



**Social &
Environmental
Justice**

The negative impact of LTNs on certain roads and specific schools: Hackney as a case study



Mossbourne Parkside Primary School,
Dalston Lane, Hackney.

Shortly after the implementation of the Covid LTNs many Hackney residents noticed that areas close to parks where roads already had comparatively less traffic were now closed to what was being called '*through traffic*' in a stated effort to stop those roads from being used as '*rat runs*'.

Post-Implementation

Newly imposed '*filters*' meant that vehicles were now subject to large fines for driving on chosen streets, and as a result, traffic was displaced onto other residential roads that immediately saw a rise in traffic, congestion, noise, and pollution.

Many of the streets onto which the traffic was rerouted were also those generally with a higher proportion of social housing, less expensive owned homes (often flats rather than single doorbell houses), with a smattering of cheaper private rented accommodation.

These were often the historic residential roads which had been given an A or B designation years ago. They are our pedestrian corridors, having bus routes and other transport hubs on them. But most alarmingly in Hackney (and certain other boroughs) is the fact that these are the streets where many of our large (usually Victorian) primary schools and some secondary schools are located.

Raising Concerns

Despite being assured by various councillors that the traffic would evaporate, concerned citizens decided to compile lists of residential roads¹ where there had been significant increases in traffic and of schools² that were now facing an increase in congestion (within 50 metres) as a result of the creation of what were termed '*Low Traffic Neighbourhoods*' (LTNs).

1. Residential Roads.

(Albion Rd)*, Amhurst Rd, Ballance Rd, Balls Pond Rd, Cazenove Rd, Chatsworth Rd/Brooksby Wk*, Cricketfield Rd, Dalston Lane, Downham Rd, Graham Rd, Hackney Rd, Homerton High St, Kingsland Rd, Laburnum Rd, Lea Bridge Rd, Lower Clapton Rd, Mare St, New North Rd, Northwold Rd, Pembury Rd, Southgate Rd, Queensbridge Rd, Upper Clapton Rd, Urswick Rd, Whitson Rd*, Wick Rd, Manor Rd.**

*Change due to take place.

**Manor Rd was not on the original list but with the daytime closure of Church St it has been predicted that this will become the newest sacrificial road.

2. Schools.

Primary (inc. nursery class).

Mossbourne Parkside Academy, Queensbridge, Northwold, Hackney New, St Dominic's, St John & St James, St Paul's with St Michael, Lauriston, Kingsmead*, Rushmore, Morningside, Princess May, (Grasmere)***, Orchard, The Olive School, Simon Mark, Beis Rochel; D'Satmar School & Nursery Dept, Tawhid Boys School, Holy Trinity CE.

*High levels of pollution from Homerton High St congestion.

**Changes in Stoke Newington will change the situation for this school.

Special School.

Ickburgh.

Secondary schools.

The City Academy, Clapton Girls Academy, Hackney New School (Kingsland Rd), Cardinal Pole, Our Lady's, Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy, The Urswick School, Haggerston School, Clapton Girls' Academy (off Lower Clapton Rd), Lubavitch Senior Girls School, Stoke Newington School.

Group Pre-school/Nursery Provision.

RoofTop Nursery (Dalston Ln, now closed), Bright Kids (Kenworthy Rd), Monkey Puzzle Day Nursery, Sebright Children's Centre (Queensbridge Rd), Linden Children's Centre (Rectory Rd), Little Pioneers Nursery & Pre-school, Mapledene & Queensbridge Children's Centre, Minik Kardes Children's Centre (Balls Pond Rd), Bloomers Day Nursery, Wentworth Nursery School & Children's Centre (Cassland Rd), Pembury Nursery, Pembury Pre-school (Dalston Lane), Sunrise Nursery (Cazenove Rd), Co-op Nursery (Morning Ln), N Family Club (Mare St), Zeeba Daycare Centre, Amazing Days Nursery.

Air Quality Action Plan

Hackney's Air Quality Action Plan (2015–2019) was created as a statutory requirement for Hackney to meet national air quality objectives for pollutants like nitrogen dioxide.

Local actions

The Greater London Authority has identified strategic nitrogen dioxide focus areas across London where further action is needed to reduce air pollution levels. Eight areas

identified in Hackney are set out within Table 2 and shown in Figure 3.

Table 2: Greater London Authority nitrogen dioxide action areas

Focus area	Name	Description of location
1	South	Old Street, City Road, Greater Eastern Street and Shoreditch High Street
2	Clapton	Junction between Clapton Road and Lea Bridge Road
3	Hackney Centre	Area including Amhurst Road, Dalston Lane and Mare Street
4	Dalston	Junction between Balls Pond Road and Kingsland Road
5	Stoke Newington	Area including Stoke Newington High Street, Stamford Hill and Rectory Road
6	Stamford Hill	Area including Amhurst Park Road and Stamford Hill Road
7	Manor House	Junction between Green Lane and Seven Sisters Road
8	Hackney Wick	Area including Hommerton High Stret, Wick Road, Cassland Road and Victoria Park Road

Page 14, Table 2 - Air Quality Action Plan 2015–2019.³

The Plan highlighted the need for action to counter pollution from motor vehicles with eight areas identified that included roads such as Dalston Lane, Balls Pond Rd and Homerton High St. where local nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations were found to be almost double the UK annual average air quality objective.

Serious concerns were raised, above all about young children living and going to school on these roads being exposed to even higher levels of pollution for longer periods of time. Council representatives assured residents that traffic would soon evaporate.

Prior to implementation of the LTNs, residents within the proposed protected areas were consulted about the benefits of the plan. Months after implementation of the LTNs, Hackney Council announced that residents would be given a chance to raise concerns via an online consultation.

A list of roads receiving increased traffic and a list of schools exposed to increased traffic were submitted to the council and personally to Cllr Mete Coban, then Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment, and Transport.

A meeting with Cllr Antoinette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Young People, was requested, and at that meeting she was handed a petition signed by local residents, most of whom had children at Mossbourne Parkside Academy and/or RoofTop Nursery on Dalston Lane. Cllr Bramble did not respond to or even acknowledge in writing the petition.

Air Quality Action Plan

‘This air quality action plan replaces the 2006 plan and sets out the Council’s new vision of how air quality in the borough will be improved while protecting the most vulnerable members of the public.’

We will target nitrogen dioxide levels within these, and other, areas through Green Action Zones and business engagement initiatives.

Green Action Zones

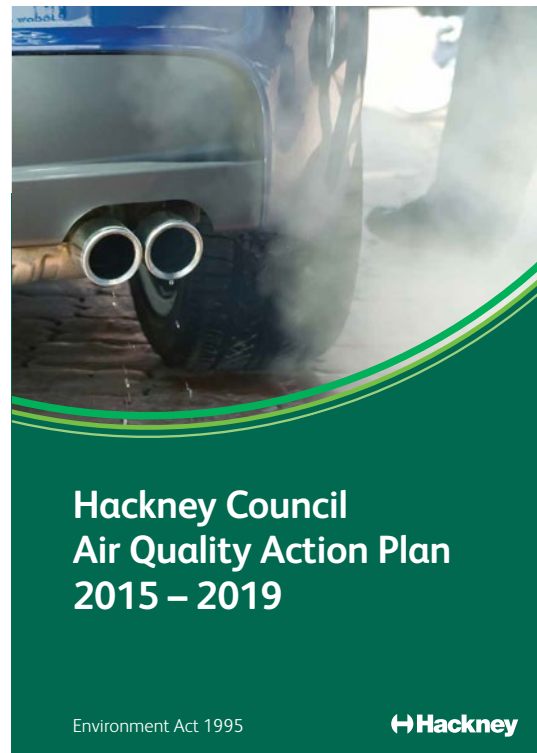
We believe that there is a better chance of improving air quality, in the worst affected areas of the borough, if we identify all that may be done to reduce air pollution locally and then take concerted joined up actions to deliver the agreed improvements. We will achieve this by identifying three local ‘Green Action Zones’ (see Figure 4).

Each zone will be developed as a locally targeted air quality action plan for the borough and will:

- Consider all available measures to further reduce air quality ranging from the strategic to street level and including innovative schemes.
- Promote and seek to fund grass roots actions by residents and the public.
- Ensure that the Council’s own efforts are appropriately targeted to ensure value for money.

While a whole range of measures will be considered for each area, examples of the types of questions we will need to tackle include whether:

- The use of healthy travel options, such as cycling and walking, and public transport may be promoted and coordinated better?
- Any parts of the road network could be developed, changed or controlled better to reduce emissions or promote cycling or walking?
- Local Low Emissions Neighbourhoods should be introduced to control the types of vehicles that may enter certain areas?
- Further Development Control requirements need to be introduced?
- Parking controls could be changed to influence choices and behaviour?
- No idling and residents only zones need to be created?
- The times that freight is delivered need to be reconsidered?
- Any innovative technologies or approaches could be trialled?



When local people continued to raise very real concerns about the fact that the roads experiencing even greater volumes of traffic had numerous schools and tended have high levels of disadvantaged residents with already worse health outcomes, Hackney Council and bodies such as The Health & Wellbeing Board summarily dismissed these concerns.

Central Government emergency funding was now being used by the Council to improve the areas that already had cleaner air and to reroute traffic onto the roads previously flagged up as being a priority for improvement in pollution.

Groups such as the Hackney Branch of the London Cycling Campaign (a number of whom were Hackney councillors) claimed that the creation of LTNs would bring about a modal shift that would benefit everyone by increasing cycling and walking rather than use of vehicles.

Five years on, no independent research has shown this to be the case and a recent expose by Hackney resident, Andrew Ellson in The Times has shown that research questioning the efficacy of LTNs has been suppressed⁴.

3. Air Quality Action Plan 2015–2019.

https://hackney.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s46724/CE%20H51%20APPENDIX%201%20CDM-16561963-v1-Hackney_Air_Quality_Action_Plan_2015-19_v4.pdf

4. TfL suppressed report showing LTNs don’t cut car use.

<https://irp.cdn-website.com/630197fe/files/uploaded/The+Times+17-09-25.pdf>

Changes in average traffic flows

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%↑

Page 29, Table 5 - Changes in daily average traffic flows on roads that were negatively affected by the introduction of traffic filters.⁵

The Council stated that there had been decreases in traffic on LTN 'boundary roads' yet as concerned residents pointed out, traffic was not necessarily displaced to the street bordering an LTN but other residential roads.

Eventually, figures were published showing increases in traffic that were the direct fallout from the London Fields LTN and above all the restrictions placed on Richmond Rd, previously a designated 'through route'. While councillors announced that 10,000 vehicles/day had been removed from Richmond Rd they failed to say where that traffic had gone. Residents of Balls Pond Rd, Whiston Rd, Graham Rd and Dalston Lane knew the answer.

5. London Fields LTN - Signed Delegated Report.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nk_ly6NIACv5Ng-MI7lqFVCGxT67k2/_view

6. SEJ Webinar Traffic Counts - Simple as 1,2,3?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-Cbm8-QuPQ&t=1s>

7. Low-traffic zone success 'based on inaccurate data'.

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/flaw-in-roadside-counters-for-low-traffic-schemes-j6wbwvzjn>

The chart above shows average increases meaning that the daytime/peak time increases are much higher. Furthermore, traffic was measured using Automatic Traffic Counters that according to their manufacturers should not be used in congested circumstances.

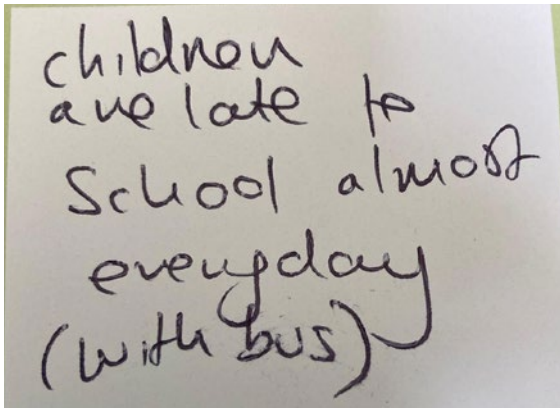
Videos of long lines of stationary and slow-moving traffic were taken to highlight the undercounting of vehicles but these were ignored by the Council⁶.

Hackney Council took the decision to put automatic traffic counting tubes (ATCs) across roads during what the manufacturers called 'non-neutral periods' e.g. school holidays and ignored those raising this as a concern that might skew the data⁷.

Yet, despite all of the Council's efforts to positively spin on things, the figures still show increases on many of Hackney's more densely populated residential roads which clean air activists began calling 'sacrificial roads'.

Post Implementation Consultation

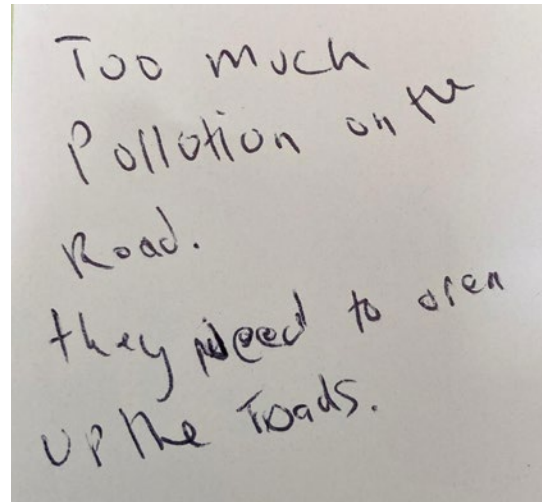
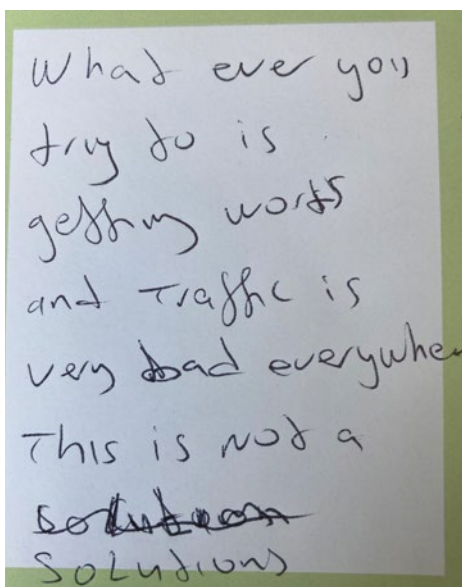
Whenever concerns about the negative impact of LTNs on certain roads were raised, the Council responded that the traffic would evaporate and that residents would be given a chance to raise concerns via a consultation.



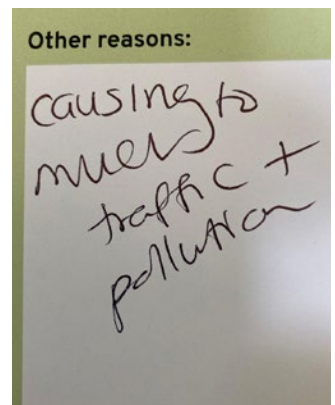
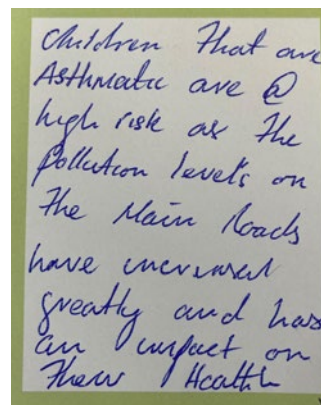
Sometime after the online consultation on the London Fields and Hackney Downs LTNs opened, a survey of parents of children at Mossbourne Parkside Academy found that none had completed the survey. In fact, many knew nothing about it.

Residents (two of whom were retired teachers) realised that there was a high level of digital exclusion among the parents and, in this respect, decided to follow the lead of pro-LTN activists in London Fields. They raised money to print response cards that parents at three of the worst impacted schools could send freepost to Hackney Council.

Again and again, these less advantaged parents said 'they won't care when we think' but the volunteers encouraged them to fill in and post back the cards (some responses reproduced here).



The schools chosen were **Mossbourne Parkside, Northwold, and Princess May** - three primary schools with attached nurseries. Concerned residents who spoke a range of community languages took part to aid communication and translate when necessary. Hundreds of response cards were returned to the Council.



Despite a concerted effort to ensure support for LTNs which included leafletting areas inside them, the majority of Hackney's residents did not support the creation of the COVID Low Traffic Neighbourhoods⁸ which were seen as divisive and benefitting one sector of the population over the other.

Many respondents to the online survey cited the differential impacts on residents and school children. Many were aware that areas of higher car ownership were set to benefit, while areas that already had greater volumes of traffic would become more polluted, dangerous and unhealthy 'sacrifice zones' or 'slivers of hell'.

8. Low-traffic neighbourhoods 'have little local support'

<https://www.thetimes.com/uk/transport/article/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-have-little-local-support-njx0tt2d6>

Cleaner air for whom?

Supporters have consistently claimed that, above all, LTNs benefit children.



Mossbourne Parkside Primary School



Northwold Primary School



Princess May Primary School

People from more disadvantaged communities are more likely to be exposed to higher levels of air pollution as a result of a number of factors including where they live, work, shop and attend school. Black and minority ethnic/global majority communities are much more likely to bear the brunt of the negative impacts of traffic.

Hackney's '*main roads*' are predominantly residential in nature, and these streets tend to have higher density housing and more likely to be lived in by residents with worse health outcomes. However, since the advent of LTNs, the Council has refused to concede that the actual impact of its policies is classist and/or, in effect, racist, because they re-route traffic onto roads with higher levels of disadvantaged residents and alongside schools with intakes that tend to be from lower income groups.

So, let's examine these claims by looking at the available data for the three schools mentioned above and two near-by schools known to have benefitted from recent measures.

The schools that have experienced a rise in traffic are **Mossbourne Parkside Primary School**, **Northwold Primary School** and **Princess May Primary School**.

All three have school streets on an already quiet '*side street*' for a limited period each day, however each one now faces increased traffic for the entire school day on their other side.

We have chosen to contrast these schools with **William Patten Primary School** and **Gayhurst Community School**.

William Patten was a school included on the original list as it is located on a B road that had already experienced congestion at certain times of the day. However, a successful campaign by its parents has seen the Council protect these children by installing a bus gate on Stoke Newington Church Street, despite the fact that the road has relatively few residences and is primarily commercial. Stoke Newington consistently ranks as the most expensive area in Hackney.

Gayhurst Primary School is located next to London Fields in what had already been a congestion-free area but is now within the large London Fields LTN. Note: the creation of the London Fields LTN displaced a great deal of traffic onto the road where Mossbourne Parkside primary school is located.

Free School Meals (FSM)⁹ is considered a reliable indicator of disadvantage. Therefore, an analysis of the relative percentage of children eligible for FSM should tell us a good deal about which young children have been granted cleaner, healthier air.

At **William Patten** the percentage of children eligible for FSM is only **18%** and at **Gayhurst** the figure is **29.7%**.

These percentages are a stark contrast to the figures for the three of the schools exposed to the '*disbenefits*' of LTNs.

Cleaner air for whom?



William Patten Primary School



Gayhurst Primary School

All children should have the same right to breathe clean air.

In 2020, the percentage of children receiving FSM at **Princess May** (Kingland Rd) was **45.5%**, the figure for **Northwold** (Northwold Rd) is **43.3%**, whilst at **Mossbourne** (Dalston Ln) the percentage of children eligible for FSM is **52.7%** – over half its intake. The average for England is about 25% for primary school aged children.

There is no readily available information concerning the ethnic/racial heritage of students at these schools. Percentages of children having **English as an additional language (EAL)**⁹ tell only part of the story as middle class bilingual French or Italian speakers are counted together with the children of recently arrived refugees from Syria and Somalia, for example.

However, it is still important to note that in 2020 at **Princess May** **71.7%** of children had EAL, at **Northwold** the figure was **69.3%** and in **Mossbourne** it was **58.4%**. The figures for that year at **William Patten** and **Gayhurst** are **42%** and **31.8%** respectively.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that schools on Hackney's larger busier roads, most notably those mentioned above, have a much higher percentage of children of Black and Minority Ethnic/Global Majority Communities.

When this disparity was raised with Meg Hillier MP, she replied that all Hackney schools have a significant percentage of children receiving FSMs. And the Green Party, who purport to care about equality, choose to ignore this environmental injustice for electoral gain. We suggest that all politicians claiming to care about justice and equality in Hackney and elsewhere look beyond the spin and stand up for what is right.

It is clear that LTNs gift cleaner air to those who already had it on their quieter roads while compounding the ill effects of traffic on larger, busier residential roads. Calling them '*main roads*' allows people to forget that for many residents (often poorer and/or People of Colour) these roads are simply '*home*'.

If one accepts that exhaust fumes have a harmful effect on health and that children are even more vulnerable to that harm, how as a society can we accept and support policies that reroute traffic onto roads where our most disadvantaged children are much more likely to live and attend school?

If Hackney and other London boroughs have '*too much traffic*' then a strategic plan to tackle London-wide traffic needs to be formulated. Shifting traffic from richer, high car-owning areas onto roads where poorer people live, work, attend school, and wait for buses is a clear example of environmental and social injustice. Policies such as these have no place in a greener future.

9. The Real Schools Guide.

<https://www.mylondon.news/news/the-real-schools-guide-search-12437581>