

Southlands Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO): Summary of outcomes

This summary reviews the headlines from the consultation, traffic and air quality monitoring survey reports that were prepared to inform a decision on the through-traffic restriction trial on Southlands, Weston, installed in November 2022.

The aim of the trial was to assess the impact of a through-traffic restriction to prevent motorists from using Southlands as an inappropriate shortcut to avoid the main roads, and to create a safer environment for walking or cycling through the area.

We have prepared four reports (attached as appendices to the single member decision report):

- Appendix A - A traffic monitoring report relating to baseline and post-installation data.
- Appendix B - An air quality report relating to baseline and post-installation data.
- Appendix C - A report on the ETRO public consultation relating to the six-month period between November 2022 and May 2023
- Appendix D - A report on the outcomes of the detailed end-point survey in September/October 2023 (specifically for residents living near the trial)

You can read these reports at www.bathnes.gov.uk/SouthlandsETRO

ETRO six-month public consultation between Nov 2022 and May 2023:

There were 322 responses received within the six months of the public consultation. In summary, the level of support from those that chose to respond to the survey was:

- 85 respondents (26%) supported the ETRO
- 8 respondents partially supported the ETRO; and
- 229 respondents (71%) opposed to the ETRO.

Residents detailed end-point survey September/October 2023:

There were 132 responses to the residents' survey and the level of support was:

- 52 respondents (39%) support the trial scheme
- 75 respondents (57%) oppose the trial scheme

- 4 respondents were undecided; and
- 1 respondent did not give their opinion.

Of those 132 respondents, 75 said they lived on Southlands:

- 31 respondents out of the 75 agreed that the scheme has had a positive impact on themselves and their area.
- 42 respondents out of the 75 disagreed that the scheme had had a positive impact on themselves and their area.

All respondents were given an opportunity to comment on why they supported or opposed the scheme. The reasons cited for supporting or opposing the six-month trial scheme were similar in the ETRO public consultation from November 2022 to May 2023 and the residents' endpoint survey conducted in September/October 2023.

Reasons for supporting the trial:

- It was perceived to improve safety on the streets, especially for children or the elderly.
- It prevented 'rat-running', and residents commented there was less traffic around.
- It was perceived to have a positive impact on the area, for example, on noise and atmosphere, and therefore their quality of life.
- It was perceived to make walking and cycling around the area more pleasant, with some suggesting it has encouraged more active travel.

Reasons for not supporting the trial:

- It was perceived to displace traffic and cause congestion elsewhere.
- It was perceived to increase journey times by car.
- Respondents did not feel it tackled the current issues with parking; and
- It was perceived to have a negative impact on the area including dividing a community.

30 respondents in the ETRO public consultation and 16 in the residents' end-point survey voiced concerns over emergency vehicle access.

How do views compare with the traffic monitoring data?

About the monitoring

- Baseline traffic data was collected for seven consecutive days from 3 October to 9 October 2022 to gain average daily counts before the trial started in November 22.

- Post-installation traffic data was collected for seven consecutive days from 18 to 24 April 2023 and again from 3 to 9 October 2023
- By comparing post-installation average daily counts with baseline data, we can assess the impact of the trial. We did not collect data during school or university holidays or other times that impact significantly on average traffic flows.
- Please note that for the purpose of this summary **we are comparing baseline data with October 2023 data plus daily averages collected over a full week (7 days), unless stated otherwise.** You can read the full report for further details.

Reduction of traffic on Southlands

The baseline traffic monitoring data (October 2022) shows us the extent to which this residential street is used as a through route by motorists prior to the trial:

- Just under half of all vehicles entering Southlands from Dean Hill Lan /High Street were found to be using this route as a through route which is 69 out of 151 vehicles (on average, each day) observed on monitoring cameras.
- Around a quarter of vehicles entering Southlands from Penn Hill Road/Anchor Road were found to be using the route as a through route, which is 85 out of 335 vehicles (on average, each day) observed on monitoring cameras.

Post-installation traffic monitoring (April and October 2023) conducted over 7 days indicates the extent to which the trial tackled this excess traffic:

- The number of vehicles using Southlands as a through-route has now dropped to zero, as expected.
- Traffic entering Southlands from each direction reduced by around a quarter during the trial. 40 fewer vehicles entered Southlands from Dean Hill Lane/High Street each day, on average (from 151 to 111 vehicles) and 87 fewer vehicles entered from Penn Hill Road/Anchor Road each day (from 335 to 248 vehicles).

Active travel on Southlands

- Daily walking and cycling trips on Southlands toward Penn Hill/Anchor Road increased following the introduction of the trial.
- We recorded 19 more cyclists each day (from 12 to 21) but just 5 more pedestrians (from 83 to 88).
- The impact on walking and cycling on Southlands towards Dean Hill Lane/High Street is mixed. Slightly fewer pedestrians used this route each day in October 2023 than in the pre-trial period (from 86 to 83 pedestrians). However, we saw the number of cyclists increase by 4 from 17 to 21 cyclists per day.

Increase in traffic on surrounding roads

A concern raised in the ETRO public consultation and residents' end-point survey was the effect the scheme would have on surrounding roads.

There were 72 comments about this in the ETRO public consultation and 46 in the residents' end-point survey.

The traffic monitoring data conducted in October 2022 (pre-trial) and again in October 2023 (post-installation) provides the evidence and, in terms of the principal alternative routes for traffic, we saw an increase in one area and a drop in another including:

Anchor Road

- 164 more vehicles per day (5%) were recorded on Anchor Road travelling in a north-eastern bound direction.
- Around 400 more vehicles per day, equating to 1% increase, were recorded on Anchor Road in a south-eastern bound direction.
- These increases are not considered to be highly significant and can be interpreted as being within typical variance of traffic flow volumes.

Weston High Street

- We recorded a drop of up to 180 vehicles per day travelling in each direction on Weston High Street which equates a 3% drop in traffic.
- Again, these increases are not considered to be highly significant and can be interpreted as being within typical variance of traffic flow volumes.

How do views compare with air quality monitoring data?

In the ETRO public consultation, 49 respondents said they were concerned about the effect of the trial on air pollution in surrounding areas. This was also mentioned by 15 respondents in the residents' end-point survey.

In the Southlands area, Weston High Street, Penn Hill Road, Southlands and Anchor Road, levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) were monitored.

- Southlands saw a 10% reduction from 10 to 9 µg/m³ as an annual average.
- Penn Hill Road saw a 20% reduction from 15 to 12 µg/m³ as an annual average.
- Anchor Road saw a 21% reduction from 24 to 19 µg/m³ as an annual average.
- Weston High Street saw a small (6%) increase in NO₂ concentrations from 16 to 17 µg/m³ as an annual average.

All these readings are well below the Government legal limit of 40 µg/m³ and are not seen as cause for concern when considering the impact of the trial, especially when considering typical seasonal variations in air quality levels.

Parking spaces on Southlands

There were comments from respondents in the surveys that the proximity to the Royal United Hospital had an impact on their (and their visitors') ability to park near their homes on Southlands because spaces were used by commuters and visitors to the hospital.

It should be noted that the purpose of the trial was primarily to reduce through-traffic and speeding through the area, rather than tackle parking issues, but it was hoped that the restriction might contribute to a reduction in the number of commuters using Southlands for parking given the no-through-route.

Parking was therefore not monitored as part of the trial, however, comments were gathered about the impact of the trial on parking during the end-point survey with residents:

- Just under half the residents who responded to the survey (33 out of 74 residents) felt there had been an improvement in parking or said that it had 'stayed the same'.
- Just over half felt it had become worse, with many stating it was much worse (41 out of 74 residents).

This data can only be considered indicative because these residents chose to participate in the survey. These comments cannot be considered representative of the demographic profile of the area.

Conclusions

The purpose of the trial was to prevent motorists from using Southlands as a short cut to avoid the main roads and to provide a safer environment for walking and cycling through the area.

Support for the scheme

It is noted that support for the scheme, in general, is low when considering both the ETRO public consultation survey (26%) and the resident's end-point survey results (29%).

However, of note is that 41% of residents responding to the end-point survey and who also live on Southlands, agreed that the scheme has had a positive impact on themselves and their area.

Achieving objectives

In terms of the trial achieving its objective, the data tells us that prior to the restriction, nearly half of all vehicles travelling on Southlands was through traffic.

The restriction has effectively prevented this and reduced the number of vehicles entering Southlands at either end (while maintaining vehicle access to homes).

The data also tells us that walking and cycling has increased on Southlands and that cyclists and pedestrians feel that it's a safer environment for this activity.

Opposition to the scheme

Drawing on survey analysis, it's noted that amongst the reasons for not supporting the scheme was the perception that the trial was displacing traffic and congestion elsewhere. However, the traffic monitoring data shows that the introduction of the

restriction has reduced through-traffic on Southlands, without significant increase in traffic on the alternative routes. Indeed, Weston High Street experienced a small reduction in traffic following the implementation of the scheme.

Another common reason for opposing the trial was that it failed to tackle on-street parking issues. Those responding to the survey were split on their opinions of whether the availability of on-street parking had improved. It is noted, however, that improving parking is not the primary intention for the through-traffic restriction. Other measures, such as residents parking zones, could be considered to tackle this issue.

Air quality

The air quality monitoring data shows there has been a marginal increase in NO₂ concentrations on Weston High Street, but Anchor Road, Penn Hill Road and Southlands all saw larger reductions in NO₂ concentrations. However, all readings are well below the government legal limit of 40 µg/m³ and therefore not seen as cause for concern.

Emergency access

It's noted that residents voiced concerns about access for emergency vehicles during the trial. Emergency services were consulted and briefed about the restriction before the trial. We continue to actively engage with these services on Liveable Neighbourhood trials to ensure access is not compromised. There is potential for improving the scheme design on Southlands for emergency access if the trial is made permanent.

On balance, it is felt that the trial has been successful in reducing the excess traffic on this residential road without significant displacement of traffic or congestion onto neighbouring roads. In addition, there has been no significant impact on the environment in terms of air pollution.

The trial has been successful in providing a safer route for walking and cycling in the area by virtue of fewer vehicles; benefiting children, pedestrians, cyclists, and older people. There is opportunity to improve the design of the restriction in its final form, subject to the outcome of a traffic regulation order (TRO) decision making process, especially with regards to emergency access.

Further information

To obtain a link to the single member decision report (SMD), and the full reports attached as appendices to the SMD, please go to <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/southlands-through-traffic-restriction-trial-etro-consultation> or www.bathnes.gov.uk/LNPIlots (Through Traffic Restriction ETRO consultation).