Scrapped low-traffic neighbourhood ‘failed to reduce congestion’

Report says London scheme that led to motorists being fined £1.4m did not improve environment



Steve Bird Senior News Reporter
Published 25 October 2026

A low-traffic neighbourhood (LTN) scheme resulted in “no significant traffic reduction” but increased congestion on boundary roads, an official report has found.

Lambeth council closed roads in West Dulwich, south-east London, to out-of-town motorists in an effort to make the area “climate resilient”. However, the council’s own analysis of traffic data found that the LTN had failed to achieve its green goals while raising £1.4m in fines from motorists.
The “improvement” scheme was introduced in September 2024 despite opposition from many residents and businesses.

In May 2025, a High Court judge found that the council had introduced the LTN unlawfully after ignoring the “legitimate” concerns of residents, including claims that it would increase traffic

and adversely affect air quality. The ruling forced the Green Party-led council to scrap the scheme.

The council's "street improvement" report stated: "Monitoring data indicates there was no significant traffic reduction across the scheme area."

While the use of CCTV cameras to enforce road closures led to 4,815 – or 85 per cent – fewer cars driving within the LTN, "the number of motor vehicles travelling on external roads increased by a total of 4,079 vehicles [a day] – [a] four per cent [increase]".

Although there was a reduction in speeding vehicles within the LTN, the data also showed that the scheme had led to a 1.4 per cent increase in the number of motorists breaking the speed limit on boundary roads.

The report found that the LTN had led to "increased pressure" in certain areas, with "displaced" traffic being forced on to boundary or "external" roads around the LTN. It also found "average bus journey times [on roads outside the LTN] marginally increasing over baseline levels from 2019".

The "biggest change" in the number of people cycling – a key goal for LTNs – was in Tulsemere Road, one of the "quieter" streets of the LTN, which was used by 19 more cyclists a day travelling northbound, representing a 307 per cent increase.

'Long-established travel habits'

However, the report added that "some sites recorded a drop in cycle numbers".

The report added that data it had analysed were “limited”, in part because “behaviour change takes time, particularly [when] shifting long-established travel habits from private car use to active modes”.

Jonathan Fowles, a resident who helped bring the successful High Court action against the LTN, said the report proved what local people opposing the scheme had argued.

He said: “This report shows that all the traffic from the internal roads of the LTN was displaced on to the external or boundary roads. That means more cars are on boundary roads, which are slower-moving and therefore increasing pollution.

“However, the data fails to measure any increased journey times or journey distances caused by the LTN. It also does not measure the impact on the lives of those living within the scheme, or the impact it has on businesses.”

In April 2023, Lambeth council staff were given a “wellbeing” day off after employees encountered fierce opposition to the LTN proposals at a “drop-in event” held in a public library.

Legal papers reported how the meeting had become a “shambolic fiasco” because residents were “relentless” in their opposition to the scheme.
The Telegraph later revealed how an academic who had written reports praising LTNs had been filmed on CCTV at a local shop removing a petition opposing the road closures.

A Lambeth council spokesman said: “The West Dulwich Healthy Neighbourhood trial scheme was not in place long enough to determine its impact. Behaviour change takes time, and this trial scheme wasn’t in place long enough to achieve its aims.

“The data was only collected at this early stage to see if any minor tweaks were needed shortly after the trial was launched. We had planned to do more thorough and meaningful data collection and analysis once the trial had bedded in and traffic patterns had adapted to the changes.

“Over longer periods of time in Lambeth’s other healthy neighbourhoods, main-road traffic has typically fallen over time, demonstrating their community benefits.”