

2014 Local Elections 'ask': Areas without Through Motor Traffic

The problem

People are reluctant to cycle or even take their children on foot on streets with significant traffic flows because they are perceived as unsafe, noisy and polluted. Residents of such streets suffer from noise, pollution and limitations on their movement.

Explanation

Most London boroughs include areas composed of residential streets. Rat-running may have been reduced by no-entries and one-way streets, but most streets remain open to through motor traffic. This means they are used by motorists who do not live in them as cut-throughs between adjacent main roads. Motorists do this to try to save themselves perhaps very little time, but this turns residential streets into places where motor vehicles dominate and cycling, walking and the ordinary lives of residents take second place.

The solution is to convert these areas into 'Quiet Zones' – zones in which motor vehicles can reach every address, but cannot drive through. There are already many areas of London that are free of through motor traffic. Some have come about by chance or by minor reductions on motor vehicle access, others are a result of careful design and strong campaigning to gain local support.

How to achieve a quiet zone

The approach uses inexpensive measure such as barriers and no entries that allow cycles and pedestrians through, but not motor traffic:

- Study existing and potential 'rat-running'.
- Put in enough barriers at carefully chosen points to stop all the cut-throughs, but allow people and goods to reach all the houses by motor vehicle.
- The outcome will be one or more zones free of through motor traffic.
- Car-parking is largely unaffected. While a few spaces may be lost to make room for road barriers and turning places, spaces may be gained elsewhere.



Benefits

Residents will enjoy a more livable space, easier and safer to move about in by foot and by

bicycle. Children's play opportunities will be expanded, particularly important in London where many homes have little or no private outdoor space. Traffic noise and air pollution will be reduced, and residents will no longer have to keep doors and windows closed.

Quiet zones are usually mainly residential but small parades of shops and cafés are often included in them and they may have high streets adjacent to them. While businesses often argue that they get trade from passing motorists, car usage in London is declining and there is evidence (e.g. Tyler et al 2012, Sustrans 2006, Broadway Market 2011) that many types of business can gain even more from passing pedestrians and cyclists, who are more likely to visit several shops in a single trip.

Creating more pleasant shopping environments will benefit many businesses; for example, cafés and restaurants may be able to offer more pleasant pavement seating.

What might this mean at ward level? It might mean campaigning for:

- The adoption of a policy under which residential areas should be regarded as 'quiet zones' free of motor vehicles that are simply using them for transit.
- The creation of at least one quiet zone within the ward.
- Removing through motor traffic from a key street within the ward (for example, a local shopping street).

Further reading

1. *An example of a quiet zone in Camden: Primrose Hill (NW1)*.
maps.camdencyclists.org.uk/LCC-CCC/AWTTs/PrimroseHill.pdf
For notes on how this residential and shopping area became a quiet zone, see www.barrgazetas.com/papers/PrimroseHill.pdf.
2. Hart, J. and Parkhurst, G. (2011) Driven to excess: Impacts of motor vehicles on the quality of life of residents of three streets in Bristol UK. *World Transport Policy & Practice*, 17 (2). pp. 12-30. ISSN 1352-7614, <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/15513/>
3. *The Means: to change places for the better: The relevance of parking in the success of urban centres: A review for London Councils*, Prepared by: Sophie Tyler, Giles Semper, Peter Guest & Ben Fieldhouse, and published on 31/10/2012. See: <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/transport/parkinginlondon/parkingurban.htm>
4. *Shoppers and how they travel. Liveable Neighbourhoods Information Sheet LNO2*, Sustrans, Bristol, 2006. Available at: <http://cidadanialxmob.tripod.com/shoppersandhowtheytravel.pdf>

5. *Broadway Market Visitor Survey*, October 2011. See: <http://broadwaymarket.co.uk/admin/uploads/dca5dd6ed5f5fd703ba69380b50af2af.pdf>
6. *A Transport Agenda for Outer London*, Submission to the Outer London Commission by Campaign for Better Transport and London Cycling Campaign with contributions from Living Streets, May 2009, p10. <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/transport/cyclingwalking/breakingdownbarrierstocycling.htm>