# Hope remains for low-traffic neighbourhoods despite high court ruling in Lambeth



Hope springs eternal among critics of low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) following a recent high court verdict that Lambeth council had acted unlawfully by disregarding local objections to its latest LTN initiative. Media reports have blared headlines hinting at a potential rollback of such schemes, suggesting a victory for campaigners against LTNs. However, this interpretation is too simplistic and overlooks the broader implications of the ruling.

The reality is that scrapping LTNs would be a regressive step for public health, urban mobility, and environmental sustainability. Instead, councils should hold firm, relying on an expanding body of evidence that attests to the benefits of LTNs. These benefits include reduced vehicular traffic, improved air quality, and enhanced conditions for walking and cycling. Critically, public sentiment towards LTNs has improved over time, with many residents recognising their value.

Research from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine highlights a tangible shift in driving behaviour; following the implementation of LTNs in Lambeth, residents recorded a 6% reduction in annual driving. This translates to a decrease of about 1.3 km per vehicle each day, illustrating the potential public health benefits of these schemes, which include diminished road dangers and decreased pollution.

Contrary to the prevailing criticisms that LTNs simply shift traffic chaos onto surrounding roads, studies suggest a more complex picture. Investigations conducted by multiple academic institutions, including Imperial College London and Westminster University, reveal that LTNs can substantially curtail both traffic volumes and air pollution. For instance, a study in Islington found that nitrogen dioxide levels decreased by 5.7% within LTN zones and by 8.9% in adjacent areas. Therefore, concerns about LTNs merely displacing traffic to boundary roads are largely unfounded, as overall traffic volumes within LTN zones dropped significantly.

Moreover, while critics often attribute rising congestion to LTNs, the reality is that London has long been plagued by heavy traffic. Data shows that the root cause of congestion is simply too many cars on the roads. LTNs cannot solve all transportation issues in isolation, but they are part of a necessary overhaul of the urban transport landscape. Implementing supportive measures such as reliable bus services, improved cycling infrastructure, designated clean air zones, and 20 mph speed limits is crucial to comprehensively addressing mobility challenges.

Compounding this urgency is the sobering reality of road safety; five fatalities occur on UK roads every day, a statistic that often flies under the radar. More than 20,000 injuries annually in London alone create significant strain on healthcare services. The financial toll of these collisions is estimated at £1.2 billion each year, reinforcing the dire need for measures like LTNs that increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

The popularity of reducing traffic is almost universal, transcending political divides. It stands to reason that if we desire fewer cars on the streets, some must drive less. This acknowledgment invites a reimagining of urban mobility—one where the freedom of motorists is balanced against the right of communities to enjoy clean air and safe public spaces. Imagining a scenario where children can play freely without fear of heavy traffic is not merely an ideal but a tangible goal.

Ultimately, LTNs should not be seen as obstacles to mobility but as opportunities to enhance community wellbeing and promote active transportation. They create a setting where walking and cycling are not just safer but more desirable forms of transport. While no policy is perfect and adjustments may be necessary, abandoning LTNs altogether due to isolated incidents would constitute a missed opportunity for meaningful progress.

As the evidence supporting the effectiveness and popularity of LTNs continues to mount, the recent court ruling should not deter councils from pursuing these vital initiatives. Instead, it should inspire more robust engagement with local communities to further refine and optimise these neighbourhood transformations.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/ignore-myths-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/ignore-myths-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn)
3. Paragraph 3: [[2]](https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2023/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-london-borough-cut-daily-driving-among-residents)
4. Paragraph 4: [[3]](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1361920922003625), [[4]](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/241731/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-reduce-pollution-surrounding-streets/), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-impact-on-traffic-london-westminster-university-study-b1054147.html)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/ignore-myths-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn), [[6]](https://www.wearepossible.org/our-reports/londons-ltns/)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/ignore-myths-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn), [[6]](https://www.wearepossible.org/our-reports/londons-ltns/)
7. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/ignore-myths-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn), [[7]](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/241731/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-reduce-pollution-surrounding-streets/)
8. Paragraph 8: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/ignore-myths-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn), [[4]](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/241731/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-reduce-pollution-surrounding-streets/)
9. Paragraph 9: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/ignore-myths-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-impact-on-traffic-london-westminster-university-study-b1054147.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/ignore-myths-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2023/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-london-borough-cut-daily-driving-among-residents> - A study by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine found that residents in the London Borough of Lambeth reduced their annual driving by 6% after the introduction of four new Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in 2020. This equates to a daily decrease of approximately 1.3 km per vehicle, indicating that LTNs can effectively reduce driving levels in inner-city areas, leading to potential public health benefits such as decreased road danger, air pollution, and noise.
3. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1361920922003625> - A study published in Transportation Research Part D evaluated the impacts of three LTNs in the London Borough of Islington on air pollution and traffic flows. The research found that LTNs reduced nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels by 5.7% within the intervention areas and by 8.9% in boundary areas. Additionally, traffic volumes decreased by 58.2% within LTNs and by 13.4% at boundary sites, suggesting that LTNs can substantially reduce air pollution and traffic without displacing the problem to surrounding streets.
4. <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/241731/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-reduce-pollution-surrounding-streets/> - Research from Imperial College London demonstrated that LTNs reduce traffic and air pollution without displacing the problem to nearby streets. The study analyzed three LTNs in Islington, London, and found that these measures effectively decreased pollution levels within the zones and in surrounding areas, countering concerns that LTNs might increase traffic and pollution in neighboring streets.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-impact-on-traffic-london-westminster-university-study-b1054147.html> - A study by Westminster University's Active Travel Academy and the climate charity Possible analyzed data from 46 LTNs in London and found that these measures led to a 46.9% average reduction in traffic on streets within LTN zones. The research also indicated that while some boundary roads experienced slight increases in traffic, the overall impact of LTNs was a substantial reduction in local traffic volumes, supporting their effectiveness in reducing congestion.
6. <https://www.wearepossible.org/our-reports/londons-ltns/> - A report by the climate charity Possible highlighted that LTNs are associated with a decrease in overall traffic volumes and substantial improvements in road safety. For instance, in Waltham Forest, LTNs led to a 70% reduction in road traffic injuries. The report also emphasized that LTNs did not cause increased risk of road collisions on boundary roads or increased traffic on surrounding streets not part of the LTN.
7. <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/241731/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-reduce-pollution-surrounding-streets/> - Research from Imperial College London demonstrated that LTNs reduce traffic and air pollution without displacing the problem to nearby streets. The study analyzed three LTNs in Islington, London, and found that these measures effectively decreased pollution levels within the zones and in surrounding areas, countering concerns that LTNs might increase traffic and pollution in neighboring streets.