

Dulwich has spoken

It's a 'No' to the road closures



A preliminary report on the publicly available
Dulwich Village and East Dulwich 'Streetspace' feedback
Produced by the Steering Group of the Dulwich Alliance

All information and quotations sourced from Southwark Council's publicly accessible Dulwich Village and East Dulwich Streetspace websites; neither Southwark nor their Streetspace platform provider have, directly or indirectly, had any involvement in the production of this report

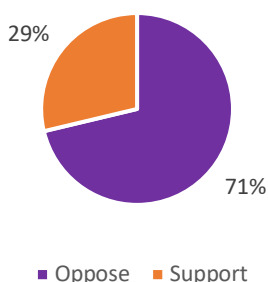
Southwark launched websites in June 2020, to allow residents to comment on the new ‘Streetspace’ road measures in Dulwich Village and East Dulwich – the ‘Southwark Streetspace’ sites⁽¹⁾. Southwark indicated that an ‘initial evaluation’ would be undertaken in Autumn 2020 – this was never published. ***In letters to residents Southwark have urged them to use these sites to provide feedback, as have local Councillors and our MP***

1,906 feedback responses were submitted to the Southwark Streetspace sites between June 2020 and 7 January 2021⁽²⁾. ***While the sites did not ask respondents directly whether they supported or opposed the measures, most made their views clear, in detail and with local knowledge – which gives us assurance that the respondents are typically Dulwich area residents***

Key findings:

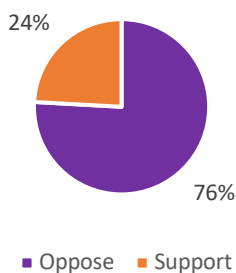
In aggregate, respondents who expressed a view **oppose the Dulwich Area measures by 71% to 29%**⁽³⁾

Total Dulwich area measures

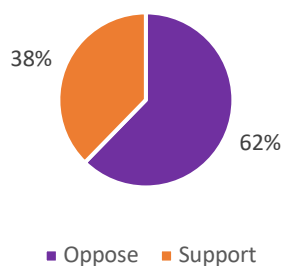


Similar levels of opposition are seen when the comments are divided into those relating to Dulwich Village and East Dulwich⁽⁴⁾

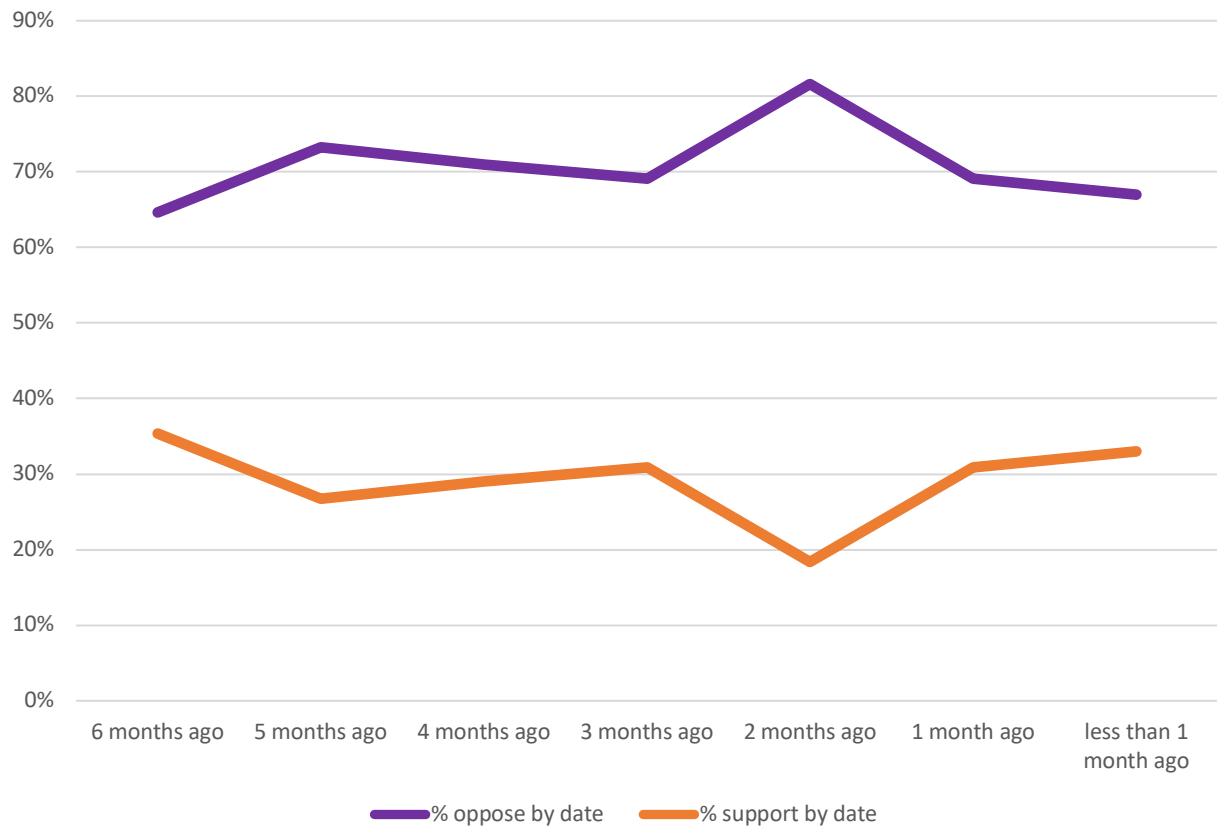
Dulwich Village



East Dulwich



The Southwark Streetspace sites have been open for more than six months, so we have looked at how levels of opposition have varied over time. **There is no evidence of declining opposition as the schemes ‘bed in’.**



Note: dates are relative to 7 January, the cut-off date for our analysis

The evidence is clear and compelling – the measures are not supported by the community and need to be immediately modified or removed

- (1) As per Southwark’s Streetspace sites, the websites and engagement are powered by Commonplace, an ‘Online community engagement platform’; sites have been set up for each of Dulwich Village and East Dulwich, herein referred to as the ‘Southwark Streetspace’ sites, to enable residents to provide feedback on the roads measures in those two areas; see “Methodology”
- (2) Since 7 January, there have been a small number of additional comments on the Southwark Streetspace sites, which we have not included in our results; we have reviewed these and do not consider that their inclusion would have any material effect on the overall results
- (3) Dulwich Alliance analysis of comments on measures relating to Dulwich Village and East Dulwich; excludes comments on other locations and those that do not indicate either support or opposition; over 80% of respondents expressed a view, see ‘Methodology’ and ‘Detailed results’
- (4) Most of the comments related to these sets of measures. There were 117 relating to Ruskin Walk, Hilsboro Road (school street), Gilkes Crescent and other roads or junctions in the area; we have excluded these – see ‘Detailed results’

Respondents were asked for ‘Any other comments about the impact at this location?’ – and the vast majority took the opportunity to set out their views, many at some length and in detail

There are many very troubling testimonies of personal difficulty and hardship resulting from the measures, as well as more supportive testimony

It is a huge body of written feedback, and hard to digest – it’s far longer than a typical novel

We have tried to highlight some of the key themes using quotes sourced from feedback submitted to Southwark’s Streetspace sites

Notes:

Quotes are in quotation marks, and have been sourced from the publicly available Southwark Streetspace sites (see ‘Methodology’) – we have removed text from comments for brevity, but we have not changed any of the words the respondents used

If you would like to see the full text of the quotes, or the full set of comments, these are available on the ‘All comments’ section of the Southwark Streetspace sites

The closures have caused issues for keyworkers...

"[...] my wife and I as key workers ITU consultants need to get to work after dropping off our children which has doubled our journey time therefore increasing pollution. The result is we are considering a move out of London. Not great for London hospitals [...]"

"I'm a nurse and my work is in the community across Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham [...] My youngest daughter has special needs so cannot take public transport. [...] This impacts on my children, who have already had a difficult year and on my ability to get to work, causing unnecessary stress. I've worked all through the pandemic and there is no consideration for key workers, my work will be hampered by longer routes across the borough and more difficult [...]"

"All of the changes to Dulwich have made getting to and from work almost impossible. I am a resident and a key worker. I need to drive through Dulwich to take my daughter to school and then get to work [...] in a Southwark primary school. The entire area is now so unsafe for children as a huge volume of traffic is now going down East Dulwich Grove. By closing roads you have forced the same number of cars onto one single route. [...]"

...and disabled residents

"I am disabled and have no choice but to use my car. I now have to spend three hours getting to and from the hospital for my dialysis. [...] I am beginning to think I can't live in London anymore due to these measures making my life impossible."

"[...] The need to drive with a disabled child or to help elderly family hasn't just stopped because of lockdown and to effectively close one side of the village from the other is causing huge problems for residents AND making other roads busier. [...] It's dangerous and disruptive and isn't making the pollution ANY better. As a parent of a disabled child, this is hugely stressful, on top of lockdown!"

"[...] I have 5 children, [...] one of whom is autistic. Trying to access the GP in Burbage Road or any of the children's schools is already dreadful. What used to be a 5mins journey, now takes 30mins.[...] This is an ill-conceived and poorly thought through proposal and has a hugely negative impact on local residents."

There is concern for the outlook for shops and other traders

This respondent is confident the measures will not impact traders

"[...] All of those measures are making Dulwich more pleasant and even more vibrant than before. The local traders will see turnover increase in due course, I am confident, as people will travel to Dulwich (with public transport) to spend time there indoors and outdoors [...]"

This one is not so sure

"Melbourne Grove includes many local shops & businesses, unlike the other roads which has been closed off. Shutting this road has massively reduced passing trade at a difficult time post lockdown. Much of the road has double yellow lines towards Grove Vale. If road is closed can shoppers park here to help boost local traders?"

And this respondent has given up shopping in Dulwich Village

"Sorry traders in Dulwich village. I used to walk into the village a few times a week to buy locally and support independent shops. I'm stuck in traffic for an extra few hours each week now and don't have time for the walk in anymore [...]"

This respondent fears for Dulwich's high streets

"[...] A more subtle approach like this would enable through traffic to continue to stop at Dulwich stores; as things stand, displacing traffic displaces wallets. I fear also, given the range of products available, that the availability of free parking at Sainsburys will see local shops come under additional pressure in these extreme times; the guarantee of parking space will see drivers eschew the slog down Lordship Lane or through Dulwich Village in favour of backstreets and will by extension see local traders lose out on any remaining passing trade.[...]"

The measures have been very divisive in the local community

Dulwich Village measures ⁽¹⁾

Supported by this Calton Avenue resident...

"[...] the difference on Calton Avenue is already huge: less air pollution, less noise pollution and, of course, being able to cross the road at that awful junction without worrying about being run over. I love it, and I hope it's made permanent [...]"

though not this one...

"As a resident on Calton Avenue this closure is an utter disaster. I'm a key worker [...] and my [...] children go to school in the village. They now have more pollution walking to school [...] I'm a prisoner in my own street! Please unblock the roads"

or this one nearby...

"[...] Unfair - I'm incredibly lucky to live on Court Lane Gardens and should be saying lucky me - less traffic - but this is just pushing traffic onto my neighbours and making the whole situation worse. [...]"

and impacting on this Dulwich Village (road) resident

"It's a shame traffic and pollution for those living on Dulwich Village has become so much worse and the queuing traffic is spilling over into Turney Road and Burbage Road. The Council was warned this would happen but didn't listen. [...]"

as well as these Croxted Road residents

"I live on Croxted Road and tried to drive my [...] mother to her doctor's appointment at King's College Hospital this morning, with over an hour to spare. She ended up having to get out of the car to walk [...] as the traffic was at such a standstill. I have never seen it so bad [...]"

"The closures to traffic in Dulwich village means that the traffic has simply been displaced. Croxted Road is totally gridlocked in the mornings, we walk to school down this road, through a fog of exhaust fumes and idling cars in traffic jams. The road is now too dangerous to cycle down and pedestrians have to breathe in traffic fumes. [...]"

(1) being the 24/7 closures of Calton Avenue and Court Lane (the "Village junction") and timed closures on Dulwich Village (road), Burbage Road, Turney Road and Townley Road

East Dulwich measures ⁽²⁾

Supported by these residents of the closed streets...

“Living on Melbourne Grove our quality of life has increased a lot since the road closure due to reduction in pollution, noise and traffic [...]”

“As a family of four I can say without doubt that our lives have improved materially as a result of these schemes. [...]”

But not by these residents on East Dulwich Grove...

“[...] I live on East Dulwich Grove [...] The displaced traffic is a nightmare. Hundreds, yes hundreds of children use this as the main route [...] They are breathing in fumes all the time to and from school. [...] Fine, if you live on Elsie Road or Derwent Grove or Melbourne Grove. But what about the residents of East Dulwich Grove, and what, most importantly about the lungs of our children [...]”

“As a resident of East Dulwich Grove [...] This is a road on which thousands of schoolchildren are educated, and along which hundreds, if not thousands of schoolchildren walk each day[...] EDG is now more dangerous than ever before both from an air pollution, noise pollution and road safety perspective. Closing Matham Grove will not help matters [...]”

“[...] as a resident on East Dulwich Grove I feel really upset as the traffic outside my house has drastically increased. I have [...] young children who have to endure the increased road noise as well as noticeably worse air quality [...]”

“[...] In the case of Melbourne Grove closure, it has simply resulted in traffic and pollution increasing on East Dulwich Grove, Matham Grove and Townley Road, negatively impacting the quality of the air around a green space, a nursery and two schools [...]”

(2) being the closure of Melbourne Grove, Derwent Grove, Elsie Road and Tintagel Crescent

Methodology

Southwark Council has directed public commenters to Dulwich Village Streetspace (<https://dulwichvillagestreetspace.commonplace.is>) and East Dulwich Streetspace (<https://eastdulwichstreetspace.commonplace.is>).

The sites allow respondents to

- i) say where they are commenting on
- ii) answer two questions:
 - a. 'What can we do to improve the experimental measures?'; respondents were given a selection of possible responses to choose from, or could fill in free text under 'other'
 - b. 'Following the experimental road closures, what is working well at this location?'; respondents were given a selection of possible responses to choose from, or could fill in free text under 'other'
- iii) fill in a free text box for 'Any other comments about the impact at this location?'
- iv) answer the question 'To what extent do you support the principle of re-purposing streetspace to prioritise public health, road safety, local business and active travel?' by means of moving a bar between 'Don't support at all' and 'Fully support' (note that the answers given to this question were not publicly available on the Southwark Streetspace site so we could not record them)

While the questions did not ask respondents directly whether they supported the measures or not, most respondents found a way to make their views known, particularly in the free text sections. The sites operate a 'traffic light system' whereby comments are classified, after having been submitted, as 'green', 'amber' or 'red'. No definition or methodology is given for these classifications so we did not attempt to incorporate them.

All of the comments submitted to the sites are publicly available via the 'All comments' tab under the 'Menu' on each site, and it is these comments which we have used in our analysis. We have not had access to any non-public data.

It is made clear in the sites' Privacy Policy that comments will be publicly available – quoting from the sites' privacy policy, "It might be a bit obvious saying this, but: if it's on the site, it's public – so that's like sharing it with the world." The site manager also states that "If you do not want to be identified with material posted by you then you should not include your name or any identifying information in the material posted. We don't review feedback before it's published, so it's important that you take responsibility for this yourself." We have nevertheless taken care in the quotes we have used not to provide any identifying information.

A team of Dulwich Alliance volunteers worked through the comments on both sites, treating them as one because there is overlap between the two – respondents to Southwark's East Dulwich Streetspace site, for example, commenting on Dulwich Village measures, and vice versa (see 'Detailed results').

For each comment, the volunteer ascertained which measures the respondent was commenting on - the question asked was not entirely clear, and many respondents interpreted it as asking where they lived, or which location was most affected by the measures. Fortunately, in most cases it was possible to work out which measures were being commented on (ie. Dulwich Village, East Dulwich or some other location).

Where i) no location was given or indicated, or ii) the respondent referred to 'all the measures' without being explicit about the location, or iii) the respondent referred to measures in both Dulwich Village and East Dulwich (among others), volunteers assumed that comments related to the Southwark Streetspace site the respondent was on (ie Dulwich Village or East Dulwich). This was to avoid double-counting.

The volunteers then read through each of the respondents' comments and recorded whether they clearly expressed positive sentiment towards the measures, in which case we marked them 'support', or clearly expressed negative sentiment towards the measures, in which case we marked them 'oppose'. Comments that did not express a clearly positive or negative sentiment towards the measures themselves – instead noting concerns about the signage, or lack of consultation, or suggesting 'tweaks' to the measures, or asking for additional road closures or restrictions to mitigate the effect of those already implemented, or other sentiments of this nature – were marked 'Not indicated', unless the respondent elsewhere indicated clearly positive or negative sentiment towards the measures.

There were a number of instances of repeated comments – either the same comment repeated more than once, or a similar comment repeated such that it looked as if it was the same respondent making multiple comments. We decided that given the relatively low number of such repeated comments, we would not try to eliminate them.

The amount of free text entered into 'Other' sections (we estimate less than 5% of respondents said nothing in answer to the question 'Any other comments about the impact at this location?'), together with the low level of repetition discussed above, gives us confidence that the Southwark Streetspace sites do not seem to have been materially 'gamed' by any interest group acting in concert to boost responses one way or another.

The length, detail and local knowledge provided in the comments also gives a high level of assurance that the respondents are indeed, in the main, Dulwich area residents. Of the 109 respondents who clearly identified which road they were located on (despite this not being asked for by the site), and who were commenting on the Dulwich Village or East Dulwich measures, all but two were on roads in the Dulwich area; 73 opposed, 26 supported and 8 did not indicate support or opposition – indicating a similar level of opposition among this sub-group of validated 'Dulwich area residents' compared to the feedback as a whole.

Having produced this data, attempts may be made to orchestrate comments to the Southwark Streetspace sites, which are still open. However, given the consistency of the results so far over time, and the lack of an obvious 'trigger' for new comments, any such actions can be identified and adjusted for in any future analysis.

Any questions please email dulwichalliance@gmail.com

Detailed results

	Total Dulwich Village	Total East Dulwich	Total Dulwich area measures	Other/ not specified	Total			
Count at 7 Jan 2021								
Oppose	755	314	1069	47	1116			
Support	240	190	430	23	453			
Not indicated	183	107	290	47	337			
Total	1178	611	1789	117	1906			
Note:								
% excluding 'Not indicated'								
Oppose	76%	62%	71%					
Support	24%	38%	29%					
	Dulwich Village	East Dulwich	Total Dulwich area measures	Other/ not specified	Total			
How the two sites were used - comments relating to								
Dulwich Village Commonplace	1111	22	1133	99	1232			
East Dulwich Commonplace	67	589	656	18	674			
Total	1178	611	1789	117	1906			
	6 months ago	5 months ago	4 months ago	3 months ago	2 months ago	1 month ago	less than 1 month ago	Total
By date (refers to 7 January, Dulwich Village and East Dulwich comments only)								
Oppose	263	52	334	67	227	62	64	1069
Support	144	19	137	30	46	23	31	430
Not indicated	87	8	83	20	40	24	28	290
Total	494	79	554	117	313	109	123	1789
% excluding 'Not indicated'								
Oppose	65%	73%	71%	69%	83%	73%	67%	
Support	35%	27%	29%	31%	17%	27%	33%	



The Dulwich Alliance
January 2021

www.dulwichalliance.org
[@AllianceDulwich](https://twitter.com/AllianceDulwich)
dulwichalliance@gmail.com