

Streetspace Programme

Environment Scrutiny Committee

November 2020

Executive Summary

This paper has been produced to inform the Environment Scrutiny Committee of the council's current situation regarding design and implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and progress to date under both the London Streetspace Programme (LSP) and the Guy's and St Thomas' Charity (GSTTC) Southwark Healthy Streets Programme.

LTNs are not a new invention and have been used for many years as an effective and cost effective method of reducing traffic over large areas and many LTNs were being planned and implemented prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Dulwich Healthy Streets project and the Walworth Low Emission Neighbourhood. LTNs work by reducing driving and encouraging modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport for journeys, this is achieved by:

- Encouraging drivers to switch for short journeys by making it less convenient and by providing safe and attractive walking and cycling routes with less driving, traffic pollution, and danger, and;
- Discouraging longer motor vehicle trips from "rat-running" through quite residential areas.

The council is responding to the pandemic, as well as the climate emergency and air quality emergency, by reducing the air pollution from transport. The council is also responding to how society has changed with most people working from home and staying within their neighbourhoods, and the potential 80% increase in driving caused by people avoiding public transport. The council's response, through its Streetspace Plan, aims to keep driving as low as possible to help tackle all three emergencies. Evidence from several LTNs shows that they create a consistent trend towards less car use and more active travel.

LTN's can build a sense of community as people are using local facilities more, with Paris seeking to create a "15 minute city" in which districts become more self-sufficient, creating a new localism. Urban planners believe this will transform people's sense of belonging as well as health and local employment.

Contrary to some recent, high profile news stories many cities around the world are creating LTNs to combat air pollution, encourage people to lead active lives, build communities and demonstrate the benefits.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed travel patterns across the country and brought opportunities to improve the health of Southwark residents, but also created significant risks of there being 80% more driving than before the lockdown in the borough. In the short term lockdown saw a significant improvement in London's air quality, people's health and safety to walk and cycle, but deterred people from using public transport. Thus as people return to work etc, it is predicted that private car use and pollution will dramatically increase, unless steps are taken to provide more sustainable modes of transport.

Earlier this year Transport for London (TfL) announced plans for emergency measures to be put in place under the London Streetspace Programme funded by the Department for Transport (DfT). In response to the London Streetspace Programme Southwark Council approved the Southwark Streetspace Plan at cabinet on the 14 July 2020.

The Southwark Streetspace Plan sets out how the council planned to deal with both the immediate need for social distancing and the longer term need to keep driving low and increase sustainable transport.

The Government has recognised the need for urgent action as it has provided only six months of transport funding and has 'flipped' the consultation process as it has instructed council's to deliver at pace. TfL have received the Government's funding and released it in four batches according to bids by councils. Restrictions have been placed on this funding specifying the timescales it must be spent within to ensure councils take action in a timely manner.

TfL are currently negotiating a second round of funding with the DfT based on a further submission of proposals by boroughs. It is expected that this funding will also have to be spent within six months' time, by 31 March 2021. The DfT have indicated that the likelihood of receiving further funding will be greatly affected by whether or not councils have delivered on the agreed schemes within the timescales.

Guys & St Thomas' Charity (GSTTC) have also expressed an interest in funding work in Southwark to reduce driving and increase active travel in order to help deliver their agenda of improved physical and mental health for those in greatest need. The council approached GSTTC who agreed to fund three LTNs in the borough. This work targets neighbourhoods with high deprivation indexes and schools with high levels of child obesity and poor air quality and aims to reduce driving and encourage active, healthy travel.

The project board has selected six neighborhoods and then shortlisted three that fit these parameters and mapped council housing, schools and green spaces within them to understand how people travel in these communities.

The project board contains officers from the transport, environment, and public health departments of the council and Lucy Saunders, representing GSTTC. Lucy Saunders is a public health specialist, urbanist and transport planner who created the Healthy Streets assessment framework for TfL that is now used to assess all major transport projects across London.

GSTTC has allocated the council £200,000 for the design and implementation of measures with a further £50,000 set aside to carry out monitoring. A report was due to be submitted to Lead Member for approval of the first round of the GSTTC schemes, but had to be delayed due to the change in Cabinet members.

Policy

National Policy

On the 27 July 2020 the DfT released its walking and cycling document [Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking](#). It sets out the Government's proposal to maintain the higher levels of walking and cycling seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence shows that, despite fewer people travelling overall during the pandemic, there has been about a 100% increase in weekday cycling and up to 200% on some weekends. In urban areas more than 40% of journeys are under two miles.

The DfT has stated that, to deliver an increase in walking and cycling, active travel needs to be embedded in wider policy making and local authorities are being encouraged to take bold steps to make this happen.

A key theme in this strategy is to empower and encourage local authorities by the Government creating a new funding body and inspectorate, Active Travel England. It will have an extensive role in promoting best practice, advising local authorities and providing funding for improvements. The Government has specifically stated that Active Travel England's assessment of an authority's performance in delivering sustainable travel outcomes will affect future funding allocations.

The strategy further states that all funding will be conditional on work starting and finishing by specified dates, if these dates are not complied with the funding must be returned.

Active Travel England will examine all applications for funding and refuse any that are not compliant with the new national standards.

[Updated guidance](#) on the statutory network management duties for highway authorities was also produced to provide extra advice on techniques for managing roads to deal with COVID-19 response related issues.

Local authorities in areas with high levels of public transport were asked to take measures to reallocate road space to people walking and cycling, both to encourage active travel and to enable social distancing during restart. It recommended that measures should be taken as swiftly as possible, and in any event within weeks, given the urgent need to change travel habits before the restart takes full effect.

Mayor of London's Policy

COVID-19 has restricted the capacity of public transport and there is wide-spread concern that a proportion of these journeys will switch to cars – making congestion, air quality and road danger worse than before the pandemic. In response to the need to encourage much more walking and cycling in London the Mayor and TfL released the [Mayor's London Streetspace Plan](#) (LSP).

The LSP focuses on three key themes for the projects it will fund:

- The rapid construction of a strategic cycling network,
- A transformation of town centres to enable local journeys to be safely walked and cycled, and
- Reducing traffic on residential streets by creating Low Traffic Neighbourhoods across London.

The approach taken across London has been to:

- Install segregated cycleways,
- Widen footways on strategic routes (ie high streets and stations) where needed, and
- Create LTNs in residential areas.

LSP guidance notes the LTNs are key measures to be introduced to create attractive and safe areas for everyone to use, including new and less confident cyclists and people using family and accessible bicycles, and to enable walking by socially distancing.

To rapidly deliver schemes within the required timescales the Government is instructing council's to use experimental traffic management orders (please see below). They 'flip' the consultation process to enable us to:

- Design,
- Install,
- Test and modify if necessary, and then
- Consult after six months to decide whether the scheme should be made permanent.

Please note that any activity by the council which will or is likely to affect the Strategic Road Network (SRN) or the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) is notifiable to TfL and subject to approval by them through the Traffic Management Act Notification (TMAN) process.

Southwark Streetspace Programme

Southwark Council has responded to the Mayor's London Streetspace Plan (LSP) by producing [Southwark's Streetspace Plan](#) (SSP), which was agreed as the council's response by cabinet on the 14 July 2020.

The SSP sets out a delivery plan in four parts:

1. Initial assessment, advice and / or enforcement, and immediate intervention measures where needed at significant pinch points.
2. Emergency reactive measures in identified hotspots to assist with social distancing.
3. Neighbourhood measures – which deliver local interventions focused on the Southwark highway. These include planned measures that have been priorities and measures from the public via the council's new Commonplace website.
4. Strategic initiatives - working with transport providers including TfL.

The SSP contains a list of interventions to be investigated under several headings (as set out above) with authority delegated to the Cabinet Member to make any required amendment to the programme.

Update on Guy's and St Thomas' Charity – Southwark Healthy Streets

The GSTTC projects are deemed to be in accordance with item three of the SSP, neighbourhood measures (as set out above),

Outline design work on three LTNs has been completed with the Cabinet Member for environment, transport and the climate emergency playing an active role on the programme board by providing strategic direction and helping to select locations for interventions. Ward members have been consulted, and the first two LTNs were generally well received, whilst further design work was requested on the third (marked below with an asterisk). Plans of the areas have been provided in Appendix A. The locations are:

1. Brunswick Park
2. Ark Walworth
3. North east Peckham

The areas are all centred on schools with high levels of child obesity and the links between them and the council housing estates in the catchment area. The aim is to reduce traffic on the most used routes to and from the schools, thereby reducing road traffic emissions and improving safety to encourage walking and cycling.

The IDM for the first two LTNs funded by GSTTC has been presented to the Cabinet Member and is currently pending approval.

Post Implementation Monitoring

Good practice following the implementation of an ETMO is to introduce monitoring to inform the decision making over whether the order should be made permanent after the six-month initial trial period. Most traffic orders that affect a large number of people will draw some objections. Thus, in order to determine the outcome of the trial and deal with any objections, the council sets out a case for how the measures in the traffic order are in the wider public benefit. Monitoring can take many forms, all of which have pros and cons and some have inherent risks. Therefore very careful consideration and a full understanding of the issues must take place before a decision is made on how the success, or otherwise, of a trial is to be measured. Any measurement must take account of what the expected benefits of these schemes are.

In the specific case of the GSTTC projects Guy's and St Thomas' are very keen to be able to gain robust scientific data on the effects of the scheme which can be used as part of a study into the effects of active travel on health inequalities and may help to shape future policy making. For this reason a large proportion (20%) of the budget GSTTC have put forward has been set aside to carry out monitoring.

In order to deliver the monitoring aspirations of GSTTC a draft monitoring plan has been put together and is attached in appendix B.

The opinion of the community as to whether the measures have brought an improvement should be an important factor for consideration and robust perception surveys can be carried out to allow a case to be made for whether the change is in the greater public good.

Traffic surveys of various types may be carried out, but it must be carefully considered what would be deemed a success. COVID-19 has presented some unique challenges for traffic monitoring in that due to the speed of the lockdown there has been no opportunity to carry out robust baseline monitoring so, in most cases, there is no "before" data to compare with. It is also likely that travel patterns may be changed permanently with people working from home and shopping locally. A monitoring plan may be put in place using other locations of a similar character as proxy sites to act as a control and allow concurrent monitoring to take place. For all measures it is important to allow sufficient time for changes to 'bed in' and travel patterns to settle down into a new normal.

During the bedding in period some traffic may be displaced onto routes around the outside of LTNs, however this is generally a fraction of the traffic those roads carry under normal operation and, in any case, traffic levels will generally settle back down to pre-implementation levels as traffic reassigns over a wider area and the intended mode shift starts to take place.

Air quality monitoring is a complex science as it is affected by many factors, including temperature, wind direction, air pressure and various sources. Road traffic accounts for around 50% of NOx & PM10 pollutants with other local sources also having a considerable effect on measured levels. Reductions in pollutants achieved by the implementation of schemes can easily be lost in a background of variations in levels due to prevailing weather conditions and in the myriad of other sources of pollution beyond road traffic. The council does measure air quality throughout the borough, but this is mostly used for tracking long term trends which averages out short term factors.

Appendices

Appendix A – GSTTC Scheme Location Plans (Draft)

Appendix B – GSTTC Monitoring Plan (Draft)