

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

What are the traffic increases on boundary roads?

I've tried to dig out enough of the official statistics to provide a credible overall picture of what has been happening to traffic levels in order to test the view that increased traffic levels on boundary roads are not significant. Many of the figures were not easy to find. I sometimes felt I would have had more luck in tracking down the missing Lord Lucan!

It is worrying when leading journalists repeat myths about the impact of low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs). This month both the environmentalist George Monbiot, one of the Guardian's star columnists, and Jon Stone, the Policy Correspondent at the Independent, claimed that LTNs do not result in significant increases in traffic on the boundary roads, including the adjacent main roads.

Monbiot wrote: "The objectors spread powerful myths. They claim that LTNs merely displace traffic to other roads. But, as [government figures show](#), the majority of schemes reduce traffic everywhere". (*Ignore the culture warriors – low traffic neighbourhoods don't close streets, they liberate them* The Guardian 3/8/22).

Stone tweeted (13/8/22) "pretty much all the boundary roads are major A roads, but the evidence we have from existing LTN monitoring suggests there won't be significant increases in traffic or pollution on them."

George Monbiot has trenchant views but I believe is an honest journalist. In what I think is his first piece on LTNs, he simply took the headline figures at face value. (The Government figures he used are now regarded as shaky by the Department for Transport. It is expected to issue revised figures next month). I would have thought, though, Jon Stone should have been more familiar with the figures. He is a prominent cyclist and an early supporter of LTNs who has made numerous cycling videos featuring them.



It should be said accurate figures are not easy to come by:

- The difference in traffic levels experienced during Covid, when many of the recent LTNs were starting up, makes accurate assessments difficult (as a number of the consultants' reports acknowledge).
- Some assessments failed to measure the impact of LTNs on key boundary roads such as London's busy South Circular.
- Some reports admit to making errors (some later rectified).

What I've written should be seen in the light of all this.

What does the evidence show?

Jon Stone tweeted (13/8/22): “for my own amusement I had a go at splitting Lambeth into low traffic neighbourhood cells, because why not.” (see his map, below right). In his videos Jon comes across as a cheerful, pleasant guy but he far too easily dismisses the impact of LTNs on boundary roads.

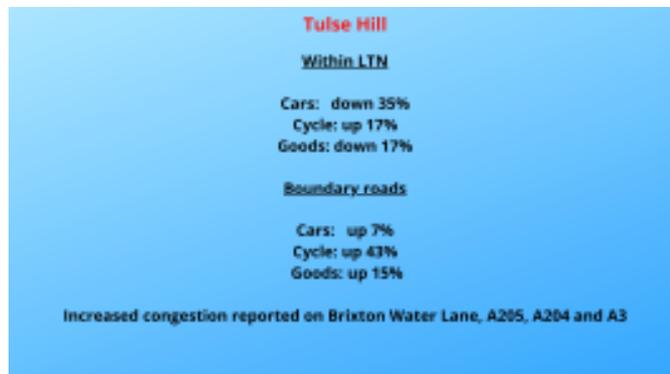
Look at some of the Lambeth evidence:

Ferndale LTN (1)



(Note: Ferndale Rd West is within the LTN but is also a boundary road for other roads in the LTN).

Tulse Hill LTN (2)



Streatham Hill LTN (3)

- Motor vehicle traffic fell by 54% within the LTN and when including the boundary roads fell by 5%.
- Car traffic fell by around 2,600 cars per day on Hillside Road, a 97% decrease.
- Hailsham Road saw a significant reduction in car travel of 87% per day.
- **Traffic on boundary roads generally increased:** Streatham Hill by 3%, Leigham Court Road by 26%, and Leigham Vale by 7%.
- Car traffic increased by 53% on Palace Road*
*Edit 17/11/2021: previously listed incorrectly as Leigham Vale.

What the Centre for London Report found (4)

“In some cases boundary roads have big increases in traffic”

"Overall the evidence shows big reductions in car traffic inside LTNs, but the picture is more mixed for boundary roads - some seeing increases in traffic and others seeing decreases. The data points to overall reductions in traffic, as increases in traffic on boundary roads tend to be smaller than decreases within the LTN. But how much traffic is displaced onto nearby roads can vary hugely - not only from scheme to scheme but from street to street. In some cases boundary roads have seen big increases in traffic".

"No matter how effective low-traffic neighbourhoods are, they can't remove our reliance on the private car alone. Although they suit local streets, they do little to reduce the traffic on main roads, and in some circumstances can displace traffic onto them. They also do not facilitate longer trips that may be challenging to make by public transport or active travel".

Lee Green LTN in Lewisham

Somewhat incredibly, Lewisham only measured the traffic changes on one boundary road impacted by its Lee Green LTN but this diagram produced by a local resident shows it was poorer areas which lost out. (the greener the area, the wealthier; the redder the area, the poorer. LTN outlined in pink)



London Fields LTN in Hackney (5)

Changes in daily average traffic flows on main and boundary roads for London Fields LTN that were negatively affected by traffic filters compared to baseline figures					
Location	Pre Implementation (baseline traffic counts 2019)	Post Implementation traffic counts (Nov 2020)		Post Implementation traffic counts (July 2021)	
		Total	Difference (against base figures)	Total	Difference (against base figures)
Whiston Road west of Queensbridge Road	7428	6106	1322 18%↓	11525	4097 55%↑
Dalston Lane (west of Queensbridge Road)	16743	13264	3479 -21%↓	20409	3666 22%↑
Dalston Lane (east of Kingsland Road)	16743	13264	3479 -21%↓	20583	3840 23%↑
Graham Road west of Mare Street	11426	unusable data due to damaged tubes		14316	2890 25%↑
Graham Road east of Queensbridge Road	11847	unusable data due to damaged tubes		14140	2293 19%↑
Kingsland Road north of Richmond Road to south of Dalston Lane	15078	13524	1554 10%↓	15387	309 2%↑
Mare Street North of Richmond Road	13681	13810	129 1%↑	15112	1431 10%↑

Table 5 - changes in daily average traffic flows on roads that were negatively affected by the introduction of traffic filters.

Dulwich LTN in Southwark (6)

The figures on the boundary roads during the crucial rush hour periods.

Half Moon Lane

7 day average Jan 21- Jan 22 = 20.1% increase
Weekday AM peak Jan 21 - Jan 22 = 26% increase
Weekday PM peak Jan 21 - Jan 22 = 14.6% increase

Grove Vale West

7 day average Jan 21- Jan 22 = 10.34% increase
Weekday AM peak Jan 21 - Jan 22 = 10.8% increase
Weekday PM peak Jan 21 - Jan 22 = 2.4% increase

Lordship Lane South

7 day average Jan 21- Jan 22 = 29.7% increase
Weekday AM peak Jan 21 - Jan 22 = 19.2% increase
Weekday PM peak Jan 21- Jan 22 = 15.5% increase

Croxted Road

7 day average total Jan 21- Jan 22 = 35% increase
Weekday AM peak Jan 21- Jan 22 = 43% increase
Weekday PM peak Jan 21- Jan 22 = 26% increase

East Dulwich Central

7 day average total Jan 21- Jan 22 = 2.5% decrease
Weekday AM peak Jan 21- Jan 22 = 7.48% increase
Weekday PM peak Jan 21- Jan 22 = 0.7% increase

East Dulwich Grove South

7 day average Jan 21- Jan 22 = 32.7% increase
Weekday AM peak Jan 21 - Jan 22 = 30.8% increase
Weekday PM peak Jan 21- Jan 22 = 16.5% increase

East Dulwich Grove East

7 day average total - Jan 21- Jan 22 = 20.6% increase
Weekday AM peak Jan 21- Jan 22 = 41.17% increase
Weekday PM peak Jan 21- Jan 22 = 13.1% increase

The consultants point out in their report that “results should be considered in the context of overall traffic levels being down **-12%** across Southwark”. They also acknowledge they did not monitor changes on the busy South Circular. Southwark, perhaps above all other boroughs, has been heavily criticised over the way it presented the findings of the consultants’ report (in order to show the LTNs in a more favourable light). It was left to residents to unearth some of the key findings.

References:

- (1). <https://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/documents/s139641/Appendix%20C%20-%20Ferndale%20LTN%20Traffic%20Impact%20Assessment.pdf>
- (2). <https://beta.lambeth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/Tulse%20Hill%20LTN%20Stage%202%20Monitoring%20Report.pdf>
- (3). <https://beta.lambeth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/Streatham%20Hill%20LTN%20SYSTRA%20Stage%202%20Monitoring%20Report.pdf>
- (4). <https://www.centreforlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CFL-StreetShift-LTNs-Final.pdf>
- (5). <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1beW7ldtU-KvVvi6BWTnvdmmXsRMFWLBKMva4pO2bJ84/edit>
- (6). <file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/Dulwich%20LTN%20Monitoring%20Report%20August%202021.pdf>

Written by John Stewart. He chairs the Campaign for Better Transport and the UK Noise Association but this report is written in a personal capacity and does not necessarily reflect the views of either organisation.

Email: johnstewart2@btconnect.com

17th August 2022