

A rapid review of East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme’s public engagement to learn for the next LN scheme in Bristol

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Executive summary:

Purpose and Context

This document is rapid review of the consultation and engagement process of the East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood (EBLN) pilot—Bristol’s first such scheme in recent years —designed to balance the use of local streets between vehicles and people. The findings aim to inform future liveable neighbourhood (LN) schemes in Bristol by comparing EBLN’s approach with national good practices, particularly from a UK Department for Transport (DfT) 2024 report and two other LN schemes (one each in Bath and London).

Methods

This was a desktop review of publicly available documents reporting engagement from the EBLN pilot and comparator schemes. We extracted informati

on on engagement formats, timelines, stakeholder inclusivity, and response outcomes and summarised these. No primary data was collected. A benchmark was derived from the DfT’s report on 99 UK LN schemes.

Key Findings

1) UK Norms for Engagement:

The average UK LN scheme used at least 4 types of engagement methods; web-based consultations and questionnaires were the most common. Best practice however includes early-stage involvement of residents, businesses, emergency services, and disability groups and employs multiple formats of engagement beyond web based and questionnaire methods.

2) EBLN Strengths:

Multi-phase co-design with structured, phased engagement over two years - 2022 to 2024.

Young people's participation through a Citizen Observatory.

Tailored communications including videos, maps, and travel planning sessions.

Evidence of community support for the scheme.

Translations to include the diverse population of the area

3) Areas for Improvement:

Communication clarity could be improved. Vague feedback responses, and unclear connections between feedback and resultant changes to plans reduced accessibility and transparency.

Some outreach was too close to implementation to be optimally impactful.

Inconsistencies in figures across documents could erode trust.

4) Comparative Insights:

Other successful LN schemes signal community ownership, naming clarity, and iterative design as potentially beneficial to optimal engagement.

Simple schemes in smaller, more homogenous communities may also be easier to implement successfully.

Recommendations for Future LN Schemes:

Early and inclusive planning: Start engagement well before design with all stakeholder groups.

Transparent responsive communications: Provide clear "you said—we did" records, track changes, and regularly update the public.

Adaptive engagement: Use online complementary to in-person formats.

Record and understand stakeholder perceptions, acknowledging that these may well differ from the evidence base for LN interventions.

Where feasible, let communities initiate or lead schemes and aim LNs at areas with greatest support for them.

Conclusion

While EBLN engagement aligned broadly with national good practice, improvements in communication, transparency, and early and wider stakeholder group involvement could increase success and acceptance of future schemes. Each LN should be tailored to its local context, with flexible, responsive, and inclusive engagement at its core.

Context

[East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood](#)

The East Bristol trial scheme is the first liveable neighbourhood project in Bristol. It's looking at improvements, designed in partnership with local communities, to achieve a better balance between how local streets are used by vehicles and people.

These Liveable (LN) or Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) schemes have come to UK from [Europe](#). In Netherlands, these 'Living Streets' have existed since the 90s. By 2024, UK had at least 99 [such schemes trialled](#) in various parts of the country. The Department for Transport (DfT) review of LN defines this as ***"A traffic management scheme aimed at reducing or removing through traffic from residential areas, put in place using traffic signed restrictions or physical measures such as planters or bollards."***

The Bristol trial area is in Barton Hill and parts of Redfield and St George, south of Church Road and north of the River Avon. The trial includes measures to better manage traffic, provide safe journey routes for pedestrians and active travel, and introduce new planters and pocket parks across the trial area will be completed in early 2025.

Considerable community engagement and formal consultation was undertaken; however, the implementation of the trial has had mixed local response and some negative reporting in the press.

Purpose

To inform the local authority about the completeness of consultation and engagement undertaken prior to the EBLN Pilot.

To assist the local authority to design future consultation and engagement to best effect.

Method

A desktop exercise (rapid review), drawing on documentary evidence from EBLN and best practice elsewhere in the UK was conducted by one researcher and two apprentices in the public health department.

No primary data collection was carried out. The review protocol and scope were finalised between June and July 7th and data collection and write up was carried out between 7th and 30th July 2025. Three people extracted data from different documents into a standardised excel sheet ([see here all](#)

data). A 30% sample of EBLN documents was independently double extracted by a researcher external to BCC to counter errors or omissions.

No evidence-based standards for ideal LTN public engagement currently exist, although some UK government guidance on these exists.

Evidence base for LNs is still emerging, so there is limited agreement or understanding on what success means for LN schemes. No information on long-term outcomes through robust evaluations are available yet. For the purpose of this work, we considered success to mean permanent scheme being installed after trial.

We used the UK DfT 2024 report of LN schemes as our benchmark. An agreed definition is not available for the LN schemes, and we used the DfT report's definition for this review.

The first step therefore was to extract information on engagement from this report and summarise this, to identify the norms and good practice for engagement in previous schemes. This was followed by extracting similar information from EBLN, and two schemes that were successfully implemented (one in West of England and one in London: BANES LN, and Waltham Forest LTN) to see how they did public engagement and consultations.

We searched for documents on each local authority website and Commonplace Archives only. We included documents only if they gave information about public engagement. We extracted information on the following items: Document publication date, Document web link, Date of upcoming work, Type of work reported, Location of work, Reasons for work choices, Expected Impact reported, Who was consulted, How were people consulted, How many people consulted, How many views/responses collated, Objections received, Themes of the objections, Mitigation of impact.

We summarised data narratively to offer insight into: Types and level of engagement carried out, areas of good practice and ideas for future improvement.

Findings

The UK DfT report

The report included 99 UK schemes in its evaluation, although none were from West or Southwest of England.

The report acknowledged there was not agreed definitions and used the below definition for assessing schemes: no single definition of an LTN, but for the purposes of their report it was defined as: ***"A traffic management scheme aimed at reducing or removing through traffic from residential areas, put in place using traffic signed restrictions or physical measures such as planters or bollards."***

The report covered only schemes for which they could find information, so there may be some that have been missed. That said, it shows that in total 11 out of 99 schemes have been removed and so the overwhelming majority remains in place.

Success in sociodemographic context:

The highest proportion removed was in Northwest England where 5 were removed and 2 remain in place and lowest is in East of England where all 11 remain in place. Greater London also has a high success rate where 53 remain in place and 3 were removed.

The report does not comment on deprivation or political characteristics of the areas where schemes were removed. It also does not list the full list of included schemes and their characteristics (no list is available at any government location for all LN schemes).

Increasing the uptake of active travel and improving air quality and road safety were the most cited justifications for schemes (>70%)

Engagement activities:

The report identified 15 engagement activities:

1. Community mapping
2. Planning for real
3. Public meetings
4. Focus groups and workshops
5. Web based consultation
6. Open space technology
7. Consensus building
8. Citizen Juries
9. Citizens' panel
10. Street stalls
11. Questionnaires
12. Local community meetings
13. Representative polling
14. Computer generated animations

What was common in engagement across UK LNs:

The highest number of engagement activities conducted was 9 out of the above 14 activities and in only one scheme. However, more than 40% of schemes used at least 4 activities, i.e. UK average is 4 types of activities.

Most popular reported engagement activities included web-based consultation (79 schemes) and questionnaires (64 schemes). Citizen Juries and Planning for Real were not used in any schemes for engaging public. Open Space technology was used in one scheme only, while a Citizen Panel was used in 9 schemes.

The schemes were asked if they specifically invited comment from these four groups: Residents, Local Businesses, Disability Groups, Emergency Services. More than 80% asked residents and local businesses, 77% asked disability groups and 70% asked Emergency services.

Schemes in the Northwest of UK reported the lowest levels of engagement (besides the Northwest, only London-based schemes reported not engaging with one or more key groups).

Good practice items for engagement:

Good practice in the eyes of public was:

1. Door to door conversations and town hall meetings.
2. Consulting with a range of stakeholder groups in a range of ways
3. Stakeholder groups given a greater role in design stages before implementation
4. Engagement includes an Equality Impact assessment (EIA)
5. Engagement allows people with various needs to feedback in an equitable way.

Wide range local groups engagement can help keep the LNs going. Low level engagement may have been the reason behind scheme failure in Northwest.

What was often missing:

Across UK, not engaging with disabilities groups early and sufficiently was common. This led to frustration and misunderstanding.

The spectrum of impacts for various groups is wider than considered in schemes.

An understanding that perceptions can be opposite to evidence and that LNs are controversial is often missing.

Communication of evidence clearly, and regularly, to suit public needs was also often missing.

Short term impact of LN on active travel and traffic reduction is also unclear.

What reduced chance of success:

Evidence suggest resident objections and lack of increased active travel are common reasons for scheme closures.

Questionnaires and web consult alone are not enough for engagement.

Emergency services and disability groups are key stakeholders in terms of influence to potentially close a scheme.

Recommendations for future success in LN schemes based on UK report findings:

- Any new scheme should aim for 9 or more types of activities ideally but is expected to at least achieve the UK average of 4+.
- All actions are best done at the start of the planning. For all future schemes we must acknowledge that LNs have been controversial in the UK and target the two key reasons for this:
 - resident objections, and
 - no increase in active travel.
- Find out the perceptions of stakeholders before planning and address these in a clear acceptable way.
- Manage expectations and built rapport by communicating with public frequently in accessible ways.
- Engage at planning stage with
 - Emergency services of all types such are fire service, Ambulance, Police.
 - Disability and vulnerable groups of all types (for example related to vision, hearing, mobility, neurodiversity, chronic pain, illness etc.)

Good practice elements seen in EBLN:

Multi-phase co-design Approach

Between January and July 2022 (Co-discover) and September 2022 to March 2023 (Co-develop), residents, businesses, schools, and community groups were invited in two structured design phases. These stages used workshops, online mapping exercises, and an online “Design Toolkit” of proposed interventions, promoting **collaboration**.

Formal Statutory Consultation for TROs

Between January and February 2024, a statutory consultation was held to gather formal feedback on Traffic Regulation Orders. All responses were reviewed and reported to local councillors, the Cabinet Member for Transport, and the Council leader, ensuring **transparency**.

Youth Engagement via Citizen Observatory

In July 2024, a Citizen Observatory project allowed young people from Bristol Somali Youth Voice and Redfield Educate to feed in concerns around safety, lighting, accessibility, and public transport. Councillors and officers actively listened and **incorporated suggestions** (e.g. improved lighting, CCTV) into designs.

Tailored Outreach Materials & One-to-One Support

Ahead of the trial installation, in late 2024, Bristol City Council released a short explanatory film and maps and offered one-to-one travel planning sessions bookable online as well as outreach to local organisations and businesses—**boosting understanding** in the upcoming changes.

Notices and feedback invites were translated into 5 languages (author is fluent one of those languages) to reach the diverse populations of the city.

Local Feedback Evidencing Community Support

It is clear from documents that residents expressed positive feedback on aimed reduction in rat-running traffic and improved safety conditions and on prioritising residents’ health over commuter convenience. Comments from public included appreciation for Environmental Benefits (pollution, emission, sustainable transport), Health and Safety benefits (less speeding safe for vulnerable, physical activity and healthy environment) Quality of Life & Community (quiet, communal, people-friendly streets). People expressed support for quick implementation, assessment of real-world trial, and a wish to expand the scheme to surrounding areas and appreciated that journey delays are worth the larger benefits. There was acknowledgement that a shift away from cars is needed.

Good practice elements seen in Bath and Waltham Forest LN schemes:

1. Clarity

Naming the scheme (and the team) after its aim can clarify purpose and increases transparency. (Through-traffic restriction trial when public concern was high traffic; Enjoy Waltham Forest when public concern was attractiveness of area)

2. Community ownership

Selecting areas based on community interest or bids (e.g., a community group requesting a trial; choosing an area where demand was over 70%) can foster ownership and relevance.

3. Responsive planning and reporting

1. Linking public feedback (e.g., poor road surfaces) to actual changes (e.g., road resurfacing) can demonstrate responsiveness and build trust and ownership.
1. Document publication dates allow tracking of what happened when

4. ETROs before TROs

Using Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs) before or instead of permanent Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) might allow for iterative feedback and responsive tweaking. ETROs has the advantage of being able to get schemes in quicker, however they are more resource intensive than TRO.

Poor practice items across the three schemes:

There were instances of sub optimal practice in every LN scheme's documents. These can be themed into four key areas:

1. Unclear Communication

- Documents with small fonts and non-enlarging images hinder accessibility.
- Vague references to changes made in response to feedback. Instead, each "you said this" should have a connected "we change this" next to it, or a list of before vs after versions of plans.
- If a text link says "get to know your routes" it should take a person to a display of alternative routes, rather than more text of what is planned.

2. Assuming Audience knowledge and clarity

- People might not know things we think they do. It would be nice to check public understanding by having drafted information sense-checked with unaware audiences rather than very engaged ones.

3. Timing

- Leaflets sent one month before construction may not allow enough time for meaningful feedback or preparation. Perhaps we should test out what timeframe is sufficient for most people for next time.
- Having no dates of publication on webpages can hinder understanding of the story and timeline of the project.

4. Mismatch Between Data and Perception

- Discrepancy between numbers (for example of response) reported on different documents can hinder understanding. While this may be because these different numbers indeed refer to different items or stages, it needs making clear.

How EBLN and others compared to DfT suggested practice

See [Table 1](#) below for description of engagement features of three LN schemes alongside relevant UK DfT report 2024 good practice suggestions.

DfT good practice guidance is not very prescriptive. It is clear from the details that EBLN, and the other two schemes, have followed good practice from DfT to a large extent.

What is also clear is that while named liveable neighbourhoods, all three LN are different schemes for different geographies, populations and aims. For example, EBLN is set in a larger, more diverse population with high car ownership. EBLN is also made up of many parts e.g., modal filter, bus gate, cycling path. The author therefore believes that there are no two LN schemes that can be comparable- each LN scheme will have unique contexts, and the components of the scheme should ideally take direction from the context including its population. There is likely no silver bullet to guarantee unanimous approvals, but it could be that smaller, more homogenous populations and simpler schemes may fare better for LN. Furthermore, some practices such as those listed above, can help or hinder the likelihood of greater approval and the success of a scheme.

LNs are controversial, and a way to deal with this is changing public perception before starting LN projects. Or starting where most people (more than 70%) like them already. These perceptions are key and should be measured in advance and repeatedly over the course of engagement. This will allow us to see, and show, the changing perceptions. A way to do this is asking stakeholder groups what good looks like to them or what would convince them of the value of LNs and measure that from the start of planning to the end of install. This can be done for existing schemes as well, because over time perceptions can change, and these data will inform future plans by showing trends.

For the next scheme in Bristol, it may be ideal to have a community bring the plan forward. If that's not feasible, it could be useful that informal consultation in early stages is made longer and wider ranging. This might involve not just contacting all residents and businesses but also identifying and contacting all disability and services stakeholder groups in the area to invite them for codesign. This involvement should enable them to make changes to design. List of all invitees and attendees (stakeholder group titles), and all changes agreed after each consultation could be made more obvious to people through clear frequent (e.g., monthly) communications that reach their door and on the website. While this may have been done in previous scheme, it is difficult to see that from documentation.

An option to give people more ownership is also to allow public to suggest and short list or choose a name for the scheme by a poll.

People appreciate transparency, so if our aim is to reduce traffic for better traffic management, we should state that as our key aim for a scheme. On the same note, trials should be called that, or something that make it clear it is not permanent and is experimental. People might appreciate reassurance that no change will be permanent against their will.

Finally, Covid 19 is no longer a public issue, so it may be good to have more engagement in person and less of it online. This will build relationships, but more importantly allow us to be more accessible to all.

Table 1: UK evidence of good practice and Engagement features of three LN schemes.

Information Category	Bristol LN (East Bristol)	BANES LN (Sydney Place)	Waltham Forest LN (Copper mill)	UK DfT LN good practice
No. of documents reviewed	20	7	7	2
Reasons for work choices	To balance street use by motorists and non-motorists- making safer for those on foot, cycles or scooters To improve public realm and quality of life Active travel and climate emergency Funding available for LN was conditional to cycle route Narrow roads necessitate traffic reduction measures for equitable use	Climate Emergency, improve air quality, Support community wellbeing, enhance public realm, Improve health, promote active travel, Address rat-running, speeding and school traffic A prioritization was done choosing an area with over 70% people in favour of LN after community groups applied for these to be implemented.	Improve area aesthetics Improve usability for people walking and cycling Part of highway maintenance programme	Should be clear and transparent
Expected Impact	Maintain access for resident cars, although route changed Businesses operation access may change; expect positive effects on businesses Informed action from community feedback	Safer streets, reduced congestion, better air	Disruption expected - suspension of parking and traffic route restriction	Implied discussing this with stakeholders

Who was consulted	Emergency services, local business, area residents, community, faith and equality groups. Bristol Somali Youth Voice and Redfield Educate	Residents and stakeholders (specifics not stated)	Residents, businesses, accessibility groups	Residents, businesses, disabilities groups and emergency services
How were people consulted	32 in person events including: Drop-in sessions at the local library and community centre Community officers visited local properties Pop-up on-street information stalls with active travel support School assemblies, classroom sessions and school gate information stalls Citizen observatory with young people Online and posted survey Online questionnaire Email and phone calls Interactive online map Translations in 5 languages for notices and feedback invites Letters sent to businesses and residents within the area of the scheme and a scheme-appropriate radius of properties outside the area	Online and in-person survey, letters, notifications to stakeholders, press release, social media posts, hardcopies, online and in person events with venues chosen for accessibility (Pop-up outdoor engagement events x 6; virtual online events x3)	Leaflets, street signs, perception survey 2018: community comments signs, inviting thoughts about 7 key locations; pop up events, a cycle ride, and a walk. 2019: 2 codesign workshops with business, resident and accessibility groups 2019: 5000 leaflets delivered informing about public consultation and inviting to participate From 24 June to 14 July 2019: Statutory consultation ran online via commonplace and hard copied given on request. Publicised further by social media, local media and flyers Two drop-in sessions attended by 96 people 2023: leaflets sent inviting people to an informal consultation about making scheme permanent.	15 activities listed; 4 activities is UK norm. A mix of approaches advised including: 1) several in-person events in the area appropriate to the scale of the scheme, 2) advertised well in advance 3) online engagement 4) information leaflets delivered to all properties within the area of the scheme and a scheme-appropriate radius of properties outside the area
How many people consulted	More than 6000 postal letters to residents 442 businesses were sent stakeholder communications 128 citywide equality, community, and faith Groups 196 local stakeholders including emergency services	Unclear, only that letter sent to 1,445 residents in early stages; and 39 residents registered for a workshop	5000 leaflets sent; 96 people attended workshops; 115 signs placed.	No guidance or proportion, but advises representative so that a minority group voice doesn't overtake majority view

	1,231 individuals were given project information			
How many views/responses collated	1,554 Survey responses (848 online and 706 paper) On the interactive map 541 comments by 225 contributors, and 1,522 'agreements' to comments dropped on the map by other visitors. At events, 458 postcards were filled in Online page from 2023 asking road and street comments had 982 comments and 496 reactions to comments	3,326 comments via online mapping tool on Commonplace 1684 total responses: 15 hardcopy responses, 1610 online, 59 free form email/ letters/phones.	364 perception survey responses 719 written responses	Not applicable
Support and objection numbers	760 were objections and 427 statements of support during the statutory TRO consultation 1,695 suggestions received across all forms of engagement	In early stages, 73% of comments in favour and 7% against the scheme. 13% of respondents were against the scheme on the online mapping tool on Commonplace. 293 responses on EV strategy, 264 on parking strategy, 334 on development approach, 421 on local priorities. Concerns about displacement of traffic, impact on disabled residents, cost of Electric vehicles, parking restrictions	Negative responses were 220 (38.6%).	Representative and significant size of population expected to be consulted although no clear statement on what is good enough. Transparent reporting implied
Themes of the objections	Business Impacts Community & Equalities impact Traffic, Transport & Pollution Parking Data & Monitoring	Parking Fear of traffic displacement, Impact on local businesses, Impact on hospital access,	Safety concerns were first, followed by Area unattractiveness Ease of travel and prioritization of sustainable transport Accessibility,	Advises to start early, implies going beyond statutory requirements

	Consultation Process Placement of LN measures in specific locations	Criticisms of engagement process/consultation bias Accessibility for disabled residents Affordability of Electric Vehicles/ e-bikes		
Mitigation of impact	Statutory response completed Disruption and checking journey advised Exemptions to restrictions listed Feedback on how to mitigate negative impact requested in 2023 and again for trial in 2025. One on one online bookable advice or visit Some examples indicate how plans were changed in response to consultations, for example lighting and CCTV. More Citizen Observatories to focus on all ages and mobility, air quality, safety and health.	Disruption and change of route advised Advertised trial period with Experimental Traffic Orders Iterative adjustments through monitoring and feedback loops, EV infrastructure planning, Residents' parking reformed so that no parking spaces lost Vehicle access to all properties is maintained	Disruption, and planning of journey with non-car transport requested Some plans progressed some didn't. Tabulation provided to show where feedback has changed action although not always clear what request had led to what change. Cycling related offers- training to ride, storage, school bike planning, community bike hire, cargo bike hires and seasonal events to promote the same. Name changes for a route. Changed a planned cycle route in response to accessibility and personal safety concerns in one area Advise people when they will expect next communication, about what works and in what format.	Through consultation and accommodating of views of the majority- advises not to make permanent any trial changes that area residents are not happy with.
Other features/ caveats	Over 6000 households in the area 80% of resident households own cars Early engagement phases in 2022 occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, limiting face-to-face engagement. 2023 to 2024 engagement included online and in person events	Simpler schemes for much smaller populations – e.g., a set of six bollards placed on one road- which was sought/driven by a local group where there is approximately 3000 households. The street has listed buildings.	5000 homes and 100 businesses in the area. Only a third of residents drive a car; majority either use public transport or active travel. Pictures and fonts in documents not in most accessible format	Advise engagement be proportionate to population and geography.

	Stakeholder groups are not clear (numbers/ titles) except the 2 youth groups.	Most documents have dates of publication. Phrasing of work planned and for requesting public input is different from other sites.	Clearly described cycle route name and design/ route change. Statutory objection report not found.	
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