of paths that you have created for this purpose – it is all used as one area. The concerns referred to in both the [Otago Daily Times article \(see below\)](#) and the [Council Meeting Notes \(see below\)](#) are still going to exist because it is all used as one area.

**Point 6:**

[Please refer to the recent Council meeting notes \(see below\)](#). It is stated that Officers have proposed this alternative location due to the high visibility and openness of the area, but there is a large percentage of established vegetation in that area - especially the area directly next to the pathway where dogs can appear without warning. I would also point out that high visibility can work in the reverse as this allows the dogs that are off-lead to see other dogs in the area and approach them, as I have had happen in this exact area on several occasions. [Many times, I have been put in a situation where I have needed to defend myself and my little dog. Please refer to the email sent to Jane Donaldson 25/11/2019 and her response, a copy of this email will be provided at the hearing.](#)

**Summary:**

I do not believe the proposal will minimise potential harm and I think the council more than enough provides for the recreational needs for dogs and their owners within the Ashburton boundary without extending to the Ashburton Business Estate.

It is my observation that the majority of the dog walkers who use the Business Estate drive there, so therefore those wishing to go off-lead have the choice to use one of the current dog exercise areas in town designated for this.

I acknowledge the petition received but would have to question whether the signatures were all from dog owners who currently use the area or even have done in the past.

This is definitely a situation where the council does not have to make changes to placate a few just because they received a petition. Surely it is a HEALTH and SAFETY matter regardless of how many signatures are received. If the proposals go ahead, my opinion is we will continue to see a trend of serious incidents in the future. I believe this would lead to an increase of dogs off-leash, therefore increasing the risk factor for potential harm amongst the current users.

## An article in the Otago Daily Times (13 January 2020):

Dog owners breaking local bylaws by running their pets off the leash at the [Ashburton Business Estate](#) can seek to have the area designated a dog exercise area when dog control bylaws are reviewed in 2021.

A petition signed by 139 "concerned dog lovers" was presented to the Ashburton District Council last year after a sign was erected in the [business estate](#) reminding owners their dogs must be leashed.

The existing bylaw says dogs must be leashed in all public places except areas designated dog exercise areas. There are nine in Ashburton, but many dog owners make use of the undeveloped area at the [business estate](#).

The dog control bylaws, which set out the designated areas, were last reviewed in 2016.

Council group manager environmental services Jane Donaldson said more education was needed so dog owners were aware of the rules.

"We put a sign up in areas with significant problems with dogs being off lead and attacking other dogs and people."

A report to councillors for their December meeting said complaints had been received from open spaces staff and members of the public regarding dog poo not being cleaned up, dogs rushing, cyclists being chased, a dog attack on a horse and dogs being off leash. The sign in the [business estate](#) simply communicated dogs needed to be restrained as per existing dog control bylaws.

Dogs had never been allowed off the leash in the [business estate](#), she said.

"I think we have to do more on the education front and we have just produced a dog owners' manual on the website. Anyone who registers a new dog gets a copy of that to make people aware of the rules."

Councillors received the report and acknowledged the concerns expressed by the petitioners, but decided the dog control bylaws would be reviewed as scheduled in 2021.

Cr John Falloon supported their actions. "It will come up in front of the bylaw committee next year so it is not too long to wait."

Ms Donaldson said the dog control bylaws applied to public places all over the district.

"If it is on a road, that is a public place, but running around a farm paddock is fine - it is private."

She said council's bylaws were not out of kilter with other local bodies and many had stricter controls on dogs. "When you see the results of dog attacks on children it makes you think twice about having lenient rules. We have had our share of dog attacks in this district."

### **Ashburton Business Estate – Taken from the minutes of a recent council meeting 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021.**

7. In 2019 Council received a petition from community members opposing signage that was erected in the **Ashburton Business Estate** signalling that dogs should be on leads.

These signs were a reflection of rules that were already in place, which states that dogs must be on leads in all public places (except dog exercise areas and dog parks).

8. In December 2019, Council resolved to accept the petition and review dog exercise areas in 2021 as scheduled.

9. Officers believe that the **Ashburton Business Estate** is not suitable to be designated as a dog exercise area. This is due to the number of conflicting activities that occur in the area such as running, walking, and cycling, as well as other hazards such as low visibility and children often being present in the area. There have been a number of incidents that have occurred in this location.

10. However, nearby Council-owned land in the North East Ashburton area is proposed to be included in the bylaw and policy as a dog exercise area. Officers propose the alternative location due to the high visibility and openness of the area, reducing the potential for incidents.

11. The proposed exercise area has been included in schedule 1 of the bylaw and policy.