

LCN 22:Surrey Canal Path and Alternative Routes

The creation of this path, indisputably a wonderful addition to Southwark's transport infrastructure coincided with an unprecedented increase in the numbers of Londoners choosing cycling as their preferred mode of commuting to work. It seems that the borough engineers at the time may not have envisaged just how many people would want to use the path and just how useful a link it is for cyclists, and large numbers of local residents walking to work and school. It is a clear link through SE London, almost all the way to Central London, linking up neatly with several other routes out to Lewisham, outer Southwark and even Bromley. But, in its present form, it is too narrow to accommodate comfortably all those who want and need to use it, most crucially at the morning peak hours. Specifically, it cannot accommodate safely cyclists who wish to travel at higher speeds at this time.

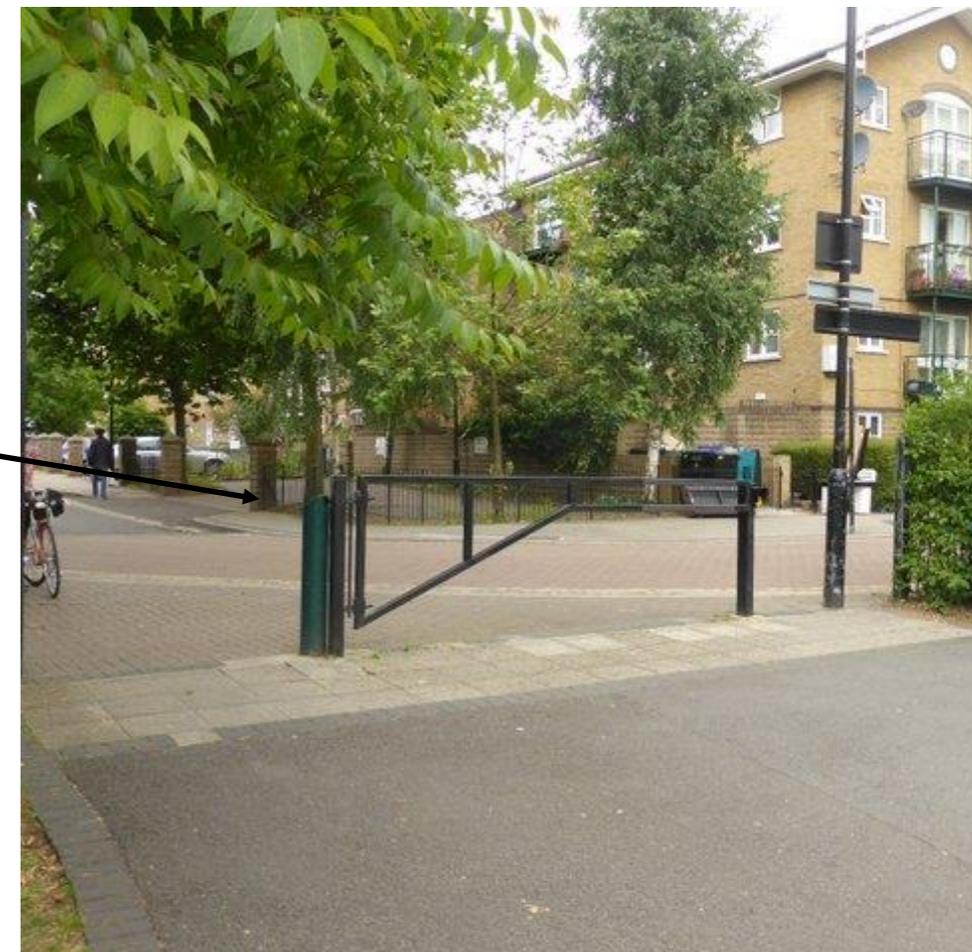
There is an alternative route for cyclists on the road, but at the moment it's not clearly signed, not easy to access from the key routes cyclists are travelling on, and has a few significant safety issues which must be addressed if those cyclists who need a fast route will use it in preference to the traffic free route.

1. The first measure that would encourage more cyclists to use this route rather than the path, would be to improve signing. The use of a large waymarking board, showing the whole route at a point clearly visible to commuting cyclists at the in the Peckham Square area should be considered in addition to additional smaller waymarking signs along the route. Combine this with a period of publicising via posters and leaflets and possibly some guided rides along it too and significant numbers of commuting cyclists could be alerted to the existence of the alternative.

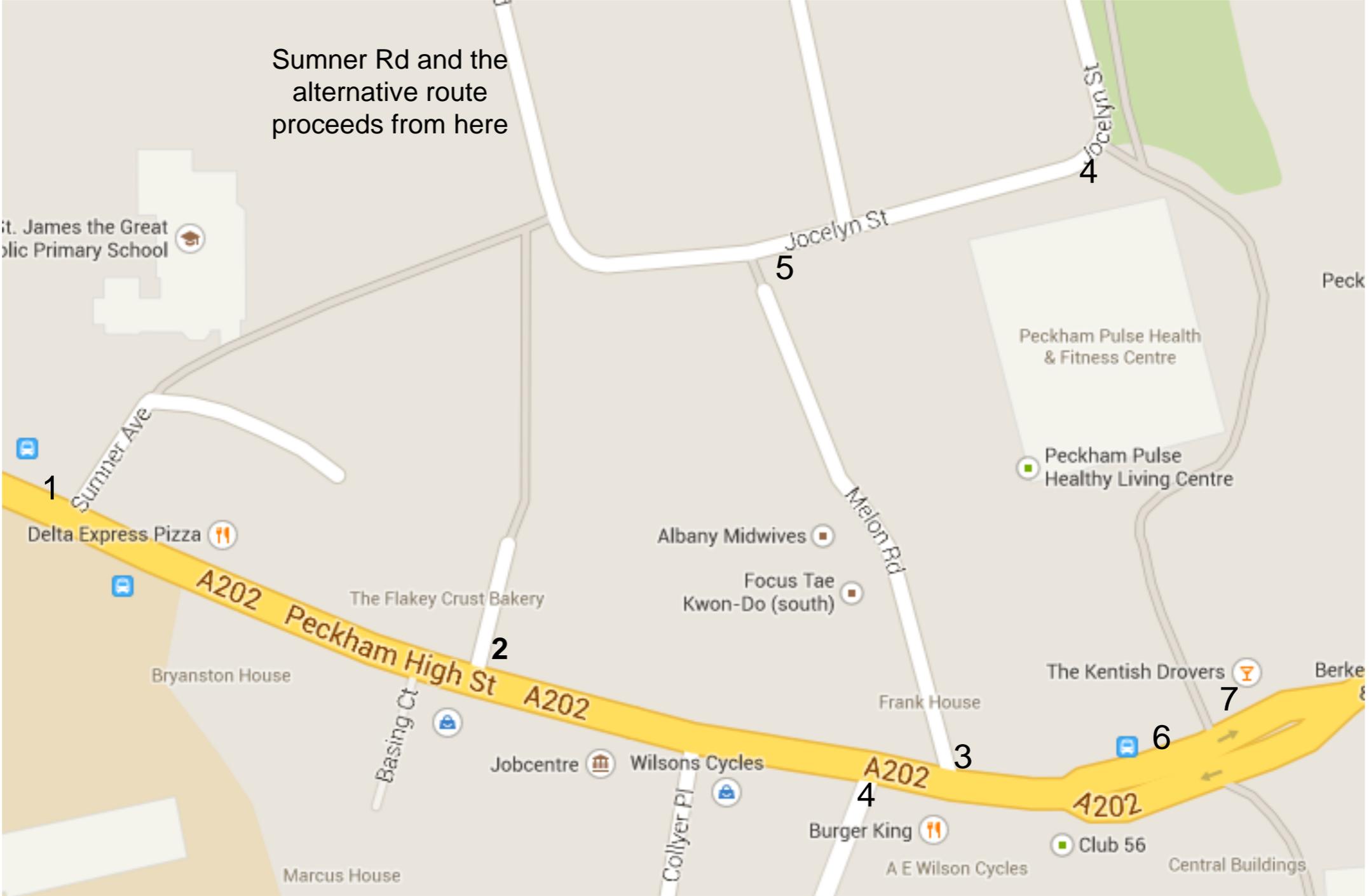


The Surrey Canal path is clearly signed: cyclists know where they are going immediately

However, the alternative road route which could be accessed from here, on Jocelyn St, just as the traffic free path starts, is not clearly signed and partially blocked by a fire gate. Unless you know the area, you won't know it's there, or how to get to it.

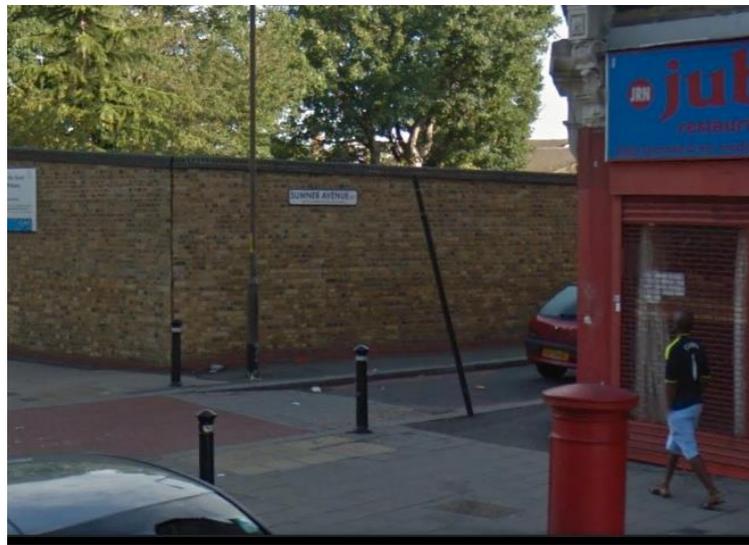


2. There are also multiple access points to the route in Peckham. Very useful, except that, firstly, they are almost invisible and secondly, 1, 2 and 3 have no clear safe approach from the A202, for cyclists using the Rye Lane route. There is an alternative route through Peckham which uses the one way system through the Bellenden Rd area. This brings you to the exit point at 4 which is meant to feed cyclists into Melon Rd (5). This would work, as this is a light controlled junction. Except that the Bellenden Rd route through Peckham is convoluted, involving lots of turns and one way streets. It is not a realistic alternative to Rye lane for outer borough cyclists



At the moment, the vast majority of cyclists travelling north south share this busy crowded crossing with large numbers of pedestrians. The pavement, especially on the north side is narrow, and the crossing itself is not wide enough for the numbers that cross in peak times. In addition there are railings limiting the area people can use to cross on the western side. The potential for conflict is great.





1. Sumner Ave: possibly not suitable as a cyclist access as it is next to a primary school.



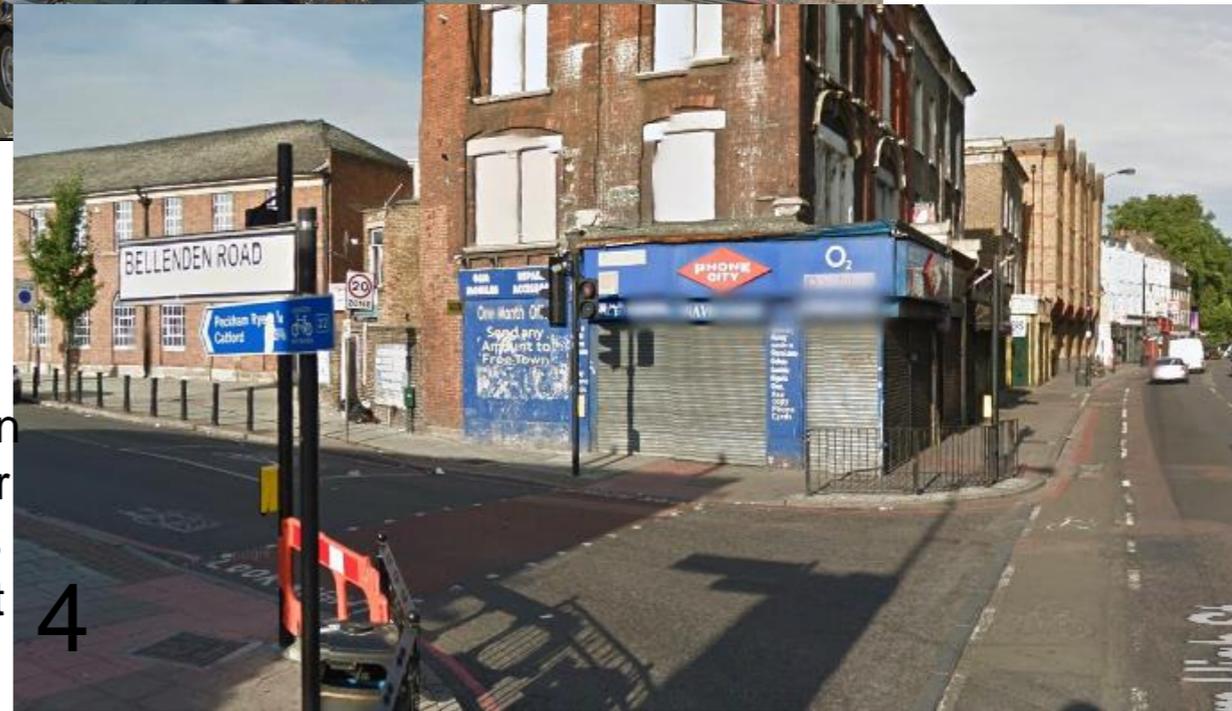
2. Sumner Rd junction with A202: easy to access for cyclists from the west of the borough. More problematic making the right turn heading back westwards and impossible to access from the south.



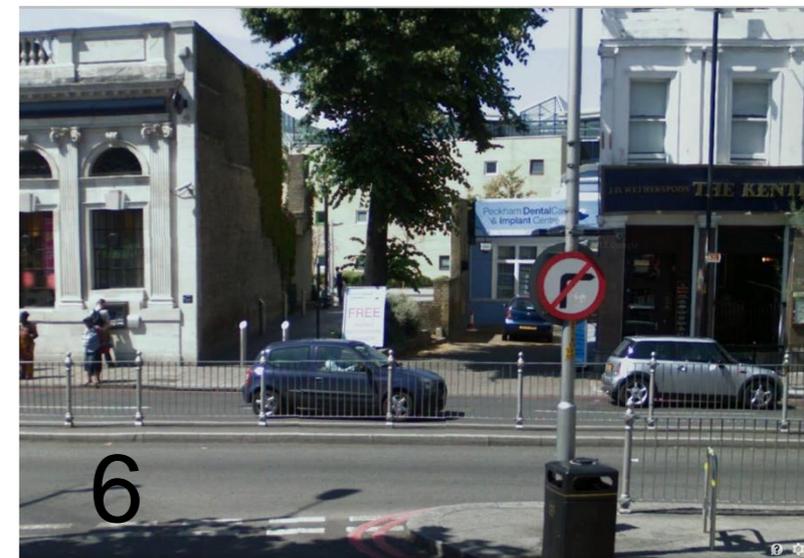
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3 and 4 show the old north south route LCN22 exiting Bellenden Rd and heading across the Peckham High St (A202) to Melon Rd which then feeds cyclists into the Sumner Rd alternative route. 5 shows the exit point on to Jocelyn St which feeds cyclists on to Sumner Rd.



6. However, most cyclists will be using the Rye Lane cyclepath approach. There is an entrance to the path here, but at the moment the railings and road layout at the junction of the High St and Rye lane make this impossible for cyclists to use approaching from the Lane. The existing crossing point is narrow and at peak times there is very little room for all those that need to use it: there may well be a case for widening it and creating access to an alternative path here which feeds cyclists onto the road route.



3. Once on the route, a cyclist can move pretty swiftly up Sumner Rd. The main hazard up to Commercial Way is parked cars. The next problem is at the junction with Commercial Way, a very popular rat run. (A very radical suggestion would be to close it to through traffic!) This junction is a problem for pedestrians as well, and the measures used to make it safer for them are visible here, junction buildouts. This reduces the on road space for cyclists to share with cars unfortunately. However, there is a pedestrian crossing at one side of the junction, so it may well be possible to create a light controlled crossing here. The left hook issue would need attention.



The junction from the south showing safety measures to protect pedestrians.

The crossing on the west side of the junction

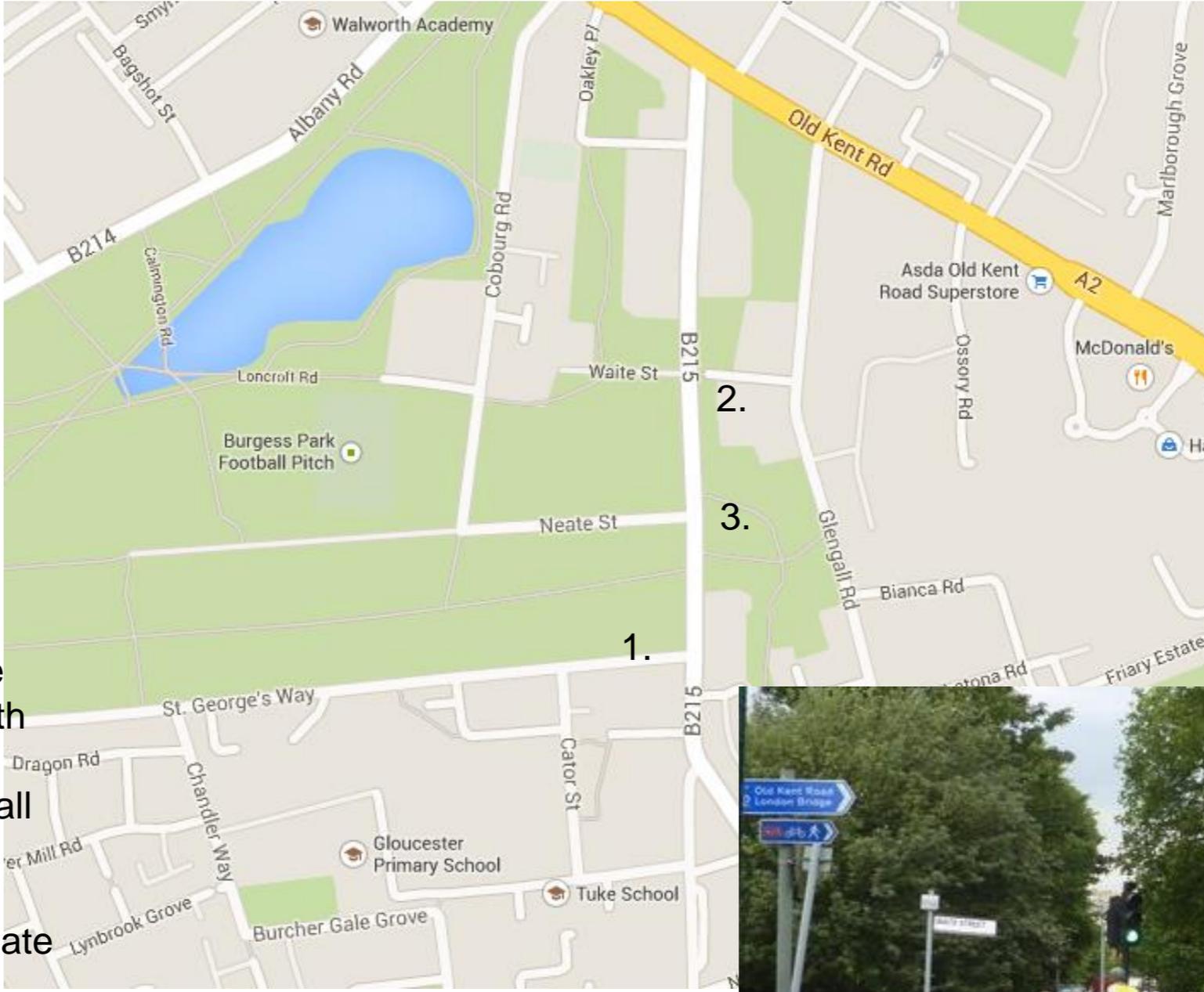


4. At the top of Sumner Rd, the route joins the busy Peckham Hill St. Here, there is a cycle path taking cyclists out of the stream of traffic which is, presumably, an attempt to minimise left hook problems here. It also leaves cyclists in a position at the junction where they have to give way and cannot swing out quickly into the fast moving traffic on Peckham Hill st. So far so good. But there is absolutely no provision to make the right turn from Peckham Hill St back on to Sumner Rd safer. This can be a dangerous and intimidating turn to make.



4. Finally, just as the signing to show cyclists how to get on the alternative route is poor and inadequate, there is the same problem on Peckham Hill St. Apart from a few ambiguous on road markings there is little to indicate how a cyclist accesses the rest of LCN 22, enabling them to cross the Old Kent Rd safely. In addition, the route provides a great link to Burgess Park, a popular destination. But an easy, safe entrances and exits are not easy to find.

1. There is a new entrance to the park on St George's Way, which could be used.



2. There is a signed route here through to Glengall Rd and the northern section of LCN22 (also to other eastbound cycle routes beyond the Old Kent Rd, including the proposed Q2. However it is a tricky right turn northbound, and cyclists must be made aware of it in good time in order to position themselves correctly.

3. The cyclist here can be seen emerging from a path which can also connect Peckham Hill St to Glengall Rd's safe crossing of Old Kent Rd. He is probably intending to cross into Neate St, another way in to Burgess Park





If faster cyclists, who need a quick convenient route into and back out of central London, are to be persuaded off the Surrey canal path, then the alternative road route described here, is the only realistic option. However, in its current state it is impossible for most of these cyclists to find. It is very likely that the majority of these cyclists live outside Southwark so signing needs to be very clear. In addition, it would be extremely helpful to have a whole route board at key points on the route, showing cyclists exactly where the route goes and to which other routes it links.

The alternative route also has several key points where its safety level falls below that which we think is acceptable. Again, if significant numbers of cyclists are to switch to it, these safety issues need to be addressed. This is not meant to be a definitive assessment of this route in Peckham, or a final proposal for its improvement. It comprises only the observations and some suggestions from a group of local cyclists who know these roads and paths well and use them both as cyclists and pedestrians. It is intended to be a starter for discussion.