

Inclusive Cycle Infrastructure Guide: Inaccessible barriers

Access barriers prevent legitimate use:

- Many access barriers are impassable for many cycles, mobility scooters, wheelchairs and Disabled pedestrians.
- Many Disabled people are unable to open gates independently.
- Low path use due to barriers makes spaces too secluded and intimidating for many more legitimate users.

Access barriers don't prevent illegitimate use:

- West Midlands police confirmed to Sustrans in 2023 that there is "No evidence to show that the [motorcycle barriers] reduce ASB/ illegal bikes." See also: <https://youtu.be/tJmvtMaLDyo>
- Access barriers create focal points for antisocial behaviour including harassment and vandalism.
- Illegitimate users are attracted to places with low usage.

How to make barrier-free, inclusive, safer places:

Making a place feel welcoming to everyone will encourage regular use by a wide range of people. This will make it safer. Quick, simple ways to do this include:

- Removing all access barriers, so everyone has easy access to the space;
- Providing amenities that encourage legitimate community use of the area, including well-designed seating;
- Improving natural or passive surveillance by:
 - Removing unnecessary signs and fencing;
 - Cutting vegetation back from paths;
 - Encouraging building owners and developers to build homes and businesses which overlook and are open onto green spaces;
 - Improving lighting, in some situations.
- Supporting positive use with community education campaigns e.g. signage made by local children.

It's best to have no access barriers at all. But if cars or vans often drive illegally on a traffic-free space and other measures like education, CCTV and in-person enforcement aren't working, then bollards spaced with 1.5m minimum air gaps between them can be used to prevent harm to people and the environment.



Credit: Harrie Larrington-Spencer

Motorcycle restriction A and K frames don't stop motorbikes- but they do stop legitimate users



Credit: Jamie Wood

All gates, including RADAR gates, are inaccessible.



Most pedestrian and cycle accesses don't need any barriers

Legal & guidance position on access barriers:

Equality Act (2010):

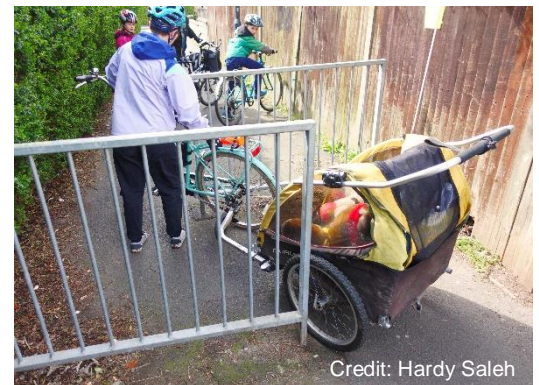
These duties are anticipatory: All reasonable adjustments to make a space equitably accessible for Disabled people legally must be taken without any Disabled person having to ask for them.

Section 20: Requires those responsible for a space to anticipate and make reasonable adjustments to enable Disabled people access with no substantial disadvantage compared to non-Disabled people. This explicitly includes including altering and removing physical features which would otherwise exclude Disabled people. It is not permitted to require a Disabled person to go a longer way around, ask for assistance or traverse a space much more slowly than a non-Disabled person would have to due to a physical barrier that could be removed.

Section 149 Public Sector Equality Duty: Requires public authorities to advance equality of opportunity for all people with protected characteristics, including Disabled people. This goes beyond removing and minimising disadvantages, and additionally includes taking steps to promote equality by actively enabling Disabled people to participate in public life and activities, especially where Disabled participation is disproportionately low (e.g. active travel).

Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN 1/20:

Section 1.6 summary principle 16: “Access control measures... should not be used. They reduce the usability of a route for everyone, and may exclude people riding nonstandard cycles and cargo bikes. They reduce the capacity of a route as well as the directness and comfort. Schemes should not be designed in such a way that access controls, obstructions and barriers are even necessary”.



Credit: Hardy Saleh

Chicanes are impassable for many people. They also create focal points for antisocial behaviour and littering.



Before: An inaccessible kissing gate



During access improvement works: Gate replaced with bollard

References/Further reading/Resources:

1. Equality Act (2010): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
2. LTN 1/20 Cycle infrastructure design: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>
3. Wheels for Wellbeing Guide to Inclusive Cycling (4th edition, 2020): <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/campaigning/guide/>