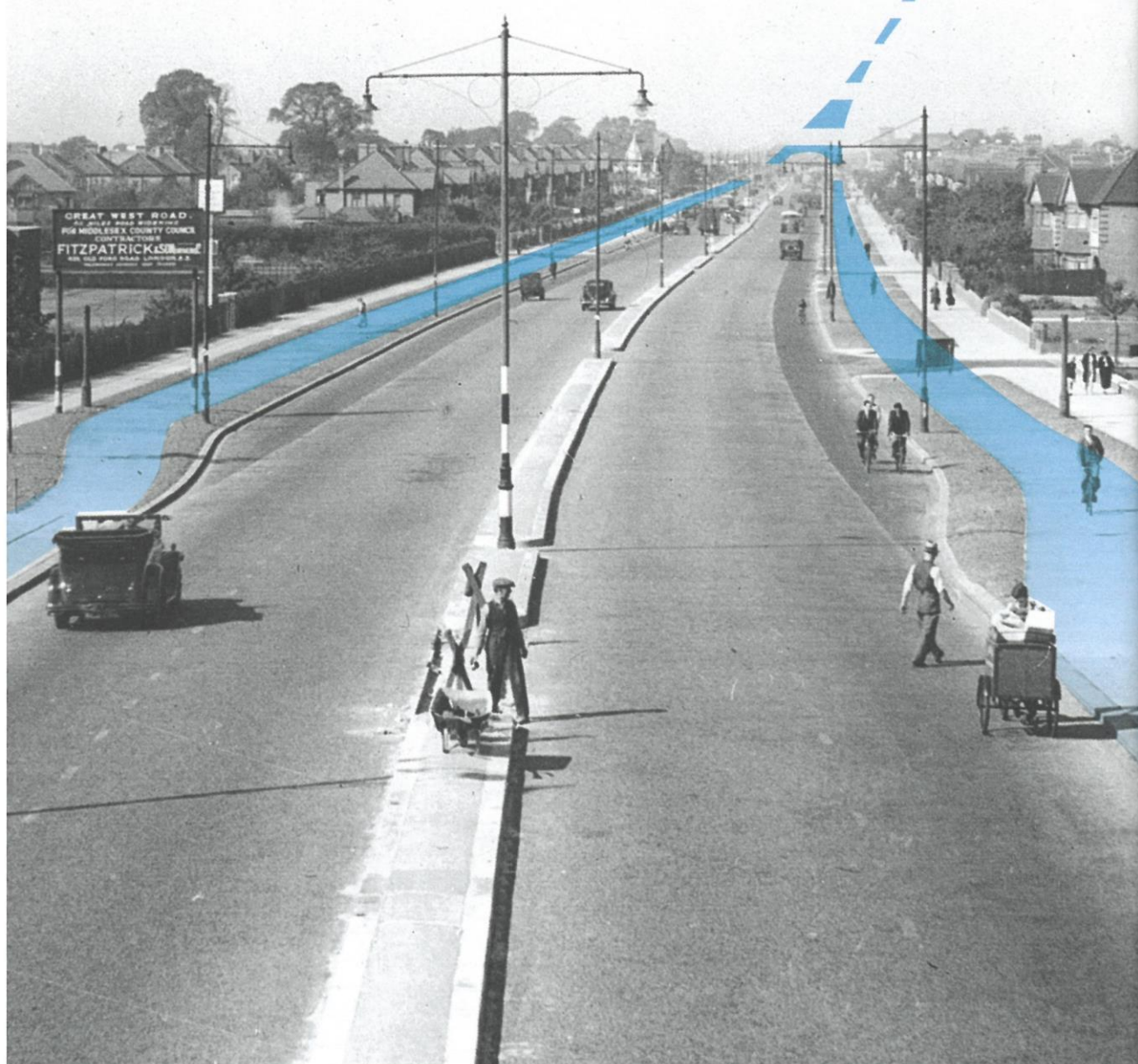# MIND
# THE GAP

New infrastructure built during the pandemic brings us a big step closer to a coherent cycle network. But **Aydin Crouch**, creator of the Safe Cycling in London map, spots the gaps that need plugging

OVER THE last decade, London has built some brilliant cycle infrastructure. However, the capital's cycle network as a whole cannot be given the same praise. Large parts of London still lack any decent infrastructure at all, and where things have been built there are often gaps with two stretches of cycleway failing to join up. But things don't have to remain this way.

Since the Covid pandemic began, we have seen how pop-up infrastructure can be built quickly, cheaply and easily. Using this method, councils and TfL can not only build new routes where potential demand is high, but also look at what already exists and swiftly fill in some of the obvious, easy gaps. And in doing so be one step closer to rolling out an extensive and truly coherent network, one fit for the 2020s.

## Tracks under tarmac

London — like much of the UK — has many miles of older, protected cycle track that pre-date TfL. Forgotten, neglected, and often even remarked for car parking, these are an untapped resource which, if upgraded, could cheaply and easily add potentially hundreds of miles to London's safe cycle network. Some of these date back to the 1930s, mostly along arterial roads — in fact, LCC columnist Carlton Reid has been running a nationwide campaign to bring many of these back into use. Others date from the 1990s or 2000s, often along suburban roads. Both types tend to be of a lower standard than acceptable today, with generally narrow tracks, nearly always untreated junctions and often merging with the carriageway at bus stops.

Some of these routes have already been upgraded and incorporated into TfL's cycle network such as the Western Avenue Cycleway (1934), which became part of C34 in 2020, and Cable Street Cycleway (mid-2000s), which became part of CS3 in 2010. In the short term, to avoid the lengthy consultations that would be necessary for more permanent changes, temporary measures could very smartly bring these existing routes up to modern safety standards for relatively little cost.

In many cases, reviving these old cycleways would result in neither roadspace, parking bays, nor pavement being lost. This would garner less opposition, making the changes more likely to stay in place beyond the current crisis.

In fact, for many of these legacy cycle tracks, it would mostly just be at junctions where new treatments and traffic lights for cyclists would be required.

This is certainly true of the A4 cycle path between Gillette Corner and Hounslow West. Despite being almost 80 years old, it is of a remarkably high quality; safety standards only fall short when side roads join and, more pressingly, where main roads intersect with it. But, as we've learnt during the last 18 months, these are not insurmountable obstacles.

Although creating new pop-up cycleways along main roads is essential and should obviously continue, the objections against taking roadspace for cycling will likely remain loud and new tracks will continue to struggle to be delivered against both noisy resident and professional driver opposition, plus the needs of buses. So it makes real sense for TfL and councils to pick some of this low-hanging fruit. It costs less money, requires less construction work and, due to most of the infrastructure already being in place, has little reason to attract backlash and create further division. These can be seen as simple cycle route 'upgrades' rather than some entirely new route — and thus far less threatening to many.

Side road junctions can be redesigned fairly

Photo: Carlton Reid

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easily and indeed uncontroversially these days, tightening turn radii, providing a raised table or continuous track/footway treatment, or clearer markings and improving sight lines — this is fairly inexpensive and straight-forward. More complicated are signalised junctions, where permanent schemes require modelling. But even here, there are often cheap temporary solutions available for the medium term — and TfL has been delivering exactly this across London during the crisis.

## Closing the gaps

The other quick way to improve London's cycle network is to bridge the gaps, most of which have been borne out of unfinished Cycleways and a lack of collaboration and coordination between two councils and/or TfL. There are a number of examples across the capital where two stretches of brilliant infrastructure come less than a mile from meeting one another, leaving cyclists vulnerable to the hostile road traffic in between.

These are especially important as cyclists are drawn to good infrastructure, resulting in a high number of them having to bridge these gaps to reach the next good stretch of cycleway in their journey. More, high-quality cycle routes not only get existing cyclists to shift their journeys onto them, but also encourage droves of people new to cycling to get pedalling. However, those new cyclists will suffer the negatives of the gaps in cycle routes far more keenly.

Most gaps could also be cheaply resolved with minor interventions, making people using these routes safer and, in turn, more confident. Here, we list a few examples of the most obvious of these missing links:

**Updating 'forgotten' bike lanes: like these on the A4, can be cheap and simple**

### GAP 1: CS5-CS7 (Oval)

CS7 is the oldest Cycle Superhighway in London (alongside CS3), and until last year's recent Streetspace upgrade it was largely unsegregated from road traffic. An exception to this is at Oval, where the stretch alongside Kennington Park was upgraded in 2015. In the same year, the first section of CS5 was built between Pimlico and Oval Cricket Ground. It was originally planned to go further east to Lewisham, but this extension is indefinitely on hold. Therefore, for the foreseeable future at least, CS5 will end just shy of CS7 — only 0.2 miles away to be exact.

### GAP 2: Tottenham Hale & Seven Sisters

C1 (formerly CS1) is a far from perfect, but heavily used north-south route, connecting north London to the City. East of Tottenham Hale station, the recently completed Forest Road/Ferry Lane cycleway provides a safe route to the rest of the Waltham Forest Mini-Holland network. Both cycleways miss each other by just under a mile. Cyclists wanting to safely bridge this gap are currently forced to use a mixture of a low-quality pavement cycle path along Broad Lane and the carriageway. Minor interventions, with short new stretches of wands and better connections with the Broad Lane cycle tracks could make crossing this car-dominated traffic intersection a lot safer. And indeed this is part of a route that has been long-promised by TfL between Camden and Tottenham Hale. Surely it would be possible for the boroughs and TfL to start working on this part of the route at least?

### GAP 3: CS3-C8 (Westminster)

Since C8's upgrade, with the installation of wands between Chelsea and Lambeth bridges,

a new gap has emerged between C8 and CS3 (the 'East-West Cycle Superhighway'). This short stretch currently prevents there being a continuous Thameside cycleway from Chelsea to Tower bridges. The obvious challenge here would be competing for space with the security infrastructure currently outside the Palace of Westminster. Perhaps a compromise measure would be to install wands just between Lambeth Bridge and Victoria Tower.

## Creating a cohesive network

There are many more examples of gaps like this in the network and despite some being fixed — such as the new link between CS3 and Q1 along Savoy Street (currently under construction) — others are frustratingly being created. One of these, in Tolworth, will see the future C29 come half-a-mile short of meeting a brilliant 1930s legacy cycleway south of Tolworth roundabout, heading south towards Ewell.

One of the reasons why I created the Safe Cycling in London map (that LCC is working with me on), is because the emerging network of safer cycle routes in London, and the gaps in that network, were not being seen clearly. With the map, it's possible for you and your borough group to campaign to close some of the gaps in your area.

## Safe Cycling in London map

For borough groups and local campaigners, there's a real opportunity to push your council to get some good, fast and cheap results, by bridging the gaps in the existing network and finding where legacy infrastructure can be brought into the 21st century.

The Safe Cycling in London map allows you to see where the infrastructure exists (legacy and contemporary), see which parts of London are served well, which parts are not, and, of course, where the gaps are. You can also use the different layers to spot where Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) should connect to nearby cycle tracks and layer on daytime routes through parks and suchlike too.

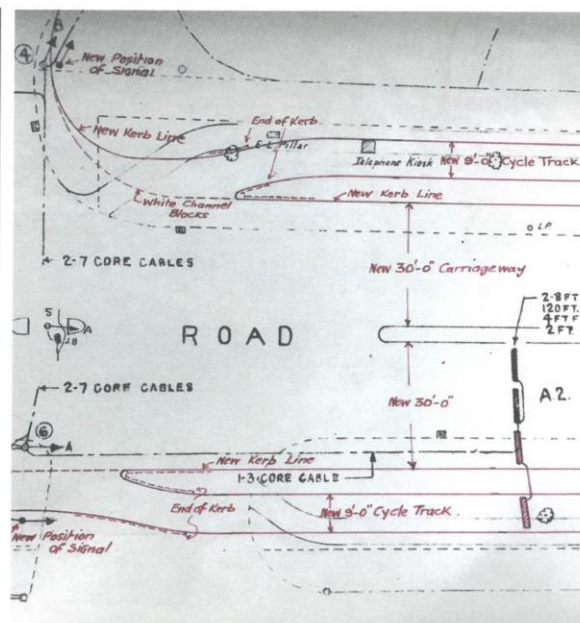To attract more people to take to the saddle,



Photo: Carlton Reid

Engineers' plans for the Great West Road in 1936: show how 9ft-wide cycle tracks were built in both directions (see main image on page 12)

and to help beat the climate crisis, we cannot wait another decade for the network to grow at the rate that London was seeing before the pandemic. We must not only act fast, but learn to maintain a high pace over time.

Fixing what we already have doesn't just deliver a lot more network on the cheap, and quickly, it also gives London stuff to get on with while engineers work on the longer-term, tougher-to-develop sections and schemes. The opportunities are there and ready for us to use, they just need to be identified and revived.

2021-standard protected cycleways could be quickly established between Hounslow West and Brentford, South Tottenham and Brimsdown, Sidcup and Orpington, North Harrow and Northolt Park, and many, many more. On top of this, the gaps in the network need to be identified and bridged, making the system of cycleways we've spent the last ten years building fit to attract the new cyclists of the 2020s.

■ Safe Cycling in London map: bit.ly/378amr0. Also twitter.com/SafeCycleLDN.