

9. ENTRANCE BARRIERS ON PARKS

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The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Parks and Recreation Committee on the continued opening up of park entrances to improve access for cyclists, wheelchair and pushchair users.

BACKGROUND

Many of the park entrances throughout Christchurch have barriers across them. Most of these barriers were constructed to prevent motorcyclists and other vehicles from entering. Today, they represent over-design and over-control of what is now a much reduced threat. Essentially, they are a legacy of the past that needs to be brought into line with a modern environment.

This proposal essentially suggests changing from a philosophy that primarily focuses on exclusion of undesirable users to a philosophy of primarily focusing on admittance of all desirable users. The reduction or removal of many of the barriers will improve access for cyclists, wheelchair and pushchair users and other members of the community. The barriers have restricted or prevented these groups using many pathways.

Recently, a number of park entrances have been developed and ‘opened up’ with little or no evidence of undesirable usage. One factor may be that motorcycling rates have dropped – with half as many motorbikes on the road as compared to ten years ago.

In the past it was assumed that the barriers enhanced the safety of park users. However, there are many park entrances around Christchurch that do not have such barriers. These have proved successful in allowing for the ‘free flow’ of cyclists through entrances without the need to dismount. Both adult and child cyclists are able to exit safely onto roads. They have also proven that cyclists and other pathway users can share accessways safely without the need for controlling barriers.

The proposed removal of many of the entrance barriers – particularly the overlapping “staples” will significantly improve cycling in Christchurch and give effect towards meeting the Christchurch City Council’s vision – “To be the most cycle-friendly city”.

The proposal will also work to the benefit of others as it is working toward bringing the paths up to the New Zealand minimum standard for access for disabled people. Currently many of the barriers particularly the double “staple” treatments do not meet these standards.



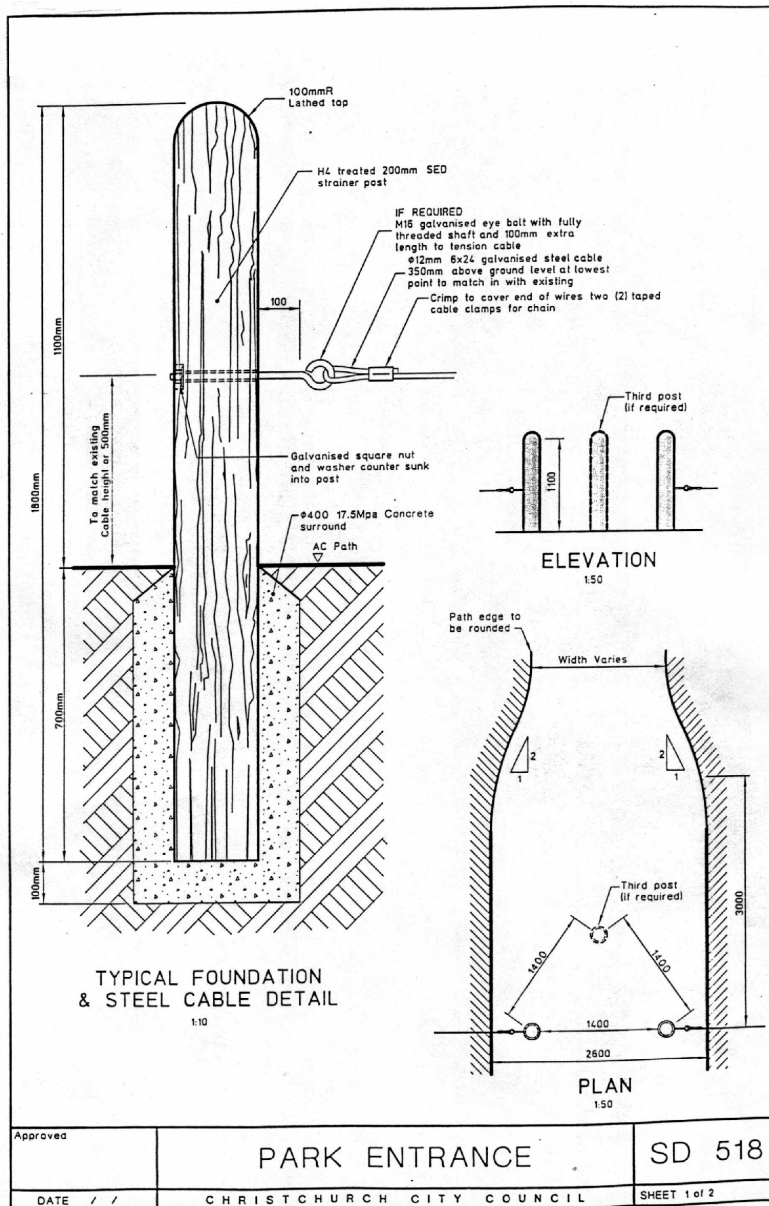
Figure 1 – Overlapping Staples

THE PROPOSAL

The Council's Parks Unit and City Streets Unit are identifying the park entrances that require alteration (with sealed paths). Once identified each barrier treatment will be assessed for potential improvements. This assessment will take into account safety factors, current minimum standards of access, available resources, future planned developments and local knowledge. It is estimated that approximately 300 park entrances throughout Christchurch will be assessed within this proposal.

Entrances that can be improved through removal of barriers and treated as per the design illustrated below will make up the majority of this proposal's implementation. This treatment costs approximately \$250.00 per entrance.

Entrances that may require more detailed design and development work will be noted and prioritised for future resourcing.



CONSULTATION

Owing to the large number of entrances being assessed for improvements it is proposed that the overall intentions of the project be publicised through community newspapers. Detailed consultation with Area Parks Officers, Area Engineers and other staff with local site knowledge will be undertaken to ensure that local issues and concerns that have been raised in the past be considered and taken into account when making decisions on specific entrances.

If the Parks and Recreation Committee has had comments in regard to specific entrances it would be appreciated if these could be conveyed to the appropriate Area Parks Officer or Cycle Planner.

FUNDING

To date, alterations to entranceways have been carried out in conjunction with path upgrades and park safety improvements under the Parks capital programme. Of course any new paths are installed to the new design. Any other entrances not picked up through the capital programme are funded from operational maintenance. Under this current level of funding, and working in conjunction with the City Streets Unit for shared accessways, this work should take 3-4 years to complete.

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above programme be endorsed.