



Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Brighton and Hove

Living Streets Brighton and Hove¹ supports measures by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) to tackle the traffic and transport issues facing the city to encourage more walking and cycling in the city, especially where measures make active travel safer, easier and more attractive.

However, we have reservations about both the current proposals on the pilot Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in Hanover and Tarnar and the city-wide LTN strategy, especially in relation to improving streets for walking and wheeling.

It is not possible to comment in detail as the revised plans for the pilot and strategy following discussions at the BHCC Environment, Transport and Sustainability (ETS) Committee in June 2022 are not yet in the public domain. However, we would like to take this opportunity to repeat and develop the key issues we raised in our paper to BHCC officers in April 2022 and to raise further questions as well as contribute positively to the continuing development of this work.

Questions

1. **Funding for the Hanover and Tarnar pilot and future strategy.** The officers' report to the June 2022 ETS Committee states that £300,000 of costs will be met by capital funding through the Local Transport Plan. Following the development of plans, the costs rose and an additional £1.1 million for 2022-23 was needed for which a bid was to be made to the BHCC Carbon Neutral Fund. This bid was put to the BHCC Policy and Resources Committee in October 2022, alongside another bid for £1 million for 2023-24. The June ETS paper goes on to say that "Alternative funding options may include borrowing, revenue contributions or additional LTP capital allocations."

None of these papers mention any specific funding from the UK Government for BHCC LTNs, unless it is included in the Carbon Neutral Fund. It would be interesting to clarify how much UK Government funding is going into this initiative, and how much local BHCC funding.

2. **Timing of pilot and overall strategy.** The June ETS papers suggest that the Hanover and Tarnar LTN pilot will inform the wider LTN strategy for the city (June ETS papers page 227). However, any data from the pilot will not be available until it has been running for at least six and probably the full 18 months of the pilot experiment.

¹ Living Streets Brighton and Hove is part of Living Streets, the UK-wide charity for everyday walking. We support the development of safer, cleaner, greener streets and neighbourhoods that create a better walking environment and inspire people to walk more. See our Brighton and Hove local group webpage <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/get-involved/local-groups/brighton-and-hove>.

An alternative approach would be to agree an city-wide strategy and then pilot the approach in one neighbourhood. The current approach of running the pilot and agreeing the wider strategy at the same time serves neither the pilot nor the wider strategy development.

3. **Dealing with conflict.** The Hanover and Tarner pilot LTN has already generated significant conflict with a petition signed by 329 people opposing the LTN, a deputation for changing and enlarging the area, and a deputation in favour of the scheme, all going to the June 2022 ETS Committee alone.

This is an unfortunate but entirely predictable response to the current approach to LTNs. Research in 2021 by disability organisation Transport for All with disabled participants from 19 of the 21 LTN areas in London found that “On both sides of the argument participants noted the negative impact the LTN debate has had on local communities, personal relationships and mental wellbeing”². A different approach to design, implementation and monitoring may provoke less conflict and division.

4. **Public engagement to date.** There have clearly been efforts made to consult local residents about the proposed Hanover and Tarner LTN. However, the design proposals to date do not address the most frequent concerns of local people as outlined in June 2022 ETS papers. The most important issues that emerged during that consultation were speeding, drug dealing etc and bins obstructing the pavements.

When asked what would improve Concept Design 1, the biggest response was less street clutter, obstructions and wheelie bins on pavements (41), followed by more dropped kerbs (25) and wider pavements (24). When asked about their concerns on the design proposals the two main ones were displaced traffic and road closures.

The main concerns raised by the public engagement about the area do not seem to be reflected in the current proposals and it will be important to see if any of these, and other concerns, are addressed in revised designs.

5. **Why Hanover and Tarner?** Without an overall strategy it is hard to identify the rationale behind choosing Hanover and Tarner as the LTN pilot, or the criteria used to justify the choice of this area, beyond a request from a relatively small number of local residents.
6. **Small benefits of LTNs.** Overall, a survey by Department for Transport of residents in existing LTNs³ suggests that the perceived impacts from the changes were not wholly positive:
 - under half the people with mobility problems (49%) supported the LTN in their local area
 - only one third (34%) said they had noticed fewer cars driving through their neighbourhood
 - 43% agreed that the LTN made living in their neighbourhood more pleasant but 39% disagreed
 - only 31% said the LTN helps create a sense of community in their local neighbourhood, and 48% disagreed.

² *Pave the Way. The impact of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) on disabled people, and the future of accessible Active Travel.* January 2021, p21. <https://www.transportforall.org.uk/campaigns-and-research/pave-the-way/>.

³ *Low Traffic Neighbourhoods Residents' Survey. Report.* Kantar for Department for Transport, January 2021, p12-13. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004948/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-residents-survey.pdf

The Transport for All research found particular problems for people with disabilities:

- **83% felt strongly impacted by their LTN and 77% reported an increase in journey times for residents and their carers** which “leads to travel becoming more exhausting, expensive, complicated or difficult. There were also cases of a negative impact on mental health, issues with taxis and a perceived rise in traffic danger”⁴.

Ways forward

The aim of the LTN initiative, as outlined in the papers for the June 2022 ETS is "to encourage greater use of active travel choices and community activities in a local area, thus reducing private motor vehicle use, particularly for short trips" (page 228).

In the spirit of supporting this aim of the BHCC LTN initiative, we suggest the following:

1. **Review again the findings from the public consultation activities** on the Hanover and Tarner pilot LTN and include more specific measures to tackle the problems identified by respondents, and to amend design proposals for the pilot to reflect concerns. Ensure that these changes *improve* access for people with disabilities, local residents etc rather than reducing and making access more difficult. Ensure that local residents with disabilities are fully consulted as well as other local residents and organisations representing disabled people, including those for people who are blind or partially sighted.
2. **Review and amend the monitoring plans** to show whether and to what extent the stated aim has been achieved, and how much local people's priorities have been achieved.
3. **Clarify how and why Hanover and Tarner has been chosen** for the pilot, and how and when it will inform the wider strategy.
4. **Clarify measures to make alternatives to private motor vehicles cheaper and easier to use** (e.g. public transport, walking and wheeling, cycling).
5. **Introduce measures gradually and in ways that are not permanent**, so they can be changed if not working: use the three Es: Engage, Experiment, Enhance. This should also help build confidence locally in changes over time and reduce conflict. Clarify all exemptions to measures (e.g. for emergency vehicles, local residents, people with disabilities).
6. **Establish mini-citizens' assemblies for the pilot** and following LTNs to enable local residents to fully participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of LTNs. Participants for these need to be recruited to reflect the demographic mix of the area, and the spectrum of views locally (for and against) using similar methods to the BHCC Climate Assembly.
7. **Review and amend the timescale for the pilot and wider strategy**, so that there is a clear rational link between the two. Launching the two things at the same time is likely to be counter productive.

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⁴ *Pave the Way. The impact of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) on disabled people, and the future of accessible Active Travel.* January 2021, p4. <https://www.transportforall.org.uk/campaigns-and-research/pave-the-way/>