# TfL's suppression of study challenges perceived success of London LTNs amid controversy



Transport for London (TfL) has faced scrutiny after reportedly suppressing a taxpayer-funded study from the University of Westminster, which found that Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) failed to reduce overall car use. The study, which cost £82,095 and was initially planned as a three-year project, was discontinued after two years when TfL concluded that the data did not provide significant new insights. According to a TfL spokesperson, the decision to halt the research was based on this lack of fresh findings rather than any broader agenda. The study indicated that while LTNs increased cycling levels, they did not encourage a corresponding reduction in driving or an increase in walking, challenging some of the schemes' core justifications.

LTNs have become a polarising topic in London’s transport and urban planning discourse. Proponents argue they improve road safety and reduce pollution by limiting vehicular traffic in residential areas, fostering safer environments for walking and cycling. Research published by the University of Westminster and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine supports this safety aspect, showing a 35% reduction in all road injuries and a 37% decrease in serious injuries and deaths over a 12-year period in areas with LTNs. This research concludes that LTNs can reduce road traffic injuries without compromising the safety of surrounding streets.

However, LTNs remain contentious among local communities and businesses, with critics often highlighting increased congestion on main roads and the economic impact of shifting traffic patterns. For example, Hammersmith & Fulham Council’s Low Traffic Neighbourhood in Fulham has issued over 100,000 parking fines but cites a daily reduction of 15,000 cars in the area. Despite backlash, the council plans to make the scheme permanent and expand it further, illustrating the ongoing tension between traffic management goals and resident or motorist dissatisfaction.

The political and social debate around LTNs has been further complicated by a rise in disinformation and mistrust. According to a study from the cross-party think tank Demos, misinformation and conspiracy theories about LTNs surged in 2023, with the proportion of misleading social media posts increasing to 28% from just 5% the previous year. This spread of disinformation has deepened divides between councils implementing LTNs and communities sceptical of their benefits.

Legal challenges have also emerged. Recently, Lambeth Council was ordered by the High Court to remove an unlawful LTN in West Dulwich after it generated £1 million in fines, marking a significant judicial rebuke against the design and implementation of these schemes. The council was additionally required to pay £35,000 in legal costs to the local campaign group that brought the case, highlighting the legal vulnerabilities councils face when rolling out LTNs without sufficient community backing or legal rigour.

Taken together, the evidence and controversies surrounding LTNs in London paint a complex picture. While safety benefits are supported by robust research, the impact on car use, community acceptance, and economic effects remains debated. TfL’s withdrawal of funding from the University of Westminster study, amidst these broader controversies and research findings, suggests a cautious or selective approach to evaluating LTNs’ overall effectiveness. As the debate continues, it underscores the challenges of balancing environmental and public health goals with the practical and political realities of urban transport policy.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-deaths-injuries-b1237157.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/fulham-low-traffic-neighbourhood-wandsworth-kings-road-fine-council-b1142292.html), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/hammersmith-and-fulham-clean-air-neighbourhood-ltn-b1219747.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn-cars-cycling-disinformation-b1159711.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/west-dulwich-ltn-lambeth-council-high-court-ruling-b1231343.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-deaths-injuries-b1237157.html), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/west-dulwich-ltn-lambeth-council-high-court-ruling-b1231343.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-suppressed-report-ltns-car-use-b1248287.html> - Transport for London (TfL) reportedly suppressed a taxpayer-funded study from the University of Westminster, which found that Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) did not reduce car use. The study indicated that while LTNs increased cycling, they did not encourage people to drive less or walk more. TfL withdrew funding for the three-year, £82,095 project after two years, citing insufficient new insights. Critics argue that the suppression of the report could have informed decision-makers about the effectiveness of LTNs in reducing car usage.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/west-dulwich-ltn-lambeth-council-high-court-ruling-b1231343.html> - Lambeth Council in London was ordered by the High Court to remove an unlawful Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in West Dulwich, which had generated £1 million in fines. The court's decision marked the first time an LTN designed to create safe cycling and walking routes by closing off roads to cars was shut down. The council was also required to pay £35,000 in legal fees incurred by the West Dulwich Action Group, which brought the case.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-ltn-cars-cycling-disinformation-b1159711.html> - A study by the cross-party think tank Demos found that disinformation and conspiracy theories about Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) increased significantly in 2023, amid government opposition to the schemes. The proportion of the most popular social media posts on LTNs classified as disinformation rose from 5% in 2022 to 28% in 2023, highlighting a worsening democratic divide between councils and communities over the implementation of LTNs.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/fulham-low-traffic-neighbourhood-wandsworth-kings-road-fine-council-b1142292.html> - Hammersmith & Fulham Council in London plans to make a Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in Fulham permanent and expand its coverage, despite issuing over 100,000 £130 parking tickets to motorists in the past two years. The LTN has been credited with reducing daily car numbers by 15,000 but has also been blamed for causing near-gridlock on main roads and a decline in business trade in the area.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/london-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-deaths-injuries-b1237157.html> - A study by the University of Westminster and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine found that Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in London led to a 35% reduction in all road injuries and a 37% decrease in deaths and serious injuries over a 12-year period. The research concluded that LTNs have reduced road traffic injuries among all road users without negatively impacting the safety of nearby roads.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/hammersmith-and-fulham-clean-air-neighbourhood-ltn-b1219747.html> - Hammersmith & Fulham Council's Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in South Fulham faced backlash after a survey found to have breached four industry rules was used to justify the scheme. The LTN, introduced in December 2022 to reduce 'rat-running' and pollution on residential streets, has been controversial due to its implementation process and the impact on local traffic patterns.