



94 Stag Lane
Edgware
Middlesex.
HA8 5LW

London Cycle Network Route 5 Preliminary submission to the CRISP process on behalf of Camden Cycling Campaign

1. General remarks

We are grateful for being invited to put forward our views on the development of LCN Route 5 through the CRISP process, commencing at the meeting on 23 July 2005 with LB Brent and Babbie Group.

We note that there has been a long history of studies of this proposed route which have not produced any effective improvements in the route for cyclists. We very much hope that this unfortunate pattern will not be continued; at the same time, we suggest that this history could be due to a fundamental unresolved issue: Is it possible, or sensible, to try to designate as a priority, high quality, cycle route, the A5 corridor, one of the most heavily-used and strategic arteries for private motor travel, commercial vehicles, including heavy freight, taxis and buses, leading out of Central London?

The Meeting Summary correctly highlights some of the main problems with the route, including lack of facilities for cyclists, high and congested traffic flows (however the other major problem, of speed, is not mentioned), and a high cyclist casualty rate along the corridor. The very severe problems with the A5 itself given, there seems to be a lack of clarity about whether this exercise is intended to identify ways to mitigate the problems of the A5 itself, the past attempts to do which seem to have achieved little, or to identify ways for cyclists to bypass it, or sections of it. That the latter is under consideration seems to be indicated by the observation that there is a “lack of published alternative routes through the area”. The issue, however, is not publication or the lack of it – there simple are no alternatives for most longer journeys currently utilising the A5, due to geographical and land-use factors. Therefore, one approach we would like to see pursued is some imaginative thinking about how such alternatives could be created.

2. Potential of the A5 as a route

The A5 has the great advantage that it is a straight, direct route, and that it is currently used by quite large numbers of cyclists (decreasing as one moves away from Central London, and falling very sharply at the North Circular Road intersection (Staples Corner), probably due to the difficulty of negotiating this junction).

However, there are few roads in London where the environment is so motor-dominated, particularly north of Staples Corner, where the road, aside from shopping stretches in West Hendon, Colindale and Burnt Oak, is almost continuously lined with car dealerships, motor-related businesses, and warehouse-style retail development affording

extensive car-parking (but very little cycle parking) and creating numerous difficult and busy junctions with slip roads and service roads.

At the same time, the road space is very badly used, with often only two wide (therefore fast) vehicle lanes, badly discontinuous combined bus and cycle lanes, parallel service roads which are largely dedicated to car-parking, some large areas of pavement, particularly between service roads and the main carriageway, which seem also, legally or illegally, to be in practice dedicated to car-parking, (see pictures 1, 2 and 3) and, elsewhere, very wide and little-used pavements, on which cycling is illegal (see picture 4). Where there are bus lanes, bus stops and other parking restrictions, there is a notable lack of enforcement, particularly on the Barnet stretches (see pictures 5 and 6). The bus lanes, shared with cyclists, are very intermittent because of the variable width of the road (picture 7), and suffer from the basic problem, from the point of view of cyclists (this is the same throughout London, and, so far as we know, the UK), that they end many metres before junctions, so denying cyclists any protection where they most need it. Where there are bus lanes or none, there has been also a tendency of the engineers to mark compulsory left-turn lanes on the road at major intersections, which are always problematic for cyclists (picture 8). Should the cyclist trying to proceed straight on ignore the marking, or try to cut into the faster-moving lane to the right?

Some cycle facilities do exist, and some are extremely bad. Picture 9 shows the kind of thing that must be avoided in future (and this dangerous example should be removed). They are generally due, as here, to thinking on too small a scale, restricting facility design to solve particular perceived problems, but creating more problems in the process due to the lack of a prior masterplan for creating a high-quality, connected route.

Speed is a major problem. Though motorists would probably claim the route as a whole is too congested to allow for speed, this is not the case in many places. For example, on the flyover that takes the A5 over the roundabout at Staples Corner West, the 30 mph limit is lifted for only a stretch of less than half a mile. The effect of this is to cause speeds far in excess of the re-imposed limit of 30 to be maintained by many vehicles into the shopping centre of West Hendon just to the north. High speeds are also the norm on the concrete-sided slip roads to the roundabout under the flyover, where the 30 limit is never lifted, but motorists may imagine it has been from the nature of the design. Cyclists are forced to choose which of these environments is the last bad.

The pictures given on the next 6 pages concentrate on the A5 between Cricklewood and Burnt Oak, and demonstrate, firstly, some of the reasons for a very poor environment for both pedestrians and cyclists, and secondly, the very bad and inefficient use of the roadspace at present. It is suggested that along substantial stretches of the A5 north of Kilburn there exists space which could be re-allocated to cycling, though thorough re-design and extensive work would be necessary.

We do not think that painted-line solutions would be of much benefit to cyclists on the A5. This is because the road is so heavily used by buses. The space would have to be shared with them, and cyclists would be continually having to pull out into the other lanes when buses stopped. It is also an unfortunate fact that much bus-driving is quite aggressive to cyclists at present. (This is my personal experience on this route.) In

addition, they presumably would not be full-time lanes, so at other times they would be shared with cars. We do not think providing painted-on cycle lanes would be an effective expenditure of money, as it will not encourage many more cyclists to use the route. Segregated cycle tracks (e.g. similar to Royal College Street and Torrington Place in Camden, or Pinner Road/Station Road and Alexandra Avenue in Harrow, or Kingsbury Road in Brent), i.e., cycle facilities separate from both the road and the pavement, are an option, if adequately designed and thoroughly consulted on with cyclists in advance so as to get the details right.

If such facilities are not considered possible (and there is likely to be a political problem with co-operation with Barnet Council, which at present is not an actively pro-cycling authority), then we don't recommend even signposting the A5 as an LCN route. Faster, fitter, more experienced cyclists who find this the most convenient, direct route will use it anyway, and signposting could encourage more inexperienced and vulnerable cyclists to use a route which has a poor safety record. For this reason we think that all options for creating a Route 5 bypassing the A5 as far as possible should be considered, and some suggested avenues for investigation of this follow in the next section. The fact is that the A5 is treated, and will continue to be treated, as a priority route for buses, heavy freight and large quantities of other motor traffic heading between inner London, the north-western suburbs and the M1, and this seems very hard to square with the creation of a decent-quality, attractive, and safe LCN+ route along it. North of Cricklewood, the road is also very much treated as an urban borderland "dumping ground" for all kinds of industrial, commercial, waste and transport-related activities that are heavily road-dependent and would be difficult to fit into the more environmentally-protected areas of NW London. It has little to attract pedestrians or cyclists over long stretches (pictures 10, 11 and 12), and to turn this round seems a tall order.

Kilburn High Road is somewhat different to the rest of the route, in being essentially a very long and densely packed shopping street. Here the issue is primarily the narrowness of the road and the density of the activities: bus boarding and alighting, constant deliveries and pickups from shops large and small, and high volumes of pedestrians. Problems tend to be of congestion rather than of speed or dangerous road design (though there are issues with the latter, particularly the awkward junction with Willesden Lane with its wide-swept south-eastern kerb). This means it is in one way even less favourable as an LCN+ route than the rest of the A5. There is probably no scope for meaningful roadspace reallocation to cyclists in Kilburn High Road. Though a few detailed design changes could be made which would be beneficial to cyclists, on balance, here, we again feel that diverting LCN5 away from the A5 as much as possible would be the most effective strategy.



Picture 1. A sea of parked cars: typical view of the A5 in the Colindale area

Here there is a bus lane, a pavement, a “filled in” service road, another pavement within that, and traders’ curtilage. All are covered with parked cars, serving the interests of businesses. The result is an extremely poor environment for cyclists, pedestrians and bus users. Borough: Brent.



Picture 2. Shopping centre with service road, A5, Colindale

The service road was intended for parking, but it seems to be allowed on the pavement between the service road and the main carriageway as well. If so much space was not given over to car-parking, there would be room for segregated cycle tracks along much of the A5 north of Staples Corner. Borough: Brent



Picture 3. More pavement parking on the A5 in the Burnt Oak area

Note the pedestrian guardrailling: all the cars/vans must have been driven along the pavement to get to where they are parked. While acknowledging that a level of vehicle parking has to be supplied, can't the road be arranged better than this? Borough: Brent



Picture 4. Wide open spaces of pavement on the A5 between Burnt Oak and Colindale

The road is not considered wide enough for a bus lane here, and has a single, very wide traffic lane in both directions, which encourages speed. On the other hand, the vast pavement, on which cycling would not be legal, is under-used and desolate, dotted with arbitrarily-placed phone boxes and bus shelters. This is a prime example of very bad use of public space along the A5 corridor. With a thorough re-design, there could be plenty of space for cyclists, and nicer pedestrian environment as well. Borough: Barnet.



Picture 5. Parking on double-yellow lines and round corners on the A5 in Burnt Oak

Note how the yellow lines are worn out through being constantly parked on. I shop here regularly and I could have taken a similar picture on any visit. Borough: Barnet.



Picture 6. Parking on double yellow lines immediately in front of a bus stop and ahead of a major junction, Burnt Oak

This routine situation, due to lack of enforcement by Barnet, not only disrupts bus travel, but squeezes cyclists and makes their progress hazardous out at such points. Borough: Barnet



Picture 7. A intermittent bus lane on the A5 in West Hendon

Combined bus and cycle lanes are often touted as a cycling solution on busy roads like this, but cyclists need protection most of all at junctions, to which the lanes do not extend. Additionally, they have narrow hours of operation (the blue sign in the distance shows hours of operation 7-10 am and 4-6pm Mon to Fri), and at other times the space is used for parking. Borough: Barnet



Picture 8. Compulsory left-turn lane on the A5 at Colindale

Motor-vehicle capacity arguments dictate the deployment of these cyclist-unfriendly road markings. A cyclist can't necessarily get into the right lane to comply. In the wrong lane they risk motorists' frequent misunderstanding of their intentions or even aggression. Note again how far short of the junction the bus lane ceases. Borough: Barnet



Picture 9. Cycle facility just south of Staples Corner roundabout on the east side of the A5

After following this short section of on-pavement cycle path, a cyclist would be ejected into the beginning of a very narrow-angle, high-speed left filter for traffic entering a retail park. He would be quite likely to be hit from traffic from behind as fast traffic emerged from the roundabout and then beared left. A terrible, dangerous “facility”. Borough: Barnet.



Picture 10. A pavement or a mess? Neglected, little-used pavement space on the A5 between Cricklewood and Staples corner

Forming borough boundaries for most of its length, the A5 has all the characteristics of a neglected urban borderland. This 6 or 7 m of broken pavement isn’t needed or used by pedestrians, while the adjacent carriageway squeezes in two narrow lanes in both directions, leaving cyclists with no space. Borough: Barnet



Picture 11. Motoring information on the A5 north of Cricklewood The road is clearly treated as a priority motor route between the north circular, the M1 and central London, as the big dot-matrix sign board for giving motorists traffic information about goings on in central London (demos, roadworks etc).indicates. The cycle routes around are by contrast obscure, under implemented and under-maintained. Borough: Barnet



Picture 12. The cyclist-unfriendly face of the Edgware Road: The A5 at Staples Corner West, from the north. Cyclists are faced with the choice of going under, round a notoriously dangerous roundabout, or over, and taking their chance amongst traffic lanes that merge at small angles with a 70 mph speed limit in force on the overpass. Could this ever realistically be converted to an attractive, high-quality, safe cycle route as LCN+ requires? Borough: Barnet

3. Alternatives to the A5

There are several alternatives to the A5 suggested on the TfL London cycling maps already, but they have major gaps, so cannot be use for longer journeys. The gaps are mostly associated with crossing the A406 North Circular Road, so this is the area where creative solutions are required.

On the **east side**, Brent Terrace is an attractive, low-traffic alternative route for some distance north of Cricklewood Station, but the route is blocked at Staples Corner East from going any further north. There are pedestrian walkways over the junction, but we do not recommend trying to adapt these to shared use. Such adapted shared facilities are generally unsatisfactory to pedestrians and cyclists alike. The gradients will be wrong for cycling, the space insufficient, and it will be hard to bring cyclists back onto a carriageway in a useful way to continue northwards. If something completely new could be built here, possibly associated with the proposed re-development of Brent Cross, that should be considered. The experience of CCC with cycle routes built through a planning-gain agreement as part of a private development is, however, that they tend to be unsatisfactory, as stakeholders such as LCC and the local authority are unable to exert sufficient influence over the implementation of such plans and subsequent maintenance of the facility. In addition, in this case there is again the question of the enthusiastic co-operation of Barnet council in creating cycle facilities.

Along the Brent/Camden border, there is not much scope for going east of the A5 because of the barriers imposed by the various railway lines. Fordwych Road is a possibility for linking Kilburn and Cricklewood, but south of that, the only continuous parallel route is along West End Lane, which has similar problems of congestion to Kilburn High Road, and is also narrow and twisting.

On the **west side**, land-use also presents major problems in bypassing the A5 at Staples Corner. We believe, however, that there is the potential for a route to the west of Brent Reservoir, which, although a detour off the current projected course of Route 5, could be made highly attractive, so that many cyclists currently forced to use the A5 might divert to it, and many other cyclists might use it as well. The suggested outline of this is shown on maps 1 – 3 below.

This proposed route involves the following, from south to north:

1. Springfield Lane, just below Kilburn High Road Station, would provide a link to the implemented LCN route in Greville Road and Hamilton Terrace. This is currently a one-way, rather unkempt little road. This would require adjustment to the signals at Kilburn High Road.
2. Cyclists would then quickly turn left into Brondesbury Villas and then proceed north through Kilburn on minor roads. Adjustments would only be needed to the road closures between Glengall Road and Priory Park Road.
3. A section of Kilburn Lane would be used and then minor roads towards Gladstone Park, some of which are already on the LCN.
4. The route would then take paths in Gladstone Park, which are very pleasant and quite suitable for cycling.
5. The route would then follow the current LCN route on minor roads through Dollis Hill.

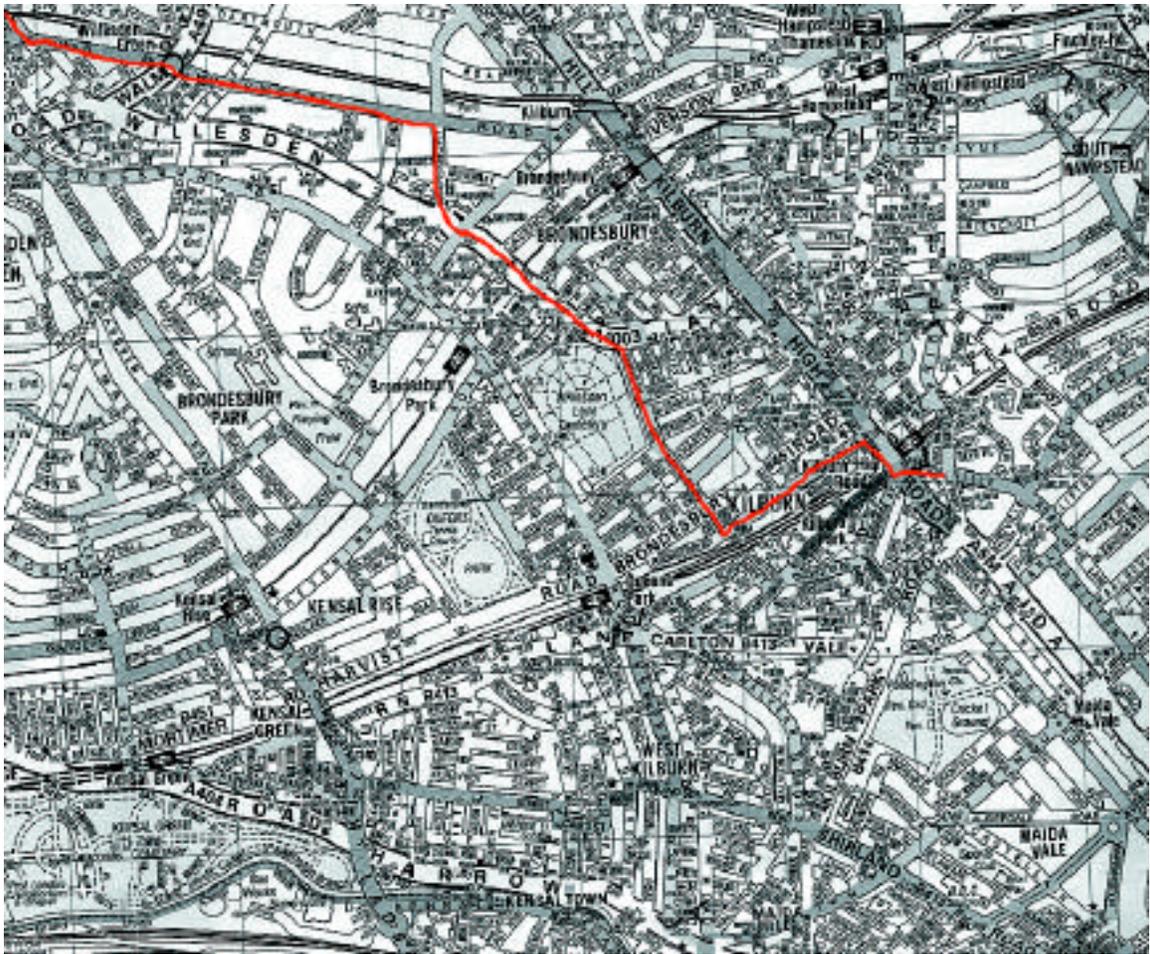
6. A new crossing of the North Circular Road near the current pedestrian bridge would be needed to access Neasden Recreation Ground, by the reservoir.
7. A new link (which would also be very useful for pedestrians) between Neasden Recreation Ground and the Welsh Harp Open Space would need to be created across the dam.
8. The current cycle path through Welsh Harp Open Space would be used.
9. Minor roads through the Kingbury area and an existing cycle path through Roe Green Park would take the route to the northern edge of Brent at Burnt Oak.

This route has the likely administrative advantage that it is entirely in Brent, with the exception of the short connection in Camden at the south end to the Hamilton Terrace route. Substantial expenditure would only be required for stages 6 and 7 of this. Stage 6 would require either a new bridge, as the current one is unsuitable for cycling, or a new surface-level crossing of the North Circular Road. Stage 7 requires investigation of the practicalities, establishing details of land ownership (British Waterways? Thames Water? The Sailing club?) and establishing co-operation with those bodies. However, this stage is fairly crucial: to take the route further west would (a) divert it too much away from the A5, and (b) encounter another unsuitable main road, the A4088 Neasden Lane.

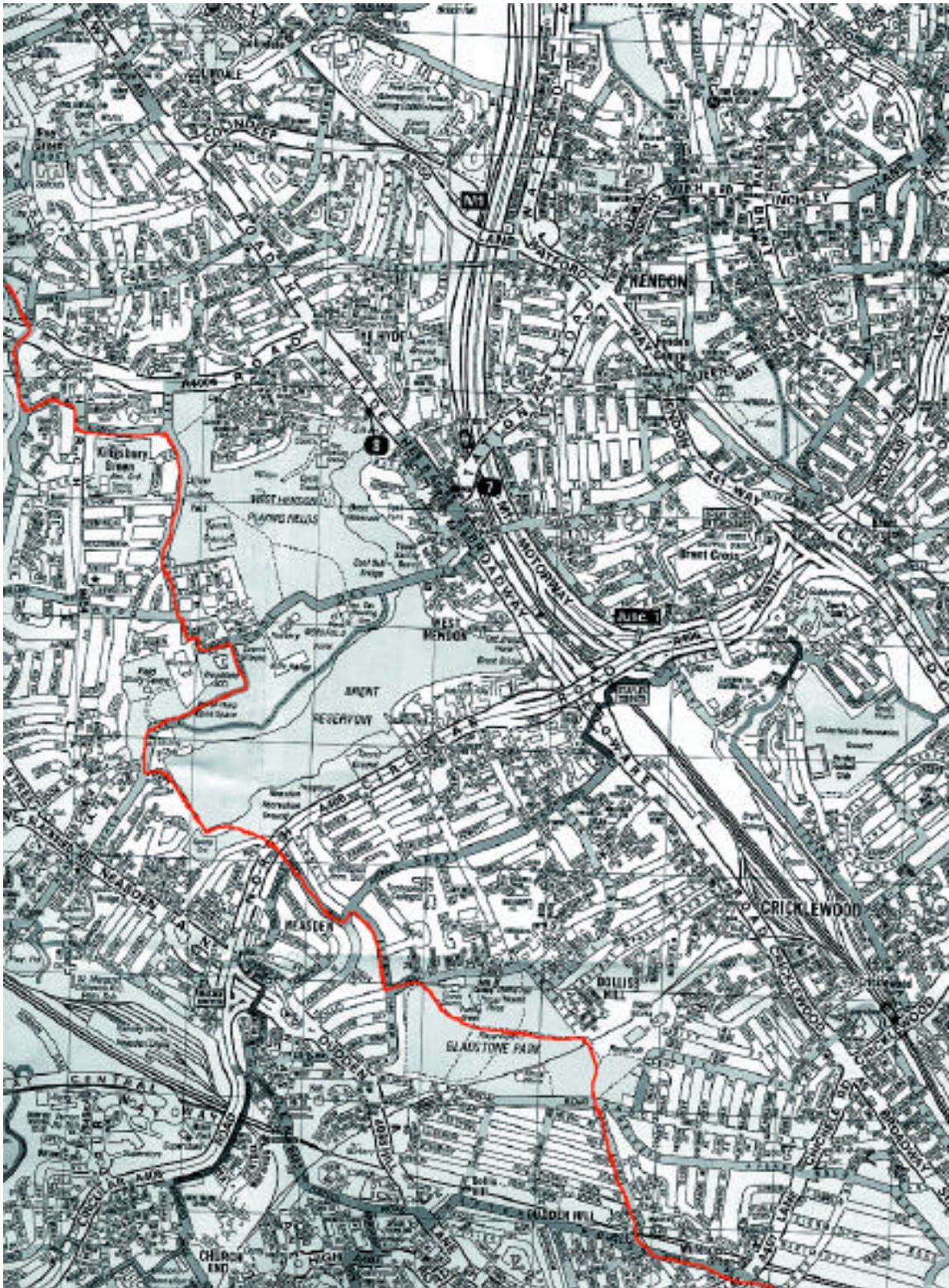
David Arditti
Camden Cycling Campaign
22 July 04

Draft 3

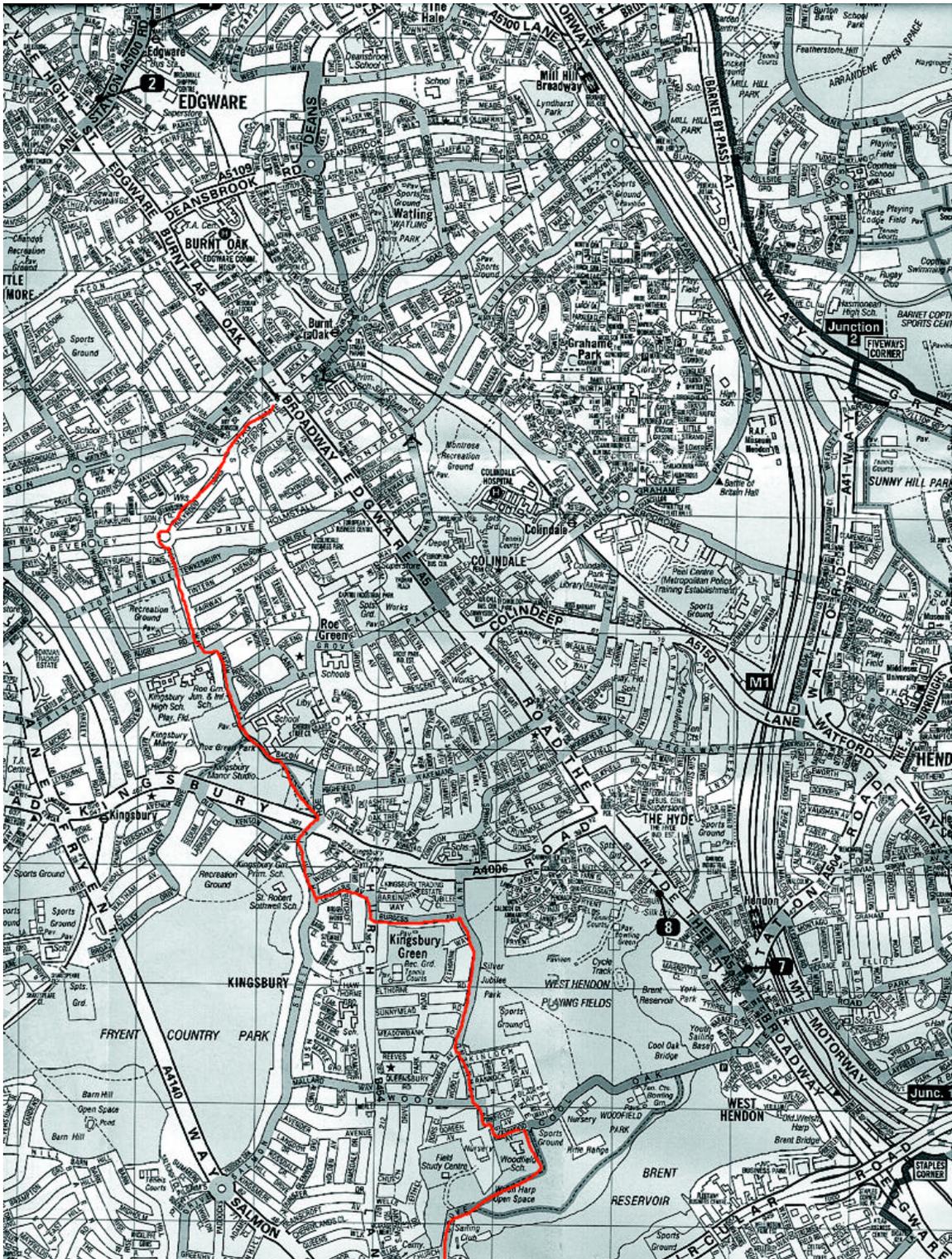
This document is also available in colour, on disk, in Microsoft Word format



Map 1. Proposed western alternative Route 5, south end



Map 2. Proposed western alternative Route 5, middle part



Map 3. Proposed western alternative Route 5, north end