

Great Suffolk Street Low Traffic Neighbourhood

Frequently Asked Questions – 23 October 2020

Why is the project being delivered?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has raised the importance and public awareness of people having safer and wider spaces for walking and cycling so people can socially distance, exercise locally and travel sustainably close to home.
- The pandemic has also highlighted that poor air quality increases the chance of people catching the virus and its impact on their health. If nothing is done then driving will increase to higher levels than before COVID-19, because fewer people are using public transport due to social distancing and other concerns.
- Therefore LB Southwark and Transport for London are introducing emergency measures across the borough to: help social distancing; reduce motor traffic; enable more people to walk and cycle locally; to build people's confidence to return to work, school, public transport, leisure and the shops.

How does this fit with Southwark's priorities?

- The Great Suffolk Street Low Traffic Neighbourhood scheme fully supports the council's Streetspace Programme, Movement Plan, Cycling Strategy and climate change commitments.
- This scheme has been identified using the Healthy Streets approach. The Healthy Streets approach was created by the Mayor of London and TfL and Southwark has been at the forefront of helping to deliver.

How were the locations chosen?

- The Great Suffolk Street Area is a mixture of residential and commercial buildings and provides a key cycle route connecting Quietway 1, Cyleway 4, Cycleway 6 and Cycle Superhighway 7.
- The Great Suffolk Street area has been identified as a priority as it receives a disproportionate volume of through-traffic with vehicles travelling through the area to avoid queueing on the larger roads. Residents and visitors have told us this is not acceptable and is discouraging active travel, such as walking and cycling, through the area. Low levels of walking and cycling affect local businesses as there is less passing trade.
- A Commonplace map (<https://southwarkstreetspace.commonplace.is/>) was set up for the whole of Southwark early in the pandemic. This was to provide people a platform to make suggestions about the changes they would like to see to make streets safer for social distancing, to support people walking and cycling and to reduce through-traffic. These comments were used to identify what measures would help these neighbourhoods and could be introduced as an experiment.

How were the community involved?

- Early proposals were reviewed with Southwark Living Streets and Southwark Cyclists to incorporate their views and local knowledge. Both organisations are supportive of the proposed projects.
- Better Bankside Business Improvement District has also been consulted regarding the proposals and have helped to arrange contact with local businesses.
- The comments given by residents, businesses and visitors on the Southwark Commonplace map were also used to develop the proposals.
- The government has instructed councils to design and test street changes and then to ask residents how they are working. This allows us to listen to local people and to change the measures so they work better.

What is going to change?

- The Great Suffolk Street Low Traffic Neighbourhood is a network of one-way streets implemented using traffic signs and road markings.
- The one-way systems will make it much less desirable for traffic to leave the main roads and cut-through the Great Suffolk Street area thereby reducing traffic in the area.
- By reducing traffic in the area, we hope to promote active travel such as walking and cycling. In future, it is hoped that the additional space created from the one-way streets, can be used for further place-making, such as planting and seating, as well as walking and cycling infrastructure.

How will local people benefit?

- Through-traffic is vehicles using small, residential streets to avoid main roads. Even a few vehicles can change how small streets feel and their safety. Often these vehicles are being driven quickly to try to get ahead of traffic on other roads.
- The Great Suffolk Street Low Traffic Neighbourhood intends to reduce through-traffic by limiting access points and making the route less desirable. This means that the only people driving on local streets are residents and visitors who tend to be driving in a calmer and safer manner.
- Less traffic will make these streets safer, calmer and healthier for people walking, cycling and scooting, as well as reducing air pollution and traffic noise.
- Healthy and quieter streets will also greatly benefit older and disabled people as less traffic makes it easier and more relaxing to walk and cycle in these neighbourhoods. More space will also be created for social distancing.

What will be the downsides for local residents?

- Some car journeys will be slightly longer for residents, businesses and visitors because of the one-way streets.
- At first there may be more vehicles on the main roads nearby because they cannot drive through the Great Suffolk Street neighbourhood. Within a few weeks traffic on main roads should return to normal as drivers adjust their journeys.

- For example, 30% of car trips in London can be easily walked or cycled by most people as they are less than 2 kilometres (1.25 miles). Any increase in through traffic using main roads is likely to be very small. We will monitor various streets to understand any traffic changes.

Will there be an impact to the emergency services or refuse collection?

- We are working with the refuse collection service and the emergency services to insure any impact is minimised across all of our London Streetspace Programme schemes.
- The Great Suffolk Street Low Traffic Neighbourhood is a series of one-way streets which are marked with 'No entry for motorised vehicles' signs. Emergency service vehicles are legally allowed to drive through these signs meaning they can still access the area in much the same way as they currently do.

How will we be communicating the changes to the community?

- We will put clear signs in each project area to explain where people can get more information about the project and how they can give us their views on it.
- Letters will be sent to those in the project areas explaining what the changes are and how they can provide us with their views.

How will we know what people think of the changes?

- A Commonplace map specifically for the Great Suffolk Street Low Traffic Neighbourhood will be launched once the scheme has been implemented. This will allow people to leave comments and suggestions about the scheme. The Commonplace map also lets you see what other people have written.
- After a period of 'bedding-in', expected to be 4-8 months after implementation, the council will conduct public consultation to understand the view of residents, businesses and users on how the measures are working.

What are the next steps?

- The Great Suffolk Street Low Traffic Neighbourhood, as with all of Southwark's COVID-19 response measures, is being implemented as a trial meaning we have the opportunity to work with the community to get the scheme right.
- We will monitor what people think of the changes and how it affects people travelling and using these roads.
- If significant safety or access problems arise, the measures will be adjusted to provide a more appropriate solution.
- After consulting residents and businesses in the area and evaluating how the measures are working using traffic counts, we will make recommendations for the next steps.

