

Access control guidance note

June 2023

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Introduction

Access controls (otherwise known as access barriers) are a common feature on paths across London, usually at an entrance point to a park or off-road route. Often installed for security reasons, access controls can inadvertently inhibit the fair and free use of the walking and cycling network, parks, green spaces, and towpaths. The point of this document is to ensure that existing and planned access controls allow for all legitimate use. Entry points must be inclusive by design and accessible to those with characteristics protected under the Equality Act (2010), such as disabled people, older people, pregnant women, and children.

This guidance note outlines a process for considering the suitability of access controls. It complements guidance set out in Chapter 4 of the London Cycling Design Standards, paragraph 4.5.15, 'Access controls', and provides:

- relevant legal definitions
- an explanation of the importance of paths for walking and cycling
- a review process for the removal, replacement and/or installation of access controls
- design requirements for access controls

Section I: Overview and legal definitions

Access controls on off-road paths typically take the form of physical barriers that are intended to restrict motor vehicles from entering an area or accessing a path or public space. Occasionally they are also installed to reduce cycling speeds. In some cases, they were a condition of planning permission for the route, which can create additional complications when trying to remove them. Most access controls serve to stop large motor vehicles from entering a park or other open space, and some are designed to specifically block motorcycles.

However, access controls can inadvertently prevent access for people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters, pushchairs, cargo cycles for transporting children or goods, child cycle trailers, tricycles or other larger or adapted cycles. TfL, boroughs, and organisations responsible for paths have a duty under the Equality Act (2010) to ensure paths can be accessed by all legitimate users, including those with protected characteristics. The overriding design requirement for an access point is that it is accessible to all legitimate users.



Designated access permissions

The legal status of a path should be understood when considering path access:

Public right of way

As the wording suggests, the public have a legal right to pass through 'public rights of way' (which may also permit cycling).

Footpath

Defined by The Highways Act (1980) as 'a highway over which the public have a right of way on foot only, not being a footway'. Cycling is prohibited on a public footpath, unless it has been designated a bridleway, restricted byway, byway open to all users, or cycle track.

Footway

Defined as: 'a way comprised in a highway which also comprises a carriageway, being a way over which the public have a right of way on foot only'. Cycling on or across a footway is permitted if it is designated as a cycle track.

Cycle Tracks Act (1984)

This act refers to, and provides additional clarity to, the Highways Act (1980) definition of a 'cycle track' as, 'a way over which the public have a right of way on pedal cycles with or without a right of way on foot... other than pedal cycles which are motor vehicles within the meaning of the Road Traffic Act (1972)'.

Section 2: The walking, wheeling and cycling network

The walking network is largely made up of footways and paths. It includes numerous signed local routes and the Walk London network - which consists of seven, sign posted, longer-distance leisure routes. Much of the network is shared use paths, many of which have access controls that need removing or updating.

The London cycleway network is made up of routes with high levels of existing and potential cycle demand. Routes are usually designed for high cycling levels, separate from drivers and pedestrians, open 24 hours and preferably with natural surveillance (designed so the path is not isolated and is easily viewable) both day and night. For these reasons, the London cycleway network is often part of the public highway and does not typically include off-road paths in parkland or adjacent to towpaths. While off-road routes through open spaces may not be appropriate for high-capacity cycling, they can provide important walking and cycling links for local trips; frequently they include access controls, which need removing or updating to meet the current standard.

Shared-use paths permitting walking and cycling total 1,900km of links in London (approximately, based on the Cycling Infrastructure Database 2018) with roughly 70 per cent located in parks, and 15 per cent alongside waterways.

Footpaths, cycling or shared-use paths may be used for wheeling, a term that encompasses the use of pushchairs, scooters, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and other mobility or carrying aids.

The quality and accessibility of these off-road routes varies enormously. The precise number of access controls in London is unknown but could be in the region of 10,000 access controls (based on the known number of separate off-road links). Feedback from borough officers suggests many are inaccessible.



Walking and cycling route, Brockwell Park, Lambeth

Section 3: Access control review

Borough responsibilities

Much of the walking and cycling network consists of shared-use paths. Often, they have extensive and well-established rights of way. Parks and towpaths frequently have controlled access to prevent large motor vehicle access and/or to allow for timed closures.

London boroughs are responsible for reviewing access controls in their area and/or liaising with bodies responsible for access in their boroughs to ensure access for all legitimate users. Boroughs should remove or replace all non-compliant access points. TfL supports this process through Local Implementation Plan funding. Boroughs may also have access to other funding sources that could be used to support this process. Access controls should be reviewed every two to four years.

The primary goal of the review is to ensure comfortable access for all legitimate users. A secondary goal may be to prevent illegitimate activity, such as motorcycling on the path or in the park, or other antisocial or criminal behaviour. A review may be prompted by complaints from members of the public. A review following a complaint about illegitimate use should by default cover legitimate access, while the time and resources are allocated. It is especially important to act on concerns relating to access controls that exclude legitimate users. All routes should be accessible to ensure the highways authority or responsible body is meeting the legal duties placed on them by the Equality Act (2010).

	Walking (including wheelchair or mobility scooter users)	Cycling	Horse-riding	Driving (motor vehicle)
Footway	Yes	No	No	No
Footpath	Yes	No	No	No
Cycle track with shared-use permissions (alternatively called a shared-use path)	Yes	Yes	No	No
Cycle track without shared-use permissions	No	Yes	No	No
Bridleway	Yes	Yes - Cyclists have a right of way but must give way to other users	Yes	No
Restricted byway	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Byway open to all traffic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Open access land	Yes	No	No	No

Review process

When considering the upgrade, replacement, or removal of an existing access control, or when considering the installation of a new facility, an Equality Impact Assessment and risk assessment should be conducted. Ideally, an area-wide review should be undertaken, with several or all access controls reviewed at a time to ensure economies of scale. Additionally, this will mean that all paths within a borough or area are accessible to legitimate users as quickly as possible so that authorities meet their Equality Act (2010) duties. As a general principle, physical barriers should be avoided and where they are deemed necessary, access controls should have a 1.5m clear width in accordance with both 'A Guide to Inclusive Cycling' (4th Edition, 2020) by Wheels for Wellbeing and the Department for Transport's Cycle Infrastructure Design, Local Transport Note 1/20 (2020).

If there is evidence of illegitimate use (for example, multiple complaints from residents about motorcyclists illegally accessing a park) or a concern about a terrorism threat (for example, an open space that can at times become very crowded), and these issues cannot be managed through alternative approaches (as outlined in section 5) then more restrictive access controls should be considered. Additionally, authorities should seek the advice of a crime prevention specialist. Local authorities have a duty to consider the impact of decisions on crime and disorder as per section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) and access control projects should involve a crime prevention specialist.

The four-stage risk-based assessment process outlined below may be used to assess the need for or design of access controls. It follows the SARA approach (Scan, Analyse, Respond, Assess) and helps identify any problems with the existing arrangement. This process is not necessarily sequential.



Walking and cycling route, Brockwell Park, Lambeth

Stage 1: Scan

An area-based review of the off-road walking and cycling network should be conducted to establish: location and number of existing access controls; if any access controls do not comply with the inclusive design guidance (providing a minimum clear width of 1.5m); and evidence of path misuse (for example, being used by motorcyclists).

Multiple access controls can be reviewed at a time. Locations selected for further investigation should complement one another spatially. For example, review all access points around a park, or address both ends of a path.

Links which connect to the strategic cycle network and/or to major trip attractors including town centres, rail stations, schools, and new developments, should be prioritised.

Alongside this, a review of the usage of connected or associated spaces should be conducted to identify any predictably crowded locations and/or 'grey spaces' which potentially harbour criminal activity. A crime prevention specialist can advise and may recommend further data be collected such as: feedback from residents, landowners, and the police; photographic records of issues such as vandalism, damage to grass verges or fly-tipping; crime data; maintenance costs due to misuse; video records of illegitimate use or evidence of interactions (including those causing anxiety or confusion, particularly to those with protected characteristics), and collision data.

Stage 2: Analyse

Analysis can help determine frequency and severity of risk. Problems identified in Stage 1 might be antisocial behaviour, interactions or collisions, noise, vandalism, fly-tipping, or damage to a path or grass verge. If any of these problems occur as clusters of incidents stemming from the same underlying cause, then it is helpful to establish their frequency (for example, every day, week, or month) and severity (minor inconvenience or major discomfort such that people avoid the route).

Problems which are frequent and/or significant may require one or more of the mitigation measures outlined in section 5. If evidence of frequent existing or serious potential criminal activity is identified during Stage 1 then the crime prevention specialist may recommend site observations. A site should be observed, ideally for at least one week, with 24-hour video footage. The borough may need to engage with users of the path to help identify why, when and where the problem is occurring and whether there is a need for intervention.

Stage 3: Respond

When considering installing, removing, or replacing access controls, boroughs should follow these key principles:

- Traffic-free routes should be accessible to all legitimate users
- Access controls should invite users onto the traffic-free route
- A general presumption against the use of access control measures
- Where controls are deemed necessary, they must comply with section 4
- Access controls should not be used to control speeds on the approaches to roads or crossing points
- Access controls may be used to prevent unauthorised access by motor vehicles
- Access controls are expensive to install and maintain, especially if they require moving parts; the case for an access control measure also needs to be reviewed in relation to the asset maintenance implications
- If a hostile vehicle concern is raised in relation to a specific site (for example, due to predictable crowding) then TfL should be contacted to provide advice on assessing the need for hostile vehicle mitigation. The Public Realm Design Guide; Hostile Vehicle Mitigation, September 2022 by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure should also be considered

Stage 4: Assess

Reviews may conclude that access controls should be removed or upgraded. In some cases, site-specific alternatives or mitigating measures may be recommended (see section 5) to allow legitimate access, while preventing crime. Changes should be made promptly where barriers do not comply with design requirements.

Where an access control is retained, re-instated or installed, it must conform with the design requirements set out in section 4. A written plan should identify the parties responsible for construction, ongoing management and, where necessary, monitoring.

This stage should involve original key stakeholders and/or working groups and form the basis of an ongoing review of access and crime considerations as part of a feedback loop into the design and management of the access control.

Section 4: Access control design

Design requirements:

- By default, access controls should have a minimum clear width of 1.5m (this should be the actual air gap and not centre to centre of bollards). There should be no obstructions on the approach. The width should be no more than 1.8m to restrict standard cars
- Where cycling is permitted, access controls should accommodate a cycle of 1.2 metres wide x 2.8 metres long, with an outer radius turning circle of 3.4m (this is the largest radius for any type of cycle, which exceeds that of any other personal mobility device)
- On pedestrian-only paths, the standard clear width is 1.5m for access controls. While the design standards for mobility scooters and wheelchair users could allow for slightly narrower widths and turning circle, most conventional pedal cycles would still be able to navigate the facility so it would not serve much purpose other than to make access difficult for legitimate users. Furthermore, a future change in status of the path, for example to allow cycling, would then require physical alterations to make the access control inclusive
- By exception, where a hostile vehicle threat is identified, a maximum spacing of 1.2m should be deployed
- Physical control features must be at least 1.0m high (to be within view). Any barrier which does not intersect the ground at right angles, should not have a gap in excess of 0.4m at the lower level, as this can pose a hazard for blind and visually impaired people that use a cane to navigate and who would not otherwise be able to identify the object
- Bollards and other control features should contrast tonally with the surroundings. Reflectors, reflective bands, or paint should be used to ensure bollards are visible during hours of darkness or in low light levels
- Where access points are adjacent to a road, the design should prevent the access point from being obstructed by parked vehicles. Designers should ensure a suitable transition point from the carriageway to the off-road path with a smooth transition (for example, dropped kerbs) of a minimum 1.5m clear width
- Surface gradients on the approach should be no more than 1:20 with a maximum crossfall of 1:40
- Access controls should not be installed where people can easily pass around the structure rendering the control pointless. The proximity of the access control to soft landscaping, grass verge or fencing should be considered during design



Fixed and lockable bollards, Cycleway 31, Kingston upon Thames

- Where adjacent fencing and/or planting is provided around the access control, this should be to a minimum height of 1.0m and be in-keeping with the character of the location
- Essential motor vehicles for maintenance or enforcement can be given access (for example, with a lockable bollard). Where there is sufficient width, a separate lockable gate could be provided for vehicular access
- More restrictive access controls should only be considered if there is significant evidence of unauthorised access and associated antisocial behaviour which cannot be addressed through enforcement or alternative approaches. In general, the least restrictive access control design option will be preferred in most situations
- Access points should enhance both the amenity of an area and the traffic-free route. Designers should consider scale, materials, and colours (ensuring they comply with above design standards). Consider working with local artists, urban designers, and schools to produce designs for access points which can offer opportunity to capture local history or features that are unique to an area



Lockable wooden bollards with integral signage, West Avenue, Waltham Forest

Recommended layout options

The exact configuration of access control arrangements will vary depending on the width of the gateway. Below are some options:

- Single bollards provided at an entrance point are generally suitable for paths less than 3.6m wide. They may be static or removable. Note that removable bollards are more susceptible to degradation than static bollards
- Multiple bollards in a single row may be used for wider access points. It will often be possible to design the approach to a road or crossing point such that users clearly understand the need to take additional care and give way to other users, without providing restrictive barriers

Avoid:

- A-frames which prevent access to disabled people and others or similarly complex barriers, are not recommended in any situation as they can impede legitimate access. Even where there is a persistent and significant problem of antisocial moped or motorcycle use, this does not legitimate the use of control barriers which are likely to exclude users, including those with child trailers or disabled people who use non-standard cycles, from accessing the path. The recessed barriers either side of the central 'channel' may trap and confuse a visually impaired pedestrian not walking centrally down the route
- Chicane barriers should also be avoided, since, as noted in LTN 1/20 8.3.4, they 'cannot be used by people on tandems, tricycles, cargo bikes and people with child trailers, as well as wheelchairs and mobility scooters. An access control that requires cyclists to dismount will exclude hand cyclists and others who cannot easily walk. Barriers fitted with plates that are designed to be narrower than motorcycle handlebars will also leave a gap that is narrower than many larger cycles'
- Staggered barriers or blind bends to slow people cycling are likely to increase the potential for user conflict and may prevent access for larger cycles and disabled people and so should not generally be used



Obstructive railings on cycle path, Ridgeway, Greenwich



Alignment of railings permits comfortable park access to legitimate users, Lambeth



Motorcycle prevention A-frame control, Ridgeway, Bexley



Bollard arrangement allows legitimate users, Kingston upon Thames

Section 5: Mitigating features

Where access controls are removed, updated, or not introduced, the following mitigating alternative measures may be considered

Signage

In certain situations, signage that informs users of access restrictions may be preferable to physical barriers. The signage may indicate 'no motor vehicles', or 'no cycling' depending on the path designation.

- An access control (provided it complies with design guidance) may have integrated signage highlighting route permissions
- Wayfinding signage may help direct people using prohibited modes towards alternative facilities

Alternative cycle routes

If people are routinely cycling illegally on a footpath, it indicates high cycling potential for that or a similar route. The existing alternative may be circuitous or require cycling on a hostile road with high traffic levels and no protection, which is likely to be off-putting for many. If that's the case, an alternative signed route and cycle facilities in the local area should be investigated. (Anyone seeking to prevent cycling by installing access controls will almost certainly create a barrier for other legitimate users such as wheelchair users so such controls should not be installed.)

Better natural surveillance

Well-maintained surfaces, the introduction of soft landscaping and waste collection regimes, and allowing cycling where it is currently prohibited, can enhance the attractiveness of the path, and improve natural surveillance through increased footfall and cycling. Lighting can also be considered.

Enforcement

Antisocial behaviour can be managed through enforcement. In certain situations, and as determined by a crime prevention specialist, CCTV surveillance combined with a rapid response to unlawful activity may help address illegal path access. Authorities should seek input from a crime prevention specialist.

Walking and cycling route, Trinity Street, Southwark



About Transport for London (TfL)

Part of the Greater London Authority family led by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, we are the integrated transport authority responsible for delivering the Mayor's aims for transport. We have a key role in shaping what life is like in London, helping to realise the Mayor's vision for a 'City for All Londoners' and helping to create a safer, fairer, greener, healthier and more prosperous city. The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets a target for 80 per cent of all journeys to be made by walking, cycling or using public transport by 2041. To make this a reality, we prioritise sustainability, health and the quality of people's experience in everything we do.

We run most of London's public transport services, including the London Underground, London Buses, the DLR, London Overground, Elizabeth line, London Trams, London River Services, London Dial-a-Ride, Victoria Coach Station, Santander Cycles and the IFS Cloud Cable Car. The experience, reliability and accessibility of these services is fundamental to Londoners' quality of life.

We manage the city's red route strategic roads and, through collaboration with the London boroughs, we are helping to shape the character of all London's streets. These are the places where Londoners travel, work, shop and socialise. Making them places for people to walk, cycle and spend time will reduce car dependency, improve air quality, revitalise town centres, boost businesses and connect communities. As part of this, our expanded Ultra Low Emission Zone and fleets of increasingly environmentally friendly and zero-emission buses are helping to tackle London's toxic air.

During the pandemic, we took a huge range of measures to ensure people were safe while travelling. This included extensive cleaning regimes across the public transport network and working with London's boroughs to introduce the Streetspace for London programme, which provided wider pavements and cycle lanes for people to walk and cycle safely and maintain social distancing. London's recovery is vital to the UK's recovery as life returns to normal. We want to ensure London avoids a car-led recovery and we continue to reassure people the capital and our transport network is safe and ready for them.

We have constructed many of London's most significant infrastructure projects in recent years, using transport to unlock much needed economic growth. This includes major projects like the extension of the Northern line to Battersea Power Station and Nine Elms in south London, as well as our work at Barking Riverside and the Bank station upgrade.

Working with the Government, we opened the Elizabeth line in time for Queen Elizabeth II's Jubilee. This transformational new railway adds 10 per cent to central London's rail capacity and supports the delivery of high-density, mixed-use developments, which are planned around active and sustainable travel to ensure London's growth is good growth. We also use our own land to provide thousands of new affordable homes and our own supply chain creates tens of thousands of jobs and apprenticeships across the country.

We are committed to being an employer that is fully representative of the community we serve, where everyone can realise their potential. Our aim is to be a fully inclusive employer, valuing and celebrating the diversity of our workforce to improve services for all Londoners.

We are constantly working to improve the city for everyone. This means using information, data and technology to make services intuitive and easy to use and doing all we can to make streets and transport services accessible to all. We reinvest every penny of our income to continually improve transport networks for the people who use them every day. None of this would be possible without the support of boroughs, communities and other partners who we work with to improve our services. By working together, we can create a better city as London's recovery from the pandemic continues.

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June 2023

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