

Impact
on **Urban
Health**

Healthy Streets Southwark

Changing streets to improve public health



Photo by Ellenor Benton Photography for Impact on Urban Health

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Executive summary

The way people travel, and the way streets are designed, has a significant effect on health in urban areas like Southwark.

Healthy Streets Southwark was a one-year partnership between ClearView Research, Healthy Streets, Impact on Urban Health, Southwark Council, and the MRC Epidemiology Unit at The University of Cambridge.

The project focused on three neighbourhoods in the South London borough of Southwark, where families were more likely to be living on low incomes, had limited access to green spaces, and where there were high levels of childhood obesity, social housing, and air pollution.

Temporary and permanent changes to make streets safer and easier for residents to walk, cycle and spend time were made; including traffic filters, widening footways, and adding extra seating and plants.

Headline findings

- The project improved the look and function of streets, creating a better experience for people who were already walking or cycling through the neighbourhoods.
- Interventions significantly reduced both the volume and speed of traffic travelling through the three neighbourhoods, and there were no major effects on traffic in most surrounding streets.
- Community research and involvement was an essential engagement tool when designing healthy streets changes.
- By the end of the project, the changes had not yet translated to a measurable increase in people walking, cycling, and spending time across these neighbourhoods. The hypotheses for reasons why can be found on page 34.
- Many residents wanted to see Southwark Council build on these changes to further improve the street environments in their neighbourhood.
- Particularly in neighbourhoods with low car ownership, these street-level changes may not be enough to increase active travel by local people. Hypotheses for reasons why can be found on page 36.

This report concludes with a series of recommendations for the future, with a focus on expansion, engagement, and evaluation.

Many residents wanted to keep, and even build upon, the street changes. Although changes successfully reduced the volume and speed of traffic, they did not improve levels of active travel. By thinking how street level changes can be **expanded** over a larger area, urban planners can help encourage people to take longer journeys by active travel.

Listening to the concerns of residents about streets – and understanding what changes residents would like to see – is vital to making urban areas healthier. This report recommends sustained **engagement** about the types of support that would help residents to walk and cycle more often.

Robust **evaluation** is key to understanding whether street level changes are affecting people's health. Future projects should be compared to control sites to measure the effectiveness of changes to streets. Those control groups should be matched based on similar demographics, and any future projects should be evaluated for at least a year.

Our hope is that these practical recommendations can help those working in the fields of transport and public health to make streets healthier places for communities.



Introduction

Our transport options influence our ability to be physically active, the air quality in our neighbourhoods, our risk of being hurt in a traffic incident, and our access to the services we need.

The majority of London's public space is made up of streets. The design and management of these streets shape the environment, how we travel, and our health. We can change streets to make them more inclusive and welcoming environments by placing people's needs at the heart of transport policy and practice.

People on lower incomes are more likely to experience the worst effects of unhealthy street environments.

Streets can be made more equitable by focusing on the needs of people often marginalised from the street environment, such as children, carers, older people, and people with illnesses or impaired mobility. Improving streets is key to enabling people to travel sustainably and actively, which is important for public health, the environment, and the economy.

The climate emergency means streets urgently need to be made safer and more inviting for people walking and cycling, with improved access to public transport and fewer car journeys.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only added to this urgency. Early in the pandemic, the Government recommended people avoid public transport to reduce transmission of the virus. There was a risk that increased traffic levels and congestion across cities would have a knock-on effect on health.

In response, cities around the world implemented a range of measures to support people to walk, cycle, spend time outdoors and reduce avoidable car use. Across London, through Transport for London's (TfL) Streetspace programme, TfL and London boroughs accelerated implementation of the Mayor's Transport Strategy to support the switch of short journeys from car to walking, cycling and public transport. This included introducing temporary wider footways, cycle lanes, 24-hour bus lanes and restricting private motor vehicle access on certain streets¹.

Evaluating how changing streets affect people's health

The project aimed to have health equity at its core and focused on addressing the health gap between higher and lower income neighbourhoods. The project therefore focused on neighbourhoods that stood to benefit the most from changes to their street environments.

Delivering a robust evaluation was a priority. Over a fifth of the project budget was spent on evaluation, working with the MRC Epidemiology Unit and using the Healthy Streets Evaluation Framework to guide the methodology. The project team focused on measuring the direct outcomes that could be attributed to the interventions: how the streets physically changed and whether people were using the streets differently.

Data was collected before the introduction of the street changes and then again one year later. These results were compared to two control locations where no street changes were made, using difference in difference analysis (DiD). The aim was to come as close as possible to understanding which of the observed changes could be reasonably attributed to this project.

Consulting with communities is key

The project team was committed to enabling residents to give feedback on the street-changes in various ways, despite the restrictions during the early stage of the pandemic.

Southwark Council hosted an online Commonplace² platform for residents to send feedback. In recognition that some people do not engage with online platforms, the project team worked with ClearView Research to recruit and train nine people from the local community as community researchers, whose role was to facilitate conversations and capture feedback from people living in the project locations.



Project objectives

- To improve streets in relation to the Healthy Streets Indicators, measured using the London Healthy Streets Check for Designers (HSCD).
- To reduce the number of motorised vehicles on the streets, measured by the average daily and peak hour motorised vehicle count.
- To maintain or reduce motorised vehicle speeds measured by the 85th percentile and proportion exceeding 20mph, looking at the daily and peak hour averages.
- To increase cycling on the streets measured by the average daily cycling movements.
- To increase walking, measured by the average daily pedestrian movements.
- To increase the total time spent dwelling on the streets, including standing, sitting, playing and lying down on the streets, measured by counts at selected locations for adults, teenagers and children.

Adjacent streets

Each project was designed to avoid a significant increase in traffic levels on adjacent streets.

The objectives for adjacent streets were:

- To not increase the total volume of motorised vehicles beyond a threshold of 10% above the 'background' uplift.
- To deliver no reduction in overall score using the HSCD.



Project area selection

When using street level interventions to address health inequity, it's vital to take a data driven approach that considers areas that have the greatest need.

Many of the health issues prevalent in urban areas disproportionately affect children and young people. The project focused on locations around schools and local green spaces and aimed to create safer, low traffic streets where children could walk, cycle, scoot, play and spend time.

The three chosen project locations were based in North Peckham, Brunswick Park and East Faraday. These areas sit within a central belt in the London borough of Southwark, identified as high need based on high levels of childhood obesity, schools with poor air quality, high levels of social housing and a high proportion of families living on lower incomes.

Within this central belt, the project team prioritised neighbourhoods which could potentially see the greatest health benefits from street changes, given a small budget, narrow timeframe for implementation, and using temporary street changes.

Air pollution

Air pollution is, according to the World Health Organization, the single greatest environmental threat to health. Poor air quality affects people's health throughout their lives, and disproportionately affects children, older people, people with health conditions and people living in areas of deprivation.

Air pollution is thought to affect every organ in the body and research shows, for every ten microgram per cubic meter of increased long-term exposure to fine particulate matter, the risk of dying from any cancer rises by 22%³.

Childhood obesity

The places where children spend most of their time, like streets, schools, and homes, have a significant effect on their health. Children living in areas of deprivation are less likely to have regular access to enough nutritious food that they need to thrive. Research shows that healthier foods are nearly three times more expensive as less healthy foods, calorie for calorie⁴. Children in these areas are more likely to be obese and suffer the other physical and mental health conditions that come with it, like asthma, early onset type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular risk factors.

Scope of streets selection

Locations that already had ongoing or planned street measures were ruled out.

The focus was on finding streets under the highways management of Southwark Council that are not part of the strategic road network. This is because the costs and timescales necessary to make changes to streets of strategic network importance were beyond the scope of this project. The project also ensured streets of strategic importance to the emergency services would not be altered.

Residents' contribution

To help decide on the project areas, the project team reviewed Southwark's Streetspace Commonplace map⁵, analysed local traffic data, and visited the streets.

Residents described several concerns they had with the streets via Commonplace, which could all be resolved through the trial street changes. Those concerns included:

- vehicles passing through the neighbourhoods at inappropriately high speeds
- narrow pavements
- lack of step free access at crossing points
- lack of public seating
- difficulties for people to walk, cycle, and spend time in the streets.

"This part of Marmont Road is a rat run for drivers...the junction with Goldsmiths Road is very dangerous for school children."



Commonplace comment on Marmont Road in North Peckham project location

"I can't see how a wheelchair user can enter it currently as there are no dropped curb pavements on either side of the road here or nearby and the entrance to the garden is very tight off from a narrow pavement."



Commonplace comment on Benhill Road in Brunswick Park project location

"Traffic is fast and aggressive and takes little or no account of the fact that this is a densely inhabited residential area which is also home to convenience stores and a cafe. Those walking and cycling along Bagshot Street are subject to significant intimidation by this traffic."



Commonplace comment on Bagshot Street in East Faraday project location



The above photographs show two of the project streets before street measures were added.

What changes were made and where?

The street changes were designed using the Healthy Streets Approach⁶, which aims to make streets welcoming and accessible for people to walk, cycle and spend time in.

As the Healthy Streets Approach is the policy framework for transport in London, this project aligns with the Mayor's Transport Strategy, Southwark Council's Movement Plan⁷ and Streetspace Plan⁸.

In 2020, the Government published their new cycling and walking plan, Gear Change⁹. The measures trialled in this project were aligned with the Government's new vision. At the start of the pandemic, the Government recommended that transport authorities and councils make use of Experimental Traffic Orders; using temporary measures to make rapid changes to streets, allowing people to experience these changes in a timely manner.

The Government encouraged local authorities to engage with residents while trial changes were in place to seek their views on next steps following the completion of the pilot.

This project's measures were a combination of temporary measures and permanent changes to streets. The permanent measures were minor and did not require traffic orders. They were introduced to improve the accessibility of streets for people with mobility impairments. In February 2022, Southwark Council gained final approval to make the temporary measures permanent.

The project added a combination of the following measures to each street:

Traffic filters

These physical barriers in the road do not prevent people from walking and cycling. Motorised vehicles can still access every building on the street but are not able to pass through the street beyond barriers.

Planters and lockable bollards were used to create the physical filters and, in one location, a camera was used to maintain easy access for emergency vehicles while still preventing private vehicles illegally driving through the street.

Temporary and permanent footway widening

Footway widening allows for more space for people to socially distance and makes footways wide enough for people to walk side-by-side and to use a range of mobility aids.

Improving crossing points and adding step free access at crossings

These make it easier for people to safely cross the streets and for people using mobility aids, buggies, or wheeled luggage to use footways.

Seating

Benches are particularly useful for people who struggle to walk longer distances. They provide a place for people to rest during their journeys while supporting social connections within communities.

Plants

Plants were incorporated into the traffic filters where possible to make spending time on the street more interesting and pleasant.

Improving cycle access into the neighbourhood

Informal cycle crossing, which linked low traffic streets, helped to improve existing cycle routes.

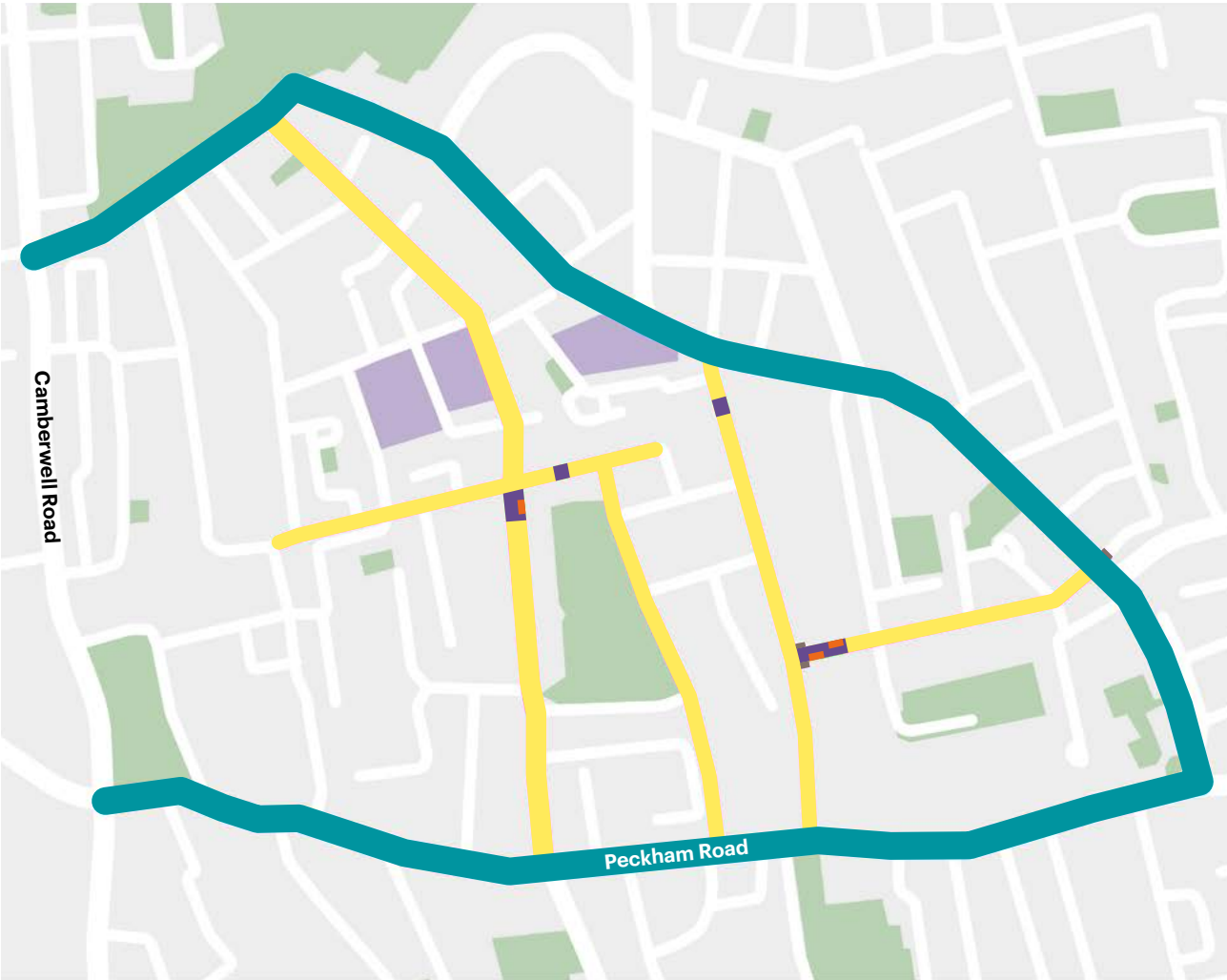
Suspending parking spaces

Some parking spaces were suspended to make space for the widened footways and traffic filters. No disabled parking bays were removed.



Benches, plants, and traffic filters added to the street.

Brunswick Park



Key

- Project streets
- Adjacent streets
- Pavement widening / dropped kerbs
- Schools / educational centres
- Bench
- Parks
- Traffic filters

North Peckham










Key

- Project streets
- Adjacent streets
- Pavement widening / dropped kerbs
- Schools / educational centres
- Bench
- Parks
- Traffic filters

East Faraday



Key

-  Project streets
-  Adjacent streets
-  Pavement widening / dropped kerbs
-  Schools / educational centres
-  Bench
-  Parks
-  Traffic filters

These street measures were selected because available evidence shows they can improve health. The National Institute for Health and Care and Excellence's guidance on physical activity and the environment¹⁰ recommends the following to increase levels of active travel:

- restricting motor vehicle access (for example, using traffic filters)
- reallocating road space (for example, by widening footways)
- improving streets (for example, adding step free access) to ensure people with limited mobility can move around the area.

Public Health England and the Institute of Health Equity's report on Healthy High Streets systematically reviewed the evidence base for street measures that improve public health. The review found evidence to support measures such as traffic calming and street design for creating safer walking environments, encouraging more people to walk around their local areas, increasing footfall on local high streets, and stimulating economic growth for local businesses¹¹.

Finally, the project was informed by emerging evidence of the positive effects from street measures used in the London Borough of Waltham Forest's Mini-Hollands scheme. In Walthamstow Village, the introduction of traffic filters successfully reduced traffic volumes and speeds and increased self-reported levels of walking and cycling from residents¹².



Consulting with residents and stakeholders

For any project that aims to change the street environment, it's vital that local services and residents are consulted.

Southwark Council held fortnightly meetings with police, fire and ambulance services to discuss implementing the changes to streets.

Engagement with residents ran alongside the implementation phase of the temporary measures to give residents an opportunity to experience the proposed changes.

ClearView Research and resident-led engagement

Under normal circumstances, Southwark Council would take a holistic approach to engagement, listening to people via face-to-face meetings and online consultations. Unfortunately, the start of project implementation coincided with the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ClearView Research was commissioned to train nine people across the three project areas to become community researchers. The community researchers spent just fewer than ten weeks interviewing residents and observing the effects of the trial street changes.

The community research approach aimed to include residents in conversations about the street changes with the knowledge that their insights would be reported back to Southwark Council and considered during decision-making on whether to make the project measures permanent.

Over a nine-and-a-half-week period, the community researchers spoke to 214 residents across the three project areas where 8,317 households were deemed to be affected by the changes. The researchers spoke to people from a diverse range of different ethnicities and the group was evenly split in terms of gender. Just over half (53%) of the people that the researchers spoke to were under 40 years old although the age range of people engaged was from 20 to 80 years.

Some residents reported not being aware of the online information and the Commonplace engagement tool. Some residents reported that they did not have the digital access or skills to use the platform, or that they were unlikely to engage online as they felt it required more effort than speaking to someone face-to-face.

This report strongly recommends using a community research approach when consulting with neighbourhoods about street-level changes, particularly to improve health and health equity.

Southwark Council's consultations

During summer 2021, as COVID-19 restrictions eased, Southwark Council continued to ensure residents were aware of the project and had an opportunity to share their feedback. As all three project areas included at least one school, it was a priority to understand how the street changes had affected traveling to and from schools.

A leaflet explaining the project was sent out to all schools in the project areas, containing a questionnaire for children with space to write about or draw their ideal street. Children who returned their questionnaire were entered into a prize draw to win a new bike.

Alongside the engagement with schools, Southwark Council held online meetings for each project area and ran an in-person event for the three neighbourhoods. This gave residents a chance to speak to Council officers involved in the project. The Council's engagement culminated in an online consultation that gave residents the opportunity to share their views on the trial street changes including whether they felt these should remain, be changed, or be removed.

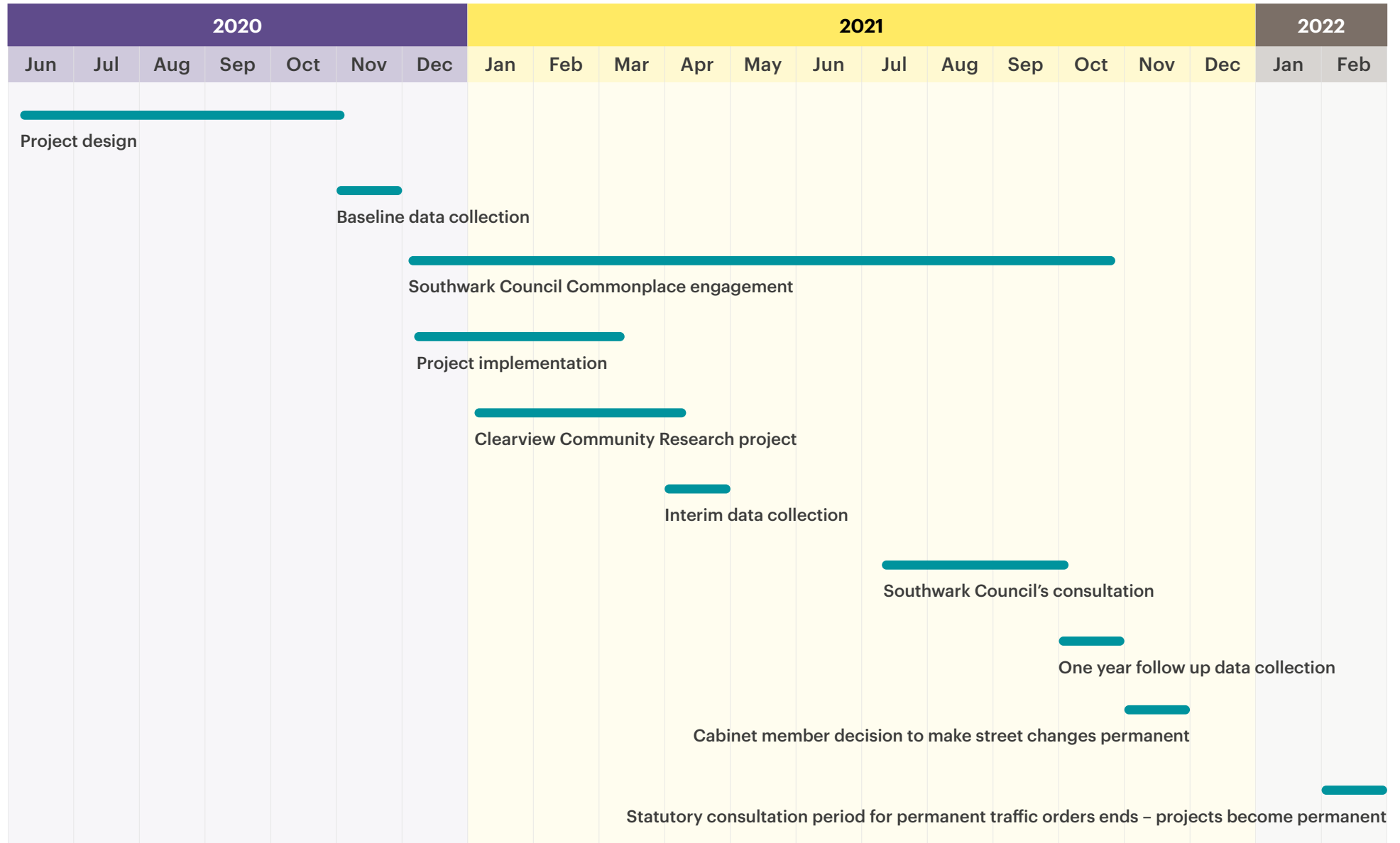
Posters were fitted to traffic filters, which included the link and a QR code to the Commonplace page. Sleeves on signposts and lamp columns were also used to raise awareness of the online consultation.

In November 2021, Catherine Rose, who was then the Cabinet Member for Transport, Parks and Sport made all three projects permanent (Catherine Rose is now the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Parks, Streets and Clean Air)¹³. The decision was informed by community feedback collected from the engagement methods, alongside interim monitoring data for the three project areas.

Residents were given a final opportunity to share their views during the statutory consultation period for the permanent traffic orders for the three projects. The statutory consultation period ended during January 2022 and all three projects received approval to be made permanent.



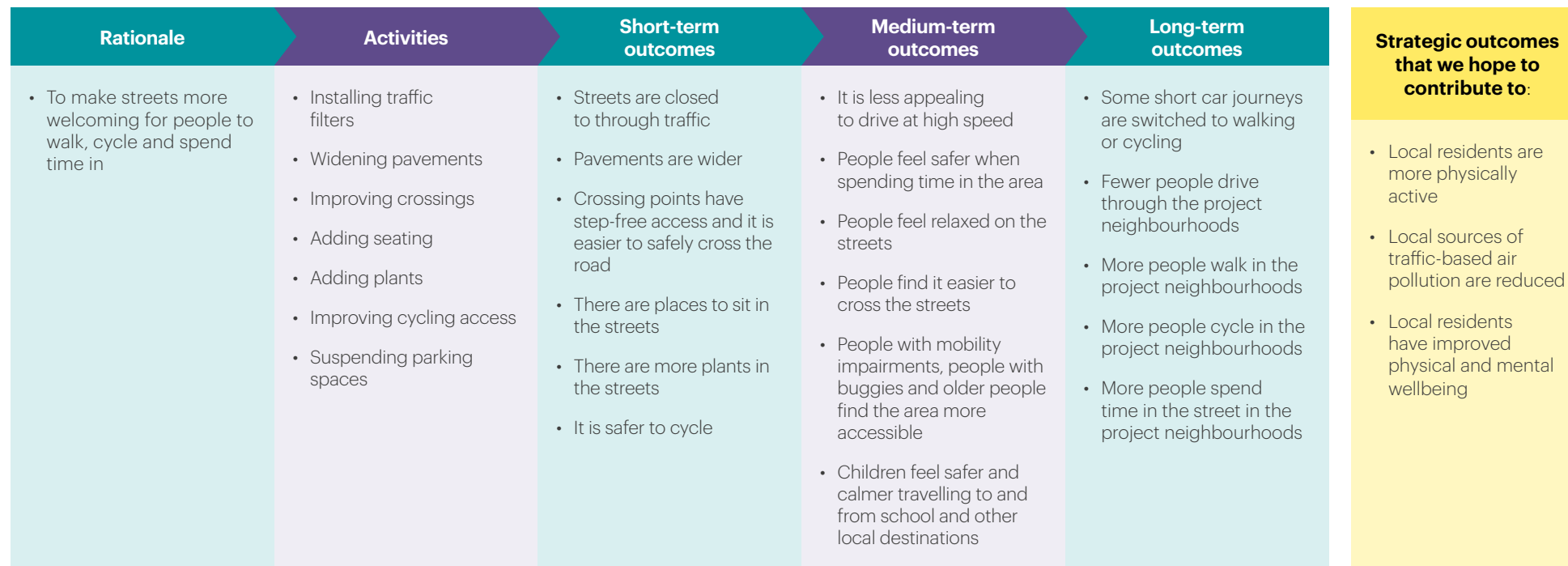
Project timeline



Evaluating success

A significant proportion of the budget was invested in a robust evaluation to understand the impacts of the project and assess whether it had achieved its aims.

Theory of change






Assumptions that underpin the theory of change, based on the evidence base

- Changes to the street environment yield significant changes in travel behaviour
- The Healthy Streets Approach provides an evidence-based way to develop street measures which improve people's experience of streets
- Contextual factors will not impact this theory of change and there will be no new factors outside of the project team's control that disrupt this theory, such as new national guidance or another emergency situation

Context in which the project is operating

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consequences of the COVID-19 related restrictions Changes in weather and daylight hours Other transport projects being implemented in Southwark General transport trends across 	<p>Southwark and London</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) expansion planned for October 2021 National and local public discourse about low traffic neighbourhoods and emergency traffic measures
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The evaluation methodology was based on the Healthy Streets Evaluation Framework¹⁴ and focused on measuring the direct outcomes that can be attributed to street projects.

	Outcomes	Measures
Short-term	Street is changed	How the street looks and functions 
Medium-term	People's attitudes to the street change	What people think of the street 
Long term	People walk, cycle and dwell more in the street	How people are using the street 

The methodology focuses on measuring the following:

1. How the street looks and functions, (the short-term outcomes in the theory of change).
This is measured using the HSCD¹⁵, a tool which gives an objective quantitative assessment of physical attributes of the street that are known to influence how inclusive, accessible, safe and relaxing streets feel for people walking, cycling and spending time there.
2. What people think of the street (the medium-term outcomes in the theory of change).
Unfortunately, due to the pandemic it was impossible to collect robust survey data to compare people's views before and after the projects were implemented. Residents' views were collected via ClearView Research's community researchers, Southwark Council's Commonplace websites and Southwark Council's online consultation. These were considered alongside the evaluation as a proxy measure for the medium-term outcomes.
3. How people are using the street (the long-term outcomes in the theory of change).
This is measured using:
 - automatic traffic counts which count the number, types, and speed of vehicles using the street
 - video camera footage, which was used to collect the levels of walking, cycling, and dwelling on the street.

Project area streets versus adjacent streets

The analysis of adjacent streets aimed to understand whether changes on project area streets led to traffic displacement and affected the HSCD scores on adjacent streets.

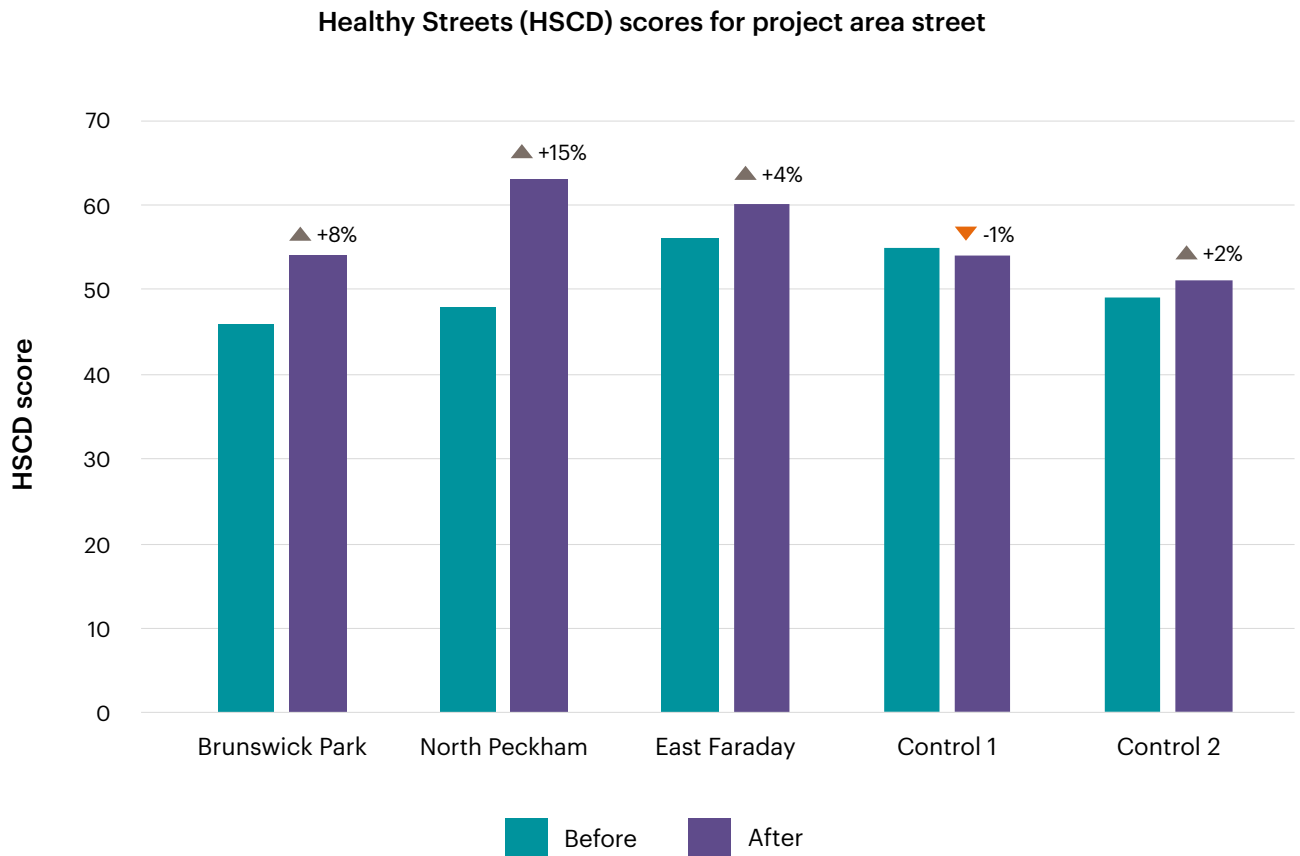
Comparator locations

Throughout the pandemic, the Government's guidelines affected people's travel behaviours. The aim of using control streets, where no street-level changes were made, was to determine whether any changes in how the streets were being used were due to the project, rather than general trends that also affected other neighbourhoods.

What was the impact?

How the streets look and function

To understand whether the project changed the way streets in the project areas look and function, a HSCD was completed for 12 streets inside the three project areas and for four streets in the two control locations.



Once the streets had been changed, the HSCD scores inside the three locations increased by nine percentage points on average, with 11 streets seeing an increased score and the score on one street remaining unchanged.

Streets inside the three project areas became safer, more accessible, and more pleasant to spend time on.

The control streets did not see a significant increase in their HSCD score, indicating that the street level changes were responsible for making streets healthier.

Across all project areas, traffic filters were responsible for the biggest improvements in HSCD scores.



Project area streets

Adjacent streets

None of the adjacent streets next to the project areas saw a reduction in score, and five streets saw small increases in their HSCD scores.

Similarly, there was minimal change to the HSCD scores for streets adjacent to the control locations, which increased by two percentage points on average.

The results indicate the street level changes did not influence adjacent streets.

What did people think of the street changes?

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the project team could not robustly measure residents' opinions of the streets before and after the street changes were made. However, it is still important that the evaluation considers people's views of the street changes, as set out in the theory of change.

Southwark Council's consultation results

Southwark Council consulted with residents to inform the decision of whether to make the street changes permanent¹⁶. Just under 800 residents replied to the statutory consultation out of 8,314 households affected across the three neighbourhoods.

Across all three neighbourhoods most respondents wanted to keep the street measures or keep them while introducing more measures to build on the changes: 49% in North Peckham, 62% in Brunswick Park and 69% in East Faraday.

In Brunswick Park and East Faraday, most respondents who declared a disability were in favour of keeping the measures or building on the measures and introducing additional features (53% in Brunswick Park and 50% in East Faraday). In North Peckham, more respondents who declared a disability wanted to remove the street measures (46%) compared to those who wanted to keep or build on the street measures (36%).

Community research

The participants who told community researchers that their main mode of transport was by car generally felt more negative towards the changes. Reasons included additional time waiting in traffic, and the inconvenience of having to take an alternative route.

People who regularly cycle tended to feel more positive towards the trial street changes. This was true throughout all phases of the research.

Some residents said they did not like the changes because they believed traffic was being displaced onto adjacent streets. However, results showed that most adjacent streets were largely unaffected, and that traffic was not displaced.

In all three project locations, more people expressed positive views about the trial street changes towards the end of the community research period. While it is impossible to be certain, this indicates that people became more accepting of the street changes the longer those changes were in place.

Those who felt positive about the changes reported that:

- streets inside the project neighbourhoods were quieter due to less traffic
- the air quality seemed better
- the reduction in traffic had made the streets feel safer – more people were using the streets for physical activity, such as walking, jogging, and cycling
- they felt safer

- they are safer using their wheelchair in the carriageway when footway space was not adequate for social distancing or for their accessibility needs
- they were appreciative of the new plants and were seen using the benches provided on filtered streets.

Spotlight on: Bagshot Street, North Peckham

Residents felt that the traffic filter on Bagshot Street solved the issue of vehicles driving dangerously.

Residents said the street feels quieter and safer, with many choosing to sit on the new benches provided.

One local restaurant owner introduced outdoor dining next to the filter once hospitality venues were allowed to accept customers outdoors as the Government's pandemic restrictions were eased. He said that this would not have been possible before due to the number and speed of vehicles using Bagshot Street before the changes were implemented.



Southwark Council Commonplace pages

As with the community research insights, comments gathered through the Commonplace page were more positive over time. Again, this suggests people were more accepting of the street changes as they became more accustomed to them.

609 responses on the three project Commonplace pages were tracked between December 2020 and June 2021.

- In Brunswick Park, feedback was evenly split with 49% of people expressing positive views and 46% of people expressing negative views.
- In East Faraday, over 70% of comments were positive.
- In North Peckham 54% of people expressed negative views.

“Having the barriers makes no difference for people to walk and get around easier, but it does make it ten times more difficult to drive around.”

**North Peckham Resident,
Commonplace comment**

Seven to nine months after implementation, most people who gave feedback wanted the street changes to be made permanent. Many people felt the changes did not go far enough and wanted to see Southwark Council build on these changes to further improve the street environments in their neighbourhood.

How people are using the streets

A year after collecting baseline data on traffic, walking, cycling, and dwelling levels, data collection was repeated across all three project locations and control locations.

Data analysis was split between project streets and adjacent streets to determine the differential impacts inside and outside the three project neighbourhoods. Project neighbourhoods were compared to the control sites using a method called difference-in-difference (DiD) analysis.



“It has been a noticeable positive difference; despite the fact we are also a driving family. It’s not ideal for driving and guests, but even guests comment how it’s preferable to have such a lovely quiet location where the street is quiet enough to walk to shops and things.”

**East Faraday Resident,
Commonplace comment**



“These changes have been great - please keep them all and create similar neighbourhoods for people rather than traffic around the borough. I walk, cycle, drive and use public transport and this scheme makes all four of those easier, plus reduces air pollution - it’s a win-win-win-win-win situation!”

**Brunswick Park Resident,
Commonplace comment**

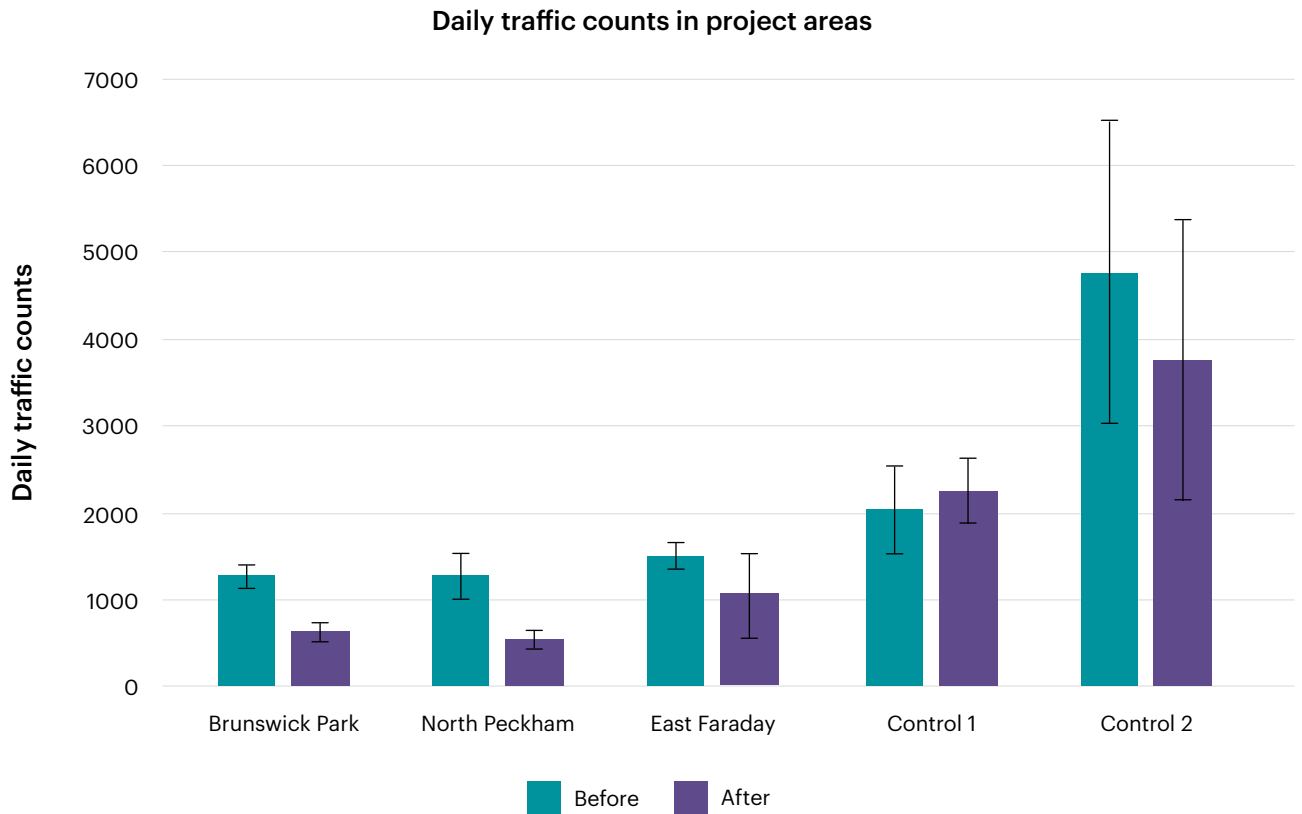


Traffic inside the project areas

One year after the baseline data was collected, there was a statistically significant reduction in average traffic volumes in both the Brunswick Park (650 fewer vehicles per day) and North Peckham (over 700 fewer vehicles per day) project areas.

Over the same period, average traffic volumes broadly stayed the same in the control 1 area.

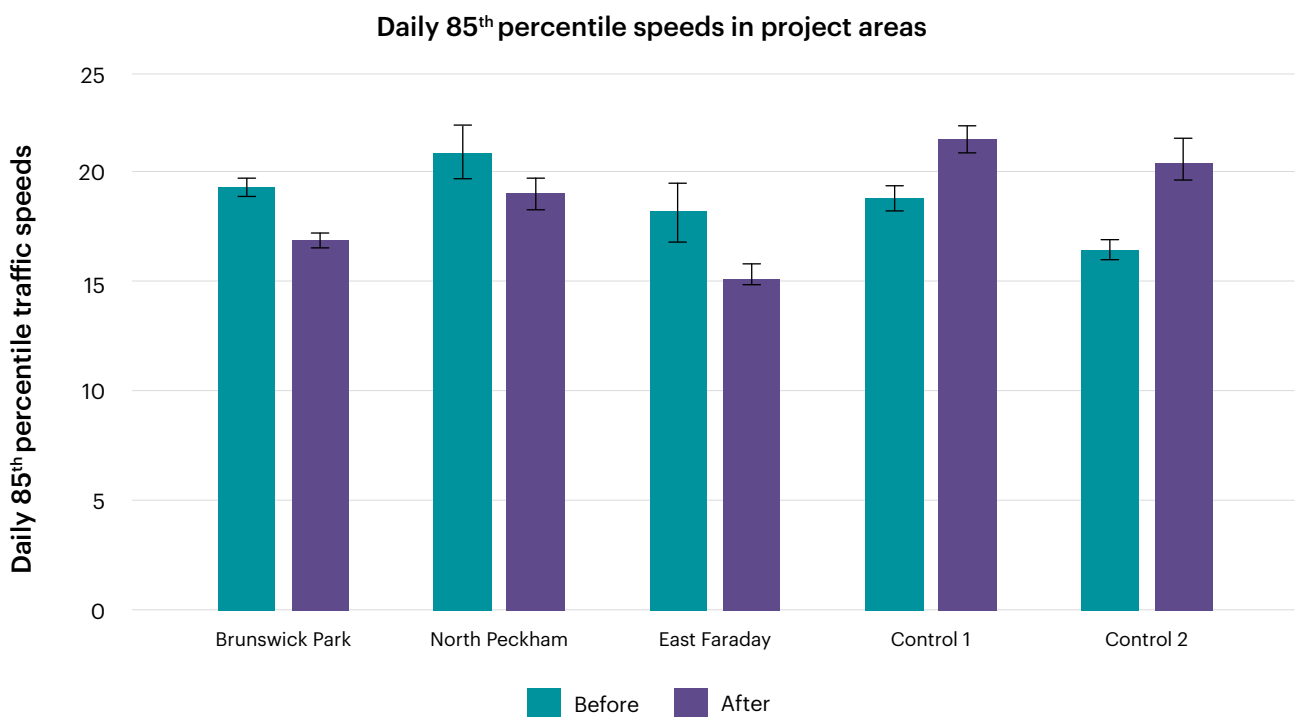
In the project area of East Faraday and its control group (control 2), traffic volumes decreased but this change was not statistically significant.



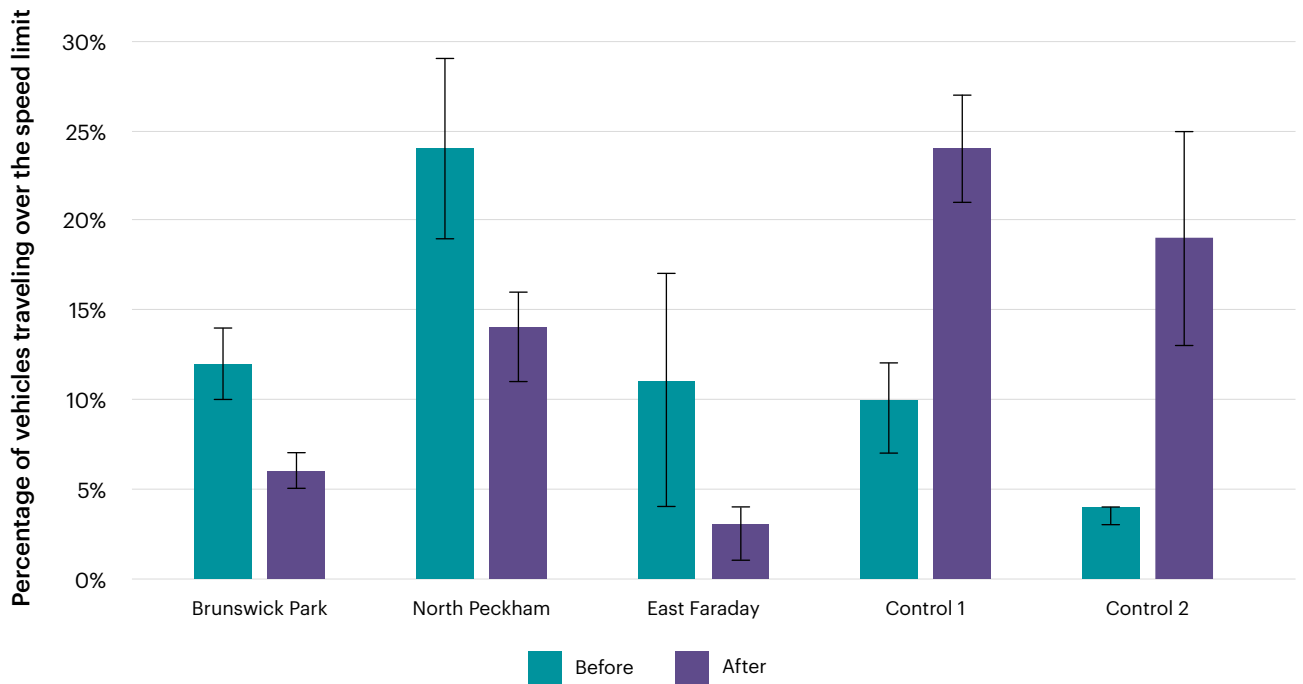
Across all three project neighbourhoods, there were statistically significant reductions in average traffic speeds.

At one-year follow-up, the daily average 85th percentile speed had reduced by between two and three miles per hour across the three project areas.

In contrast, there were statistically significant increases in average traffic speeds inside both control locations across these metrics.



Daily proportion of vehicles travelling above the Posted Speed Limit (PSL) in project neighbourhoods



Overall, in comparison to the control locations, the trial street measures successfully reduced the average number of vehicles using streets in North Peckham and Brunswick Park and reduced traffic speeding in all three project locations.

Without the street changes, it is likely that no traffic reduction would have taken place in North Peckham and Brunswick Park in the project areas and that there would have been increased speeding across all three neighbourhoods.



Spotlight on: Goldsmith Road, North Peckham

Goldsmith Road is a small residential street, which provides access to a school.

Before the project, motor vehicles used Goldsmith Road to avoid traffic lights at the junction of Peckham Hill Street and Peckham High Street. On average, almost 3,000 vehicles per day would use Goldsmith Road with over 26% of these vehicles exceeding the 20mph speed limit.

A traffic filter was added to Goldsmith Road as part of this project. As a result, there are on average over 2,000 fewer vehicles using this street per day. Average vehicle speeds have also reduced: only 14% of vehicles exceed the 20mph speed limit on average per day.

This street is now safer for children and families walking, cycling, and scooting to the local primary school.

Traffic on adjacent streets

Traffic volumes did not increase on adjacent streets in two of the three neighbourhoods compared to their control group. However, in Brunswick Park, daily traffic volumes on adjacent streets increased by 1,891 vehicles or 22% on average. In its control group (control 1), daily traffic volumes on adjacent streets increased by 505 vehicles or 8% on average.

Based on these results, it is likely that the trial street measures had minimal impact on traffic displacement in North Peckham and East Faraday but may have contributed to an increase in traffic on adjacent streets in Brunswick Park over and above the general traffic trend locally.

Moreover, fewer motor vehicles were speeding at the one-year follow-up point on streets adjacent to the Brunswick Park project area.

Walking

On average, there was no statistically significant change in counts of pedestrians across the three project neighbourhoods, when compared to control locations.

However, in comparison to control 2, there was a statistically significant increase in the average daily and weekday pedestrian counts for children in East Faraday. This is likely due to more children using an alternative entrance to the school, which was created by the school to support children to socially distance.

Overall, while there were increases in pedestrian counts on some individual streets within the project areas, there were no statistically significant changes to the number of pedestrians across the neighbourhoods.

This suggests that the project did not result in a net increase in walking across the three neighbourhoods after one year but, in some instances, it may have encouraged people to re-route and walk to alternative streets.

Spotlight on: Fenham Road, North Peckham

Fenham Road is a residential street that provides a route to a school.

As part of the project, a traffic filter was placed on the street to reduce the number of motor vehicles travelling through the neighbourhood. In addition, benches and plants were added to the street to create a small public space in the neighbourhood.

Before the project there was on average 711 pedestrian movements per day on Fenham Road. This increased by almost 70% to 1,209 pedestrian movements per day at follow-up. Average weekend walking levels saw an even bigger increase of 127% from 509 to 1,154 pedestrian movements. These increases were largely due to more instances of adults walking down Fenham Road.



Cycling

Overall, there were no statistically significant changes to average cycling levels across the three project neighbourhoods and two control areas at one-year follow-up.

There was no statistically significant difference in the change in cycling levels in Brunswick Park and East Faraday when the project neighbourhoods were compared to control groups 1 and 2 respectively.

However, in comparison to control 1, there was a reduction in the average daily and weekday cycling levels in North Peckham. This is largely because of a decrease in adult cycling levels at one-year follow up.

This indicates the project has not led to neighbourhood-level changes in cycling in project areas, relative to the control areas.

Spotlight on: Benhill Road, Brunswick Park

Benhill Road is a street that runs through the Brunswick Park neighbourhood and connects to a school street. Benhill Road is also part of a cycleway.

A traffic filter was added to Benhill Road to reduce traffic and make this existing Quietway route calmer and more welcoming for cycling. Benches and plants were also added to create local public space for residents.

One year after baseline data was collected, there was a 62.5% increase in average daily cycling levels on Benhill Road. This is almost completely driven by an increase in the levels of children cycling on this street. Weekday average child cycling movements more than doubled and weekend average cycling levels doubled.



Spotlight on: Lidgate Road, Brunswick Park

Lidgate Road sits just outside the Brunswick Park boundary. This used to be a dead-end street that people could walk through from the filtered neighbourhood of Chandler Way to join Southampton Way and enter the Brunswick Park neighbourhood.

As part of the project, access through this street was introduced for cyclists so that they too can easily travel east-west across this area on quieter streets.

Before these changes were made, people rarely cycled through Lidgate Street as there was no step-free access for them. On average two cycling movements per day were recorded in November 2020. At the one-year follow-up, this had increased to 17 average cycle movements per day. While these are small numbers, they demonstrate how even small changes to the step-free permeability of neighbourhoods can support people moving through on wheels.



Dwelling

Dwelling is defined as the number of people spending time on the street. The numbers of people dwelling was low in all three project neighbourhoods before and after the changes.

Compared to the control locations, there was no statistically significant change in the overall number of people dwelling in the project areas. There was a small decrease in children and a small increase in teenagers dwelling in Brunswick Park and North Peckham compared to control 1.

The number of people dwelling decreased in both control locations.

Findings

The streets became healthier

The changes made the streets safer, more welcoming and accessible, and a better environment for people to walk and cycle.

Across the three areas, all but one street saw a clear uplift in their HSCD scores with an average increase of nine percentage points. This compares to minimal change in the scores on streets inside the control locations.

The only project street that did not see an increase in the HSCD score was Mina Road in East Faraday. The score on this street stayed the same because, while the temporary footway widening is likely to have delivered benefits to people in parts of the street, these benefits were not sufficient to improve the street at its worst point, which determines the score.

The project did not reduce the HSCD scores for streets adjacent to the project neighbourhoods. A similar pattern was seen on streets adjacent to the control locations, suggesting that the project had no impact on the way adjacent streets look and function.

Consultations

Over 1,600 responses were collated across the three project neighbourhoods where 8,314 households were deemed affected by the changes¹⁷.

- People's opinion of the project reflected the main mode of transport that they reported using.
- Most feedback centred on the traffic filters, while the other street measures generally received positive feedback.
- While many residents felt that the project streets were quieter, they expressed a concern that traffic would be displaced onto adjacent streets. Evidence shows, however, that there were minimal effects on most adjacent streets.
- Different engagement routes discovered different attitudes to the changes, suggesting that both the method of engagement (online and face-to-face) and the people involved in gathering feedback is important.

For example, in North Peckham, only 18% of the feedback given to the community researchers was positive, compared to 43% via the Commonplace page. In East Faraday, 48% of comments given to the community researchers were negative, while feedback through the Commonplace page was overwhelmingly (over 70%) positive.

There are explanations for these differences.

- The community researchers may have reached a different cohort of people who did not engage with Southwark's online engagement methods.
- Residents may have felt more able to be critical about the project to the community researchers as they were viewed as independent from the Council.

Alternatively, desirability bias may have led residents to express views they thought the community researchers wanted to hear based on their perception of local sentiment towards the project.

Typically, other methods would be used to understand whether people's views of the streets had changed. For example, an on-street survey of people's views would be undertaken in the project and control locations before and after the project was implemented. This was not possible due to guidelines during the pandemic.

None of the community engagement methods were designed with the intention of tracking residents' views over time, so it is impossible to draw clear conclusions about whether the project shifted people's attitudes towards their local streets.

Lessons learned

The project's theory of change posited that by physically changing how the streets look and function, it would change people's views of the street and, in turn, affect how they used the streets in their local neighbourhood.

The project aimed to reduce the volume and speed of traffic while increasing levels of walking, cycling and dwelling inside the project neighbourhoods. Additionally, the project aimed to ensure that traffic levels on adjacent streets did not increase above general traffic trends due to displaced traffic.

The findings demonstrate a clear positive impact on traffic volumes and speeds inside the project neighbourhoods, with lower traffic volumes and speeding at one-year follow-up in all three areas when compared to control locations.

This indicates the project has been successful at reducing traffic on project streets and encouraging safer speeds. This is likely due to the traffic filters placed in each neighbourhood. Reductions in both traffic volumes and in levels of speeding may lead to better road safety as well as reduced noise and air pollution for communities living on these streets.

Although the project successfully decreased traffic – creating safer streets and increased community satisfaction with the street environment – this did not translate into significantly higher levels of walking, cycling, and dwelling in the neighbourhoods.

While there have been some positive impacts on individual streets (such as Goldsmith Road or Lidgate Road), overall, there has been no statistically significant change in walking, cycling, or dwelling in comparison to our control locations.

There are several potential explanations for these results.

Scale

Within the budget available, the project was unable to make a big enough change to the local street environments to facilitate measurable changes to walking, cycling and dwelling.

Many of the trial street measures implemented were small in scale, for example improving the accessibility of one junction or adding benches to just two streets in the area. While people may have benefited from these changes on a street level, this was not enough to create a shift in behaviour across the neighbourhood.

Car use and ownership

The three project neighbourhoods are residential areas with low levels of car ownership. It is likely that there are few short car trips originating in these neighbourhoods so while these trial street measures have prevented other vehicles taking shortcuts through these areas, they are unlikely to have generated trip switches away from car use among people who live in the neighbourhoods within the project timeframe.

The project neighbourhoods are based in some of the most deprived areas in Southwark. Households that own cars within these areas may need more incentives or personalised support to make the switch to active travel modes for longer trips, such as cycling.

There are few trips that would begin and end within each neighbourhood. Until streets are systematically improved across the borough, one short section of a journey being improved may not be enough to prompt people to walk or cycle.

Behaviour change

The physical environment is only one factor in people's choice to walk, cycle and spend time in the streets. To support behaviour change, more time should be spent talking to the community about their needs and interests, and working with local businesses, schools, and community groups to make better use of the streets as destinations.

The theory of change anticipated that changes in the way people use the streets would be a long-term outcome. However, the results indicate that behaviours take longer to embed. The length of the project's evaluation may have been too short to pick up significant changes.

The potential impact of displaced traffic

Looking at the potential impact of displaced traffic on streets adjacent to the project areas, findings indicate that while traffic levels were elevated at one-year follow-up in both North Peckham and East Faraday these increases were no different than the changes in traffic volumes seen on streets adjacent to the control sites.

In Brunswick Park, traffic volumes were slightly higher on adjacent streets at the one-year follow-up point when compared to control 1, and traffic speeds were significantly lower.

This may indicate that there was some traffic displaced to adjacent streets in the Brunswick Park area. Continued monitoring of traffic on these adjacent streets should be undertaken to see if traffic levels here fall in line with the trends across the borough.

Conclusion

The project improved the way streets in the three neighbourhoods look and function in relation to the Healthy Streets Indicators, improving the experience for people using these streets. The street measures led to a reduction in traffic travelling through the project locations and a reduction in speeding violations from vehicles using these streets.

While these findings indicate the project has made the environment better for those already using active travel modes in the three neighbourhoods, there was not an increase in the levels of walking, cycling, and dwelling. The hypotheses for why centre around three themes.

1. The three project neighbourhoods are in some of the most deprived areas in Southwark where most people do not own cars and already get around by walking, cycling, or public transport. While the traffic filters were successful at reducing through-traffic from the area, they have not encouraged local residents who drive to switch to sustainable travel modes.
2. The project focused on improving the streets inside priority neighbourhoods, but most trips go beyond these project areas. To have an impact on people's travel behaviours, there is a need to systematically improve streets across the borough, developing connected routes that are inviting for people to walk, cycle and spend time.
3. While it is clear the built environment is an important factor influencing people's travel behaviours, it is important to also take time to understand the needs of each community and tailor interventions to support behaviour change accordingly.

The findings suggest that projects of this size and nature are valuable in their ability to cost-effectively reduce through-traffic and speeding and improve streets.

However, particularly in neighbourhoods with low car ownership, they may not be sufficient to reduce car use and increase active travel by local people. They should be seen as a vital part of the approach, with further action required to create a connected network of healthy streets, improve the experience on main roads, and provide support to local people and businesses that incentivise behaviour change towards walking and cycling.

Recommendations

In Southwark, this project has built a strong foundation from which to develop. Recommendations for next steps would be to build on these successes and seek to better understand the opportunities within these neighbourhoods and to foster connections into neighbouring areas:

Maintain the most popular measures

During the resident consultation period in summer 2021, many people wanted to keep the measures. Budget allowing, Southwark Council should consider where successful elements could be expanded within the neighbourhood to have a larger impact.

Develop insights on the factors that increase behaviour change

Further insights are required to understand the potential for switching short local trips by car originating in and around these neighbourhoods to walking and cycling. Southwark Council could gather this information through engagement with businesses and households across the three areas.

Continue to engage with the local community

Engagement with local communities in these neighbourhoods should aim to develop an understanding of the changes residents would like to see next on their streets.

Meet the needs of residents

Residents should be engaged in a conversation about what other forms of support would help them to walk and cycle more often.

This could include connecting people to existing support networks such as bike try-before-you-buy¹⁸ and training¹⁹; facilitating new community activities within the reclaimed street space; and/or testing out financial support or incentives to switch to active modes.

Learn from the experience of pilots in other cities

We can look to other cities for innovative approaches, such as Birmingham City Council's targeted scheme providing free bikes to people living in areas with lower income and employment and poorer health²⁰.

Consider improvements to connected neighbours

As part of the highways programme of work, Southwark Council should identify connected neighbourhoods that would benefit from physical improvements to enable longer walking and cycling journeys across the central belt of Southwark which was selected as a 'priority zone' for health improvement within this project.

Commit to regular and consistent data collection

To support ongoing evaluation and better understand seasonal effects, data should be collected regularly in multiple neighbourhoods across the borough over time to understand the long-term impacts of these changes.

Finally, in applying the Healthy Streets Evaluation Framework and using routinely collected data in a real-time evaluation, the project team has gained invaluable insights into the challenges of evaluating these types of projects.

This report has five recommendations for future evaluations in this field:

Contingency for control locations

Ensure there is at least one control site to match each project neighbourhood and, if possible, include more control locations to act as a contingency if something unexpected happens in a control location.

Street environments constantly change and many highway measures can be implemented at very short notice. This can render control site data invalid.

Levels of data collection

Aim to collect the same amount of data in control locations as in project locations to help make results comparable.

Comparability of control locations

Ensure control areas are as similar to project sites as possible in terms of neighbourhood and demographic contexts, as well as baseline levels of the outcomes of interest that will be measured. This will help to ensure the project and control areas are comparable.

Length of time for follow up

Monitor the effects of street changes for at least one year after implementation. It is plausible that changes to behaviour may take longer to develop which could be determined with a longer follow-up period. Longer follow-up periods with multiple data collection points are also useful to understand if any behaviour change is sustained.

Collecting a representative sample of residents' views

It was not possible in this evaluation to collect a representative sample of residents' views before and after the project was implemented due to the unique circumstances of the global pandemic. This is recommended in the Healthy Streets Evaluation Framework and the project team would seek to do this in future project evaluations, in addition to the collection of community views via other channels during the project.

Although it can be costly, applying a robust evaluation methodology to street projects is important. This evaluation has provided a rich and rounded understanding of the impacts of our projects that will be of interest not only to the local communities but also to transport professionals and advocates around the world who seek to understand the effects of these types of projects.



Partners

Southwark Council designed and delivered the project interventions, developed the theory of change and data collection plan with the support and expertise of Healthy Streets.

[Southwark Council](#) is the local authority for the London Borough of Southwark in Greater London.

Systra and Tracsis were commissioned to collect the data.

The MRC Epidemiology Unit were funded to collate the data, perform the statistical analyses and the interpretation of the quantitative results.

The [MRC Epidemiology Unit](#) is a department at the University of Cambridge. It is working to improve the health of people in the UK and around the world. Obesity, type 2 diabetes and related metabolic disorders present a major and growing global public health challenge. These disorders result from a complex interplay between genetic, developmental, behavioural and environmental factors that operate throughout life. The mission of the unit is to investigate the individual and combined effects of these factors and to develop and evaluate strategies to prevent these diseases and their consequences. www.mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk

ClearView Research recruited and trained people from the local community as community researchers.

[ClearView Research](#) is an audience insight and strategy agency. It leads in providing culturally-informed insights and recruiting from diverse populations. It specialise in working on research, evaluation, engagement and strategy projects with minority ethnic groups, culturally diverse communities, people living in vulnerable circumstances, people with protected characteristics and those who often go unheard. It is committed to ensuring that the work is always inclusive and equitable. It strives to ensure that all participants enjoy the research process and find it accessible, engaging and empowering. It ensures that participants voices are central in the materials it produces – from reports and frameworks, to videos and interventions. **ClearView Research work best with organisations who give a damn – and want to make a genuine impact.**

Impact on Urban Health led on drafting the final report, with the first draft reviewed and edited by Southwark Council, Healthy Streets, and the MRC Epidemiology Unit.

[Impact on Urban Health](#) funded all elements of the project. Impact on Urban Health works to make urban areas healthier places for everyone to live by removing obstacles to good health. Its [health effects of air pollution programme](#) explores how people's health is affected by poor air quality and tests solutions to reduce this harmful impact.

[Healthy Streets](#) is led by Lucy Saunders who developed the Healthy Streets Approach. Healthy Streets provide training, tools, capacity building and consultancy to enable system-wide change to ensure streets support people and planet, now and in the future. Lucy embedded her Healthy Streets Approach in policy and practice at the Greater London Authority and Transport for London. Healthy Streets now work with towns and cities in the UK, Europe, Australia and New Zealand to develop and apply new ways of working that prioritise the 10 Healthy Streets Indicators in decision-making at every level.

Appendix

An appendix for this report is available on request. Please contact Impact on Urban Health at communications@urbanhealth.org.uk for more information.

Footnotes

- ¹ Transport for London. Streetspace funding and guidance. 2020: <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/boroughs-and-communities/streetspace-funding>
- ² [Commonplace](#) is an online community engagement platform, which Southwark Council uses across a range of service areas to gather feedback from local communities. During the first lockdown in spring 2020, Southwark Council launched a [Commonplace page](#) asking residents where they needed street changes to support social distancing and safe and healthy travel. Since then, Commonplace has also been used to gather feedback on local transport projects that have been implemented since the start of the pandemic. You can view all of Southwark's Common-place pages [here](#).
- ³ University of Birmingham. Exposure to particulate air pollutants associated with numerous cancers. 2016: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2016/exposure-to-particulate-air-pollutants-associated-with-numerous-cancers>
- ⁴ The Food Foundation. The Broken Plate 2021: The State of the Nation's Food System. 2021: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/FF-Broken-Plate-2021.pdf>
- ⁵ Southwark Council. Streetspace Southwark. <https://southwarkstreetspace.commonplace.is/>
- ⁶ Healthy Streets: <https://www.healthystreets.com/what-is-healthy-streets> The Healthy Streets Indicators are the foundation of the Healthy Streets Approach. They describe important aspects of the human experience of being on streets that should be considered in the design and evaluation of street projects.
- ⁷ Southwark Council. Movement Plan. 2019: <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/9415/Movement-Plan-2019.pdf>
- ⁸ Southwark Council. Streetspace Plan. 2020: <https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s89803/Report%20Streetspace%20Plan.pdf>
- ⁹ Department for Transport. Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking. 2020: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf
- ¹⁰ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Physical activity and the environment. 2018: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng90/chapter/Recommendations>
- ¹¹ Public Health England Healthy High Streets: Good place-making in an urban setting. 2018: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-high-streets-good-place-making-in-an-urban-setting>
- ¹² London Borough of Waltham Forest. Walthamstow Village Review. 2017. <https://londonlivingstreets.files.wordpress.com/2019/07/2017-08-23-wv-report-final.pdf>
- ¹³ Southwark Council. Decision details: Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation Streetspace Scheme. 2021. <https://modern-gov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7484>
- ¹⁴ Healthy Streets. Healthy Streets Evaluation Framework. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6048ed-6105c2155a63b0c831/t/60c339c5ed2a953164d5e107/1623407052709/Healthy+Streets+Evaluation+Framework.pdf>
- ¹⁵ Transport for London. Healthy Streets: <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/healthy-streets>

The London Healthy Streets Check for Designers (HSCD) tool is typically used by designers when developing a new project or evaluating its impact. Within the HSCD, streets are assessed before any changes are made and after the project is implemented, giving both a before and after Healthy Streets Check score (or “HSCD score”). Each HSCD score is out of a maximum of 100. The difference between the before and after score gives an indication of whether the street environment has improved or declined in relation to the Healthy Streets Indicators.

¹⁶ Southwark Council. Guy’s and St Thomas’ Foundation Streetspace Scheme. 2021. <https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s103132/Report%20Guys%20and%20St%20Thomas%20Foundation%20Streetspace%20Scheme.pdf>

¹⁷ The project team were unable to validate the number of people engaged across the three methods and so cannot say if some residents shared their views more than once.

¹⁸ Peddle my wheels - Try before you buy TM <https://www.peddlemywheels.com/try-before-you-bike>

¹⁹ TfL. TfL's online Cycle Skills course. <https://cycle-skillsonline.tfl.gov.uk/>

²⁰ Birmingham City Council. Big Birmingham Bikes giveaway. 2022. https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/article/1048/big_birmingham_bikes_giveaway

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