

Active and Healthy Travel - Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) are residential areas where through traffic (“rat runs”) are prevented by targeted road closures to motorised traffic, whilst still always allowing access for cycling and where appropriate also for buses. The aim is to create pedestrian and cycle friendly streets and a better liveable environment for residents. Waltham Forest, which contains Walthamstow, in London is the most prominent example of this approach in England – see pictures below.



Urban renewal of its shopping street with widened footways



Closing rat runs and the creation of public parklets.

LTNs create cycle and pedestrian friendly networks from people’s front door, fit for everyone to cycle from children to older adults. From that point they can cycle to identified cycle routes, either quiet routes or quick routes along main roads depending on their skills and propensities. Safe low traffic neighbourhoods therefore encourage both walking and cycling.

LTNs have great potential to make neighbourhoods safer, cleaner and more desirable. They enhance community togetherness and promote active and healthy travel options for residents. Despite initial concerns, it has also been found that they are good for the local economy – with local shops and businesses seeing improved revenues from increased footfall. They help to build people’s cycling confidence on quiet, safer streets, promoting improved public health and reducing air pollution. All this all helps to make communities where people want to live.

What is the Evidence for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods?

Data from “Walthamstow Village Review” comparing pre (2014) and post (2016) implementation surveys show the impacts of introducing LTNs and indicate why LTNs would be suitable to adopt as part of Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

Public Perceptions

- Traffic was the key factor in residents’ perception of the quality of their streets; with too much traffic the key complaint (50% of responses) and less traffic, less noise and safer roads the key benefits (80% of responses) of the LTN.
- Visitors (people entering from outside the area) were wholehearted in support, with 90% supporting the layout and appearance of the area

- Community Groups were very favourable, noting that residents could sleep with windows open in summer and more people were walking and cycling.
- Businesses were less supportive, with 46% in opposition compared to only 20% in favour. However, the local shopping centres were visibly improved with fewer shop vacancies.

Traffic surveys

- 14 traffic counters showed that there was a 50% reduction in traffic within the LTN from 28,000 to 14,000 vehicles per day. Of the 14 roads, two had small increases (19% and 26%) whereas 12 had decreases in traffic ranging from 20% to 95%
- The same counters showed there was an overall 1.9 mph reduction in mean (average) speed from 17.7 mph to 15.8 mph
- Traffic on the three main roads outside the area, where “rat run” traffic would be displaced increased by 11% from a combined total of 38,000 to 42,000 vehicles per day.

Cycling and walking

A safety analysis of 11 key junctions (using London Cycling Design Standards methodology) found that safety had improved at all junctions, with four moving into the (green) safest category and four moving from the (red) un-safest to the (amber) medium safe category. Automatic Cycle Counters at 11 locations showed a 20% increase in cycling from 837 to 1005 cyclists per day.

Health: Air Quality and Safety

Modelling undertaken by Kings College London showed the school run caused 14% of the NOx, PM10 and PM2.5 emissions from all cars between 8am and 9am in 2013. By 2020, there would be a 7% reduction in car emissions. Collision data from TfL revealed there were 15 recorded collisions within the LTN area in the three years before the changes; no collisions were recorded in the 11 months afterwards.

What are the downsides?

LTNs might frustrate some car drivers who are used to rat running and could displace cars onto other major routes in to the city. There is a perceived negative impact on local businesses, which may mean a strong initial push against LTNs.

Overall

We believe the evidence is strongly in favour of the benefits of Low Traffic neighbourhoods for many reasons - safety, health, air quality, active travel, reduced collisions, increased life expectancy and thriving communities.

Question 4

Active & Healthy Travel: Low Traffic Neighbourhoods - What do you think?

What do you think the benefits of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods could be for your community? How do you think they could be best introduced? What objections do you think there might be, and how could they be mitigated?

To respond please use the online consultation form.