REBUILDING A GREENER HACKNEY

Hackney

London Fields Low Traffic Neighbourhood (interim traffic counts)

This briefing gives interim traffic counts from the London Fields Low Traffic Neighbourhood taken in November 2020 in comparison to changes in background levels of traffic caused by the COVID-19 lockdown. It shows that whichever measure of the lockdown effect on traffic is used, traffic has on average fallen further inside the London Fields LTN. Even LTN boundary roads, where traffic displacement might be assumed to be a risk, have experienced greater falls in traffic on average than most benchmarks of background traffic.

Background

The ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic and its associated public health lockdown response has had big effects on travel in London including large drops in public transport use (following government guidance to avoid using it wherever possible) and initially large reduction in road transport. But as London begins to emerge from its third lockdown in early 2021 there is the continuing potential for vast increases in the number of motor vehicles on our roads if even a small proportion of people who used to travel by public transport switch to using private cars.

The public health and road safety implications will be profound for those groups already disproportionately impacted upon by the secondary effects of motor vehicle use, including those on low incomes, people of minority ethnic backgrounds, older people, and children. This could potentially exacerbate air pollution in a borough that already has the sixth highest mortality rate out of 418 UK local authorities and by one analysis, the largest number of road injuries amongst pedestrians and cyclists per 1000 journeys of any borough in London. This would be particularly socially unjust in a borough where 70% of households do not own cars.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

The rollout of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) has been an important part of London and Hackney's response to the pandemic and a key to preventing a car-led recovery. The LTNs are designed to physically prevent motor vehicles from cutting through residential areas while maintaining motor vehicle access to residents and creating space, cleaner air and better conditions for walking and cycling. But what does the evidence from interim traffic counts actually show?

We can look at Hackney's biggest single Low Traffic Neighbourhood, the London Fields LTN as an example. This LTN stretches between the A10 Kingsland Road in the west and Mare Street in the east. Graham Road in the north and the Regent's canal in the south. It was introduced in July-September 2020 using experimental traffic orders.

In late November 2020/early December (16th-3rd December) Hackney commissioned a series of traffic counts throughout the LTN area including boundary roads.[1] These counts were compared to baseline counts taken before the introduction of the LTN. The drop in traffic levels was unsurprisingly biggest within the low traffic neighbourhoods but traffic was down even on boundary roads by an average of 21%[2]

Benchmarking the effects of lockdown

We are aware that road traffic in November 2020 was depressed by the second of the capital's lockdown periods which have an effect independent of the LTNs measures. We considered a number of ways to benchmark this. One way would be to look at national traffic levels which according to the DfT were **24% down** in this period but perhaps a more relevant benchmark is to look at national urban traffic which was **16.6% down** on pre-COVID levels.

More local benchmarks would include the traffic flows on the A12 in Hackney which is an urban motorway with high flow levels and would be largely unaffected by any potential traffic displacement from LTNs. Traffic on this road was **14.8% down**. An alternative local benchmark would be to look at the overall average of flows on roads in Hackney in November 2020 and compare this to the equivalent period in 2019 **(14% down)** But this does not take account of the effect that traffic levels appear to be more depressed the closer one gets to Central London so an even more local sample would be to sample a slice of roads in the borough at the same latitude as the London Fields LTN. These roads are on average **19.4%** down on pre pandemic levels.Details of these local benchmarks are given in **Tables 1 and 2** below.

[1] A further series of traffic counts were taken in February 2021 when background traffic levels in the borough had changed substantially from November 2020. These traffic counts, therefore, need to be seen in the context of a different lockdown effect. Analysis of these counts will be covered by future separate briefing note.

[2] Not surprisingly nearly every count within the Low Traffic Neighbourhood shows very substantial drops in traffic. One example is Richmond Road where traffic in November 2020 was about 90% down on pre-covid levels. But this and other similar drops on other residential roads in the London Fields area reflect the effect of **both** lockdown reductions in traffic and the removal of through traffic. Later in 2021 we hope to assess the LTNs overall impact on traffic levels including the net absolute levels of traffic on boundary roads and internal roads and a fuller picture of the benefits realised can be viewed as a whole. For now we are focussing on boundary roads looking at early indications of what might eventually happen and looking for early warning flags of where we might need to make adjustments to traffic management.

Table 1: Traffic on Main Roads in Hackney (16.11.20 - 01.12.20)	
Location	**% change on equivalent period in 2019[3]**
Homerton High Street (TfL 3)	+6.5%[4]
Albion Road	-6.2%
A10 Tottenham High Road	-8.8%
Seven Sisters Road	-10.4%
A12 Hackney Wick	-14.8%
Southgate Road	-17.8%
Green Lanes Borough Boundary	-16.6%
A10 jw Walford Road 289	-15.4%
A10 Kingsland Road jw Richmond Road	-12.9%
Old Street	-20.9%
A10 Hoxton	-23.8%
Mare Street jw Brenthouse Road	-27.5%
Average of Roads	**-14.0%**

Table 2: Sample of Traffic on Main Roads in London Fields Area (16.11.20 - 01.12.20)	
Location	**% change from equivalent period in 2019**
Southgate Road	-17.8%
A10 Kingsland Road (jw Richmond Road)	-12.9%
Mare Street (jw Brenthouse Road)	-27.5%
Average of Roads	**-19.4%**

The counts show that on average traffic in Hackney roads was at **14.0% lower** than in 2019 in this period. In the immediate London Fields area (Mare Street, The A10 jw Richmond Road and Southgate Road) background traffic was lower, relatively being **down 19.4%** from the same period in 2019. A third benchmark is the **14.8% reduction** from 2019 traffic levels seen on the A12.

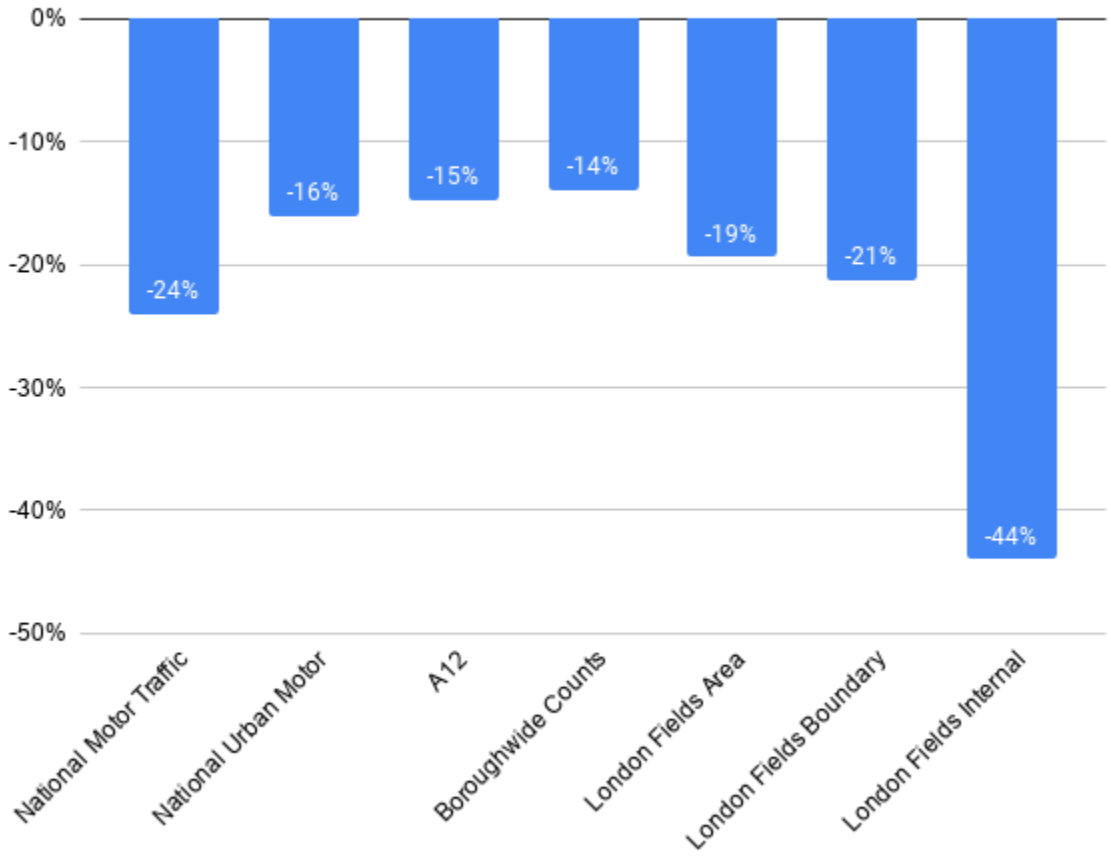
[3] The 2019 baseline uses data from 18 November 2019 to 1 December 2019 while the equivalent dates in 2020 are the period 16 November 2020 to 29 November 2020 (to achieve consistency of days of the week).

[4] We issued 12,000 key worker parking permits during the pandemic, many of which were used in the area around Homerton Hospital, which is thought to be a partial cause for this increase in traffic compared to pre-lockdown levels. It is also worth noting that transport levels on Homerton High Street were higher than pre-pandemic levels before the introduction of the London Fields low traffic neighbourhood, and remained at this level for much of the year

Traffic on London Fields LTN Boundary Roads

It is useful to view the changes in traffic levels on boundary roads of the London Fields LTN with these background benchmarks in mind.[5] Traffic trends from the London Fields boundary roads with the baseline period used are given in **Table 3: Traffic Trends on London Fields Boundary Roads.** A comparison with the average flow from this table with national and local traffic benchmarks is shown in **Figure 1** below. Flow trends on LTN internal roads (discussed in the next section) are also included for the sake of comparison.

Figure 1: National and local Hackney traffic trends (Nov 2020)



The average of the flows of the LTN boundary roads is **21.3%** lower than the baseline which is in excess of the **14.0%** decrease seen over the borough as a whole or the **19.4%** decrease in the immediate area of London Fields or the **14.8%** reduction in the Hackney section of the A12.

[5] An important caveat to bear in mind is that whereas with the TfL traffic counts could be compared with a baseline for the equivalent period in 2019, this type of data was not available for the many of the newly commissioned counts on LTN boundary roads. Instead baseline figures from the most recently available pre Covid traffic counts were used instead.

Looking more closely at **Table 3** the smallest decrease in relation to baseline is the **12.0%** reduction seen in Graham Road. The A10 at the junction with Richmond road also showed a below trend drop in traffic of **12.9%**

Table 3: London Fields LTN boundary roads (November 2020 traffic % change from 'Baseline')		
Road	November 2020 ATC counts % change from 'baseline'	Baseline source
Dalston Lane East of Beechwood Road	-34.36%	DfT AADT (2019)
Queensbridge Road north of Whiston	-25.46%	7 day ATC 01/20
Queensbridge Road north of Richmond	-19.16%	7 day ATC 17/01/20
Graham Road west of Mare Street	-11.98%	7 day ATC 10/18
Whiston Road west of Queensbridge Road	-17.79%	7 dayATC 09/19
A10 jw Richmond Road	-12.91%	Equivalent period 2019
Mare Street jw Brenthouse Road (53)	-27.45%	Equivalent period 2019
Average of London Fields LTN Boundary Roads	**-21.30%**	***Various***

Traffic on London Fields LTN Internal Roads

The figures in **Table 4** below show the changes in monitored levels of traffic on roads inside the low traffic neighbourhood. The Council is aware of increases in traffic on Laurel Street and Forest Road and will continue to monitor these streets so it can address issues there.

Table 4: London Fields LTN internal roads (November 2020 traffic % change from 'Baseline')		
Road	November ATC Count % change from 'baseline'	Baseline source
Richmond Road, east of Greenwood Road	-94%	7-day ATC Jan 2020
Richmond Road, east of Queensbridge Road	-89%	7-day ATC Jan 2020
Richmond Road, west of Queensbridge Road	-90%	7-day ATC Jan 2020

Laurel Street	+34%	7-day ATC Mar 2019
Forest Road, east of Beechwood Road	+36%	7-day ATC Feb 2019
Middleton Road, west of Queensbridge Road	-32%	7-day ATC July 2019
Lee Street, east of Stean Street	-75%	7-day ATC Feb 2019
Average	**-44%**	**Various**