

Review of cycling infrastructure around the Swiss Cottage Gyratory

Camden Cyclists (by Kaveh Kordestani), July 2025

Background

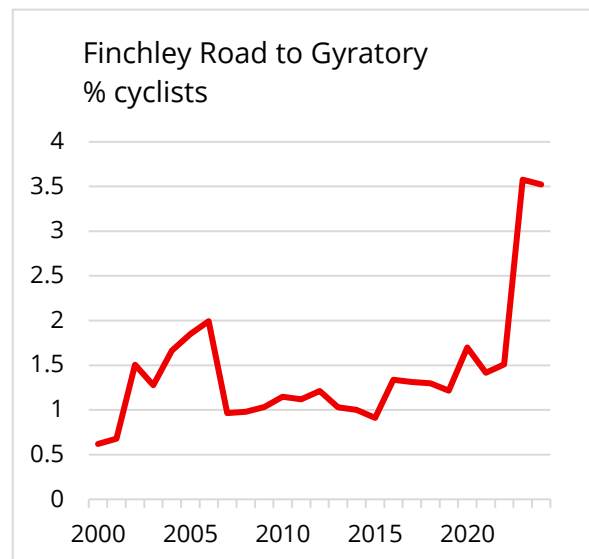
The roads leading up to the Swiss Cottage Gyratory see around 20 000 motor vehicles per day, on average. In 2022 just 3.5% of these vehicles were bicycles (↑ from 0.6% in 2000).¹

Originally the area around Swiss Cottage comprised two bidirectional roads with one lane either way. Around the same time as the Swiss Cottage redevelopment (1964), the roads were converted to a gyratory system.

As part of the Mayor's Transport Strategy under Boris Johnson, intention was expressed to "rip out" the gyratory and replace it with conventional bidirectional roads. This has been done successfully at other gyratories (e.g. Hammersmith). The redevelopment of many others is imminent (e.g. Vauxhall Cross, Stoke Newington).

Some cycling infrastructure was added in the late 1990s, detailed below. Some minor improvements were proposed by TfL in 2007² and by Camden in 2012.³ Neither were fully implemented.

In 2016 TfL proposed a redesign of the entire gyratory, making the Avenue Road wing bus only with segregated cycle infrastructure (albeit at the cost of the east-west cycle link).⁴ The plans foundered on a successful legal challenge by Westminster City Council.



¹ DfT traffic count of area between Boundary Road and junction with Adelaide Road.

<<https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/manualcountpoints/48537>>

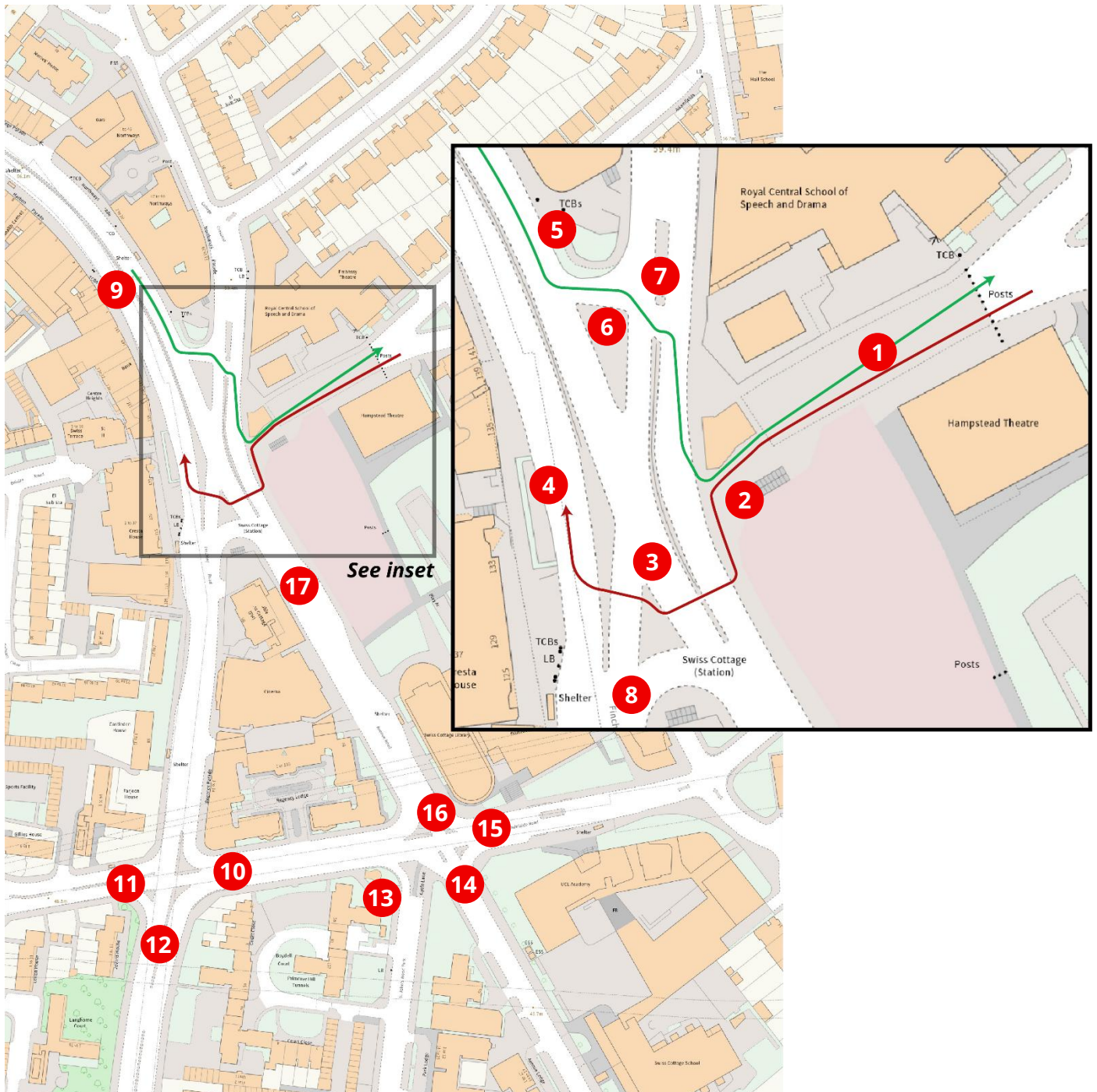
² <http://www.camdencyclists.org.uk/camden/consultations/swiss-cottage-06-07>

³ <https://camden.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s24768/Item%2002%20-%20Swiss%20Cottage%20Consultation%20Leaflet%20-%20FinalAppendix.pdf#page=10>

⁴ https://westminster.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s17519/Appendix_001_TfL%20consultation%20leaflet%20and%20consultation%20drawings.pdf

Review

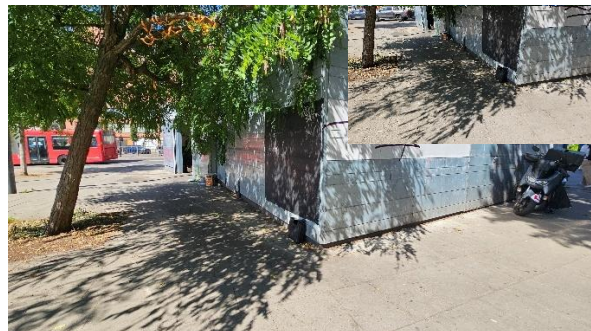
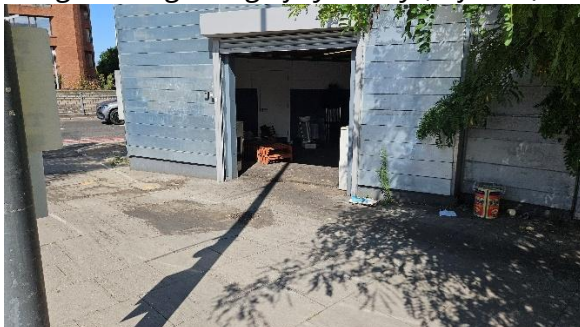
Overview map



The dedicated cycling infrastructure from Eton Avenue is highlighted in red and green.

From Eton Avenue (westbound)*Fig 1.1: shared space from Eton Ave**Fig 1.2: path during market hours*

- **1** This is a shared-use space (fig 1.1).
- On Wednesdays there is a farmers' market. Whilst this often leads to obstructed routes for cycles, cycling is still possible (fig 1.2).
- If following the LCN Link, cycles enter this area by coming northwards on Winchester Road and turning left onto Eton Avenue.
- Owing to the moderate pedestrian volumes, this **works effectively**.

*Fig 2.1: beginning of cycleway (v. faded)**Fig 2.2: cycleway during market hours**Fig 2.3: traders' storage behind cycleway**Fig 2.4: paving change of cycleway*

- At **2** there is a separate cycleway.
- Fig 2.1 shows its very poor condition. Many of the paving stones have been rearranged and the markings have not been reapplied.
- Fig 2.4 shows where the paving changes. The green has faded greatly and is less evident to pedestrians.

- On market days (Wednesday), the cycleway is directly adjacent to the market storage area (fig 2.3). This means that it is usually blocked and/or there are traders entering/exiting over the cycleway.
- Camden's 2011 plans to realign this towards the station entrance, rectifying the above issue, was not followed through.
- Owing to the above, there is no longer a clear delineation between pedestrian and cycle infrastructure and as a result there is unintentional infringement by both users.



Fig 2.5: length of cycleway to toucan



Fig 2.6: "jug handle" before toucan



Fig 2.7: toucan crossing

- Further down from **2** is a toucan crossing to the central island.
- There is a jug handle for cyclists (fig 2.6). It is poorly designed as does not afford cyclists an adequate view of southbound traffic. There are also two stop lines, neither of which are optimally placed.
- The toucan crossing has low-level cycle signals for cyclists throughout with early releases (fig 2.7). The traffic signals are excellent.



Fig 3.1: refuge island 1



Fig 3.2: crossing to refuge 2 with LLCS



Fig 3.3: refuge island 2



Fig 3.4: carriageway join from refuge 2

- The refuge island at **3** (fig 3.1) has an awkward turn for cyclists but is otherwise all right.
- The second refuge island (fig 3.3) has an odd kink and is only long enough for one cyclist, causing issues when multiple use the crossing.
- The dotted lines are problematic as they encourage cyclists to continue straight and thus directly into a fence (fig 3.4). This is also promoted by the curve of the second refuge island to be perpendicular with the road.
- There should be right turn arrows for cyclists at this point and the cycleway should curve rightwards.



Fig 4.1: bus lane cyclists are advised to use



Fig 4.2: poor and rough paving in bus lane



Fig 4.3: loading bay directly after guardrails with broad time of operation

- The bus lane to be used at cyclists after this point at **4** through to **9** is incredibly poorly paved (fig. 4.2) and often filled with LGVs (fig 4.3; loading bays are in operation from 07:00–16:00) meaning cyclists have to weave back into the main carriageway, causing unacceptable risk.
- The guardrail for the length of the ventilation shaft also means there is no refuge opportunity for cyclists (fig 4.1).

From Finchley Road to Eton Avenue (south/eastbound)

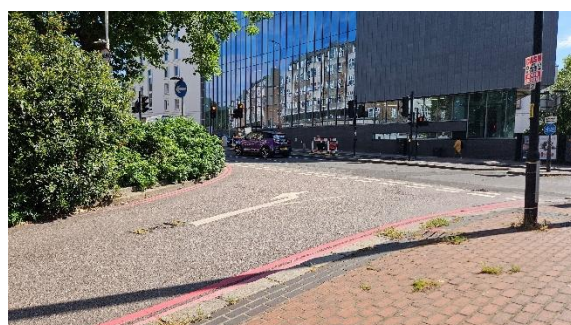


*Fig 5.1: bus lane leading to **6***



*Fig 5.2: turning lanes into **6***

- Beginning at **9**, cyclists must stay in the bus lane to proceed on this route. It is frequently blocked as there is a bus stop at **5** that serves four routes (fig 5.1).
- There is no dedicated left turn lane to enter the area at **6** (fig 5.2). Neither is there any segregation, meaning that cyclists share this small area with double-decker buses.



*Fig 6.1: area at **6** with left-hook risk*



Fig 6.2: obstructive street furniture



Fig 7.1: cycle/bus only crossing area



Fig 7.2: cycle refuge area at 7

- The carriageway after has a central reservation at 7. There are two gaps, one for cyclists and one for buses (fig 7.1). No other vehicles may enter.
- Buses turn both left and right from 6. The cycle gap is on the left. This means that cyclists who cross into the reservation are at risk of being left-hooked by a turning bus (fig 6.1).
- There are no traffic lights. Street furniture and trees make it difficult to see any oncoming traffic from the right (fig 6.2). Having just come off one carriageway, it is easy and tempting for cyclists to not slow down and continue on, with northbound traffic in a blind spot.
- The gap for cycles in the pedestrian refuge is insufficient, especially given that cycles often have to wait for southbound traffic on College Crescent before exiting (fig 7.2).



Fig 2.8: v. narrow feeder lane to exit at 2



Fig 2.9: joining area at 2

- After continuing southbound along College Crescent, cyclists are encouraged to join back into the LCN network by exiting left onto the cycleway at 2 (fig 2.9).
- This is very poorly planned. Firstly, the actual exit of the carriageway is a 90° turn making it impractical to join. Secondly, it pushes rapidly moving cyclists into oncoming cyclists who are continuing to the toucan crossing.
- Considering that the cycleway here is only designed for westbound users, this creates a possibility of collision both with pedestrians and other cyclists. This is especially problematic given that these users are blocked by the traders' storage building.
- The feeder lane for this exit is also dangerously thin: about half a metre (fig 2.8).

Junction of Hilgrove Road, Finchley Road and Adelaide Road



Fig 12.1: looking northbound to Finchley Rd



Fig 12.2: looking east from 10



Fig 12.3: looking north before junction



Fig 12.4: looking west towards 10

- The turning movement from Hilgrove Road (left side of fig 12.3; left onto Finchley Road) is okay. When turning left there is a bus lane that cyclists can enter (9; fig 12.1). There is one bus route (31) that provides some left-hook risk. An ASL should be installed here.
- There is no ASL or cycling facilities on the northbound movement of Finchley Road (fig 12.1, fig 12.3). Considering the high bus and HGV volume here this is poor. Knowledgeable cyclists use the left turning lane which has an exception for buses and cyclists continuing into the bus lane (fig 12.1), but this is poorly indicated.
- The left turn from westbound Adelaide Road into southbound Finchley Road (10 to 12) often has vehicles going well over the speed limit and lacks any sort of dedicated cycle lane (even advisory).
- Continuing west from Adelaide Road into Hilgrove Road (10 to 11) is high stress considering the steep descent and lack of an ASL, meaning cyclists often have to wait behind cars in the middle of the carriageway whilst vehicles continue on both sides of them.
- All of these turning movements would benefit from a simple ASL and a well-placed feeder lane, though this is difficult in some cases (particularly westbound Adelaide Road).

Junction of Avenue Road, Finchley Road and Adelaide Road*Fig 13.1: St John's Wood Pk modal bypass**Fig 13.2: very poor surfacing on bypass**Fig 13.3: south-facing view of bypass*

- St John's Wood Park joins Adelaide Road just west of the main junction at **13**. The road is two-way with no entry from Adelaide Road.
- There is a separate cycle facility that enables cyclists to enter this road directly from Adelaide Road as part of the LCN link (fig 13.1). It is very poorly paved (fig 13.2) and not particularly evident to most cyclists (fig 13.3), despite offering a very useful entrance to an important side road.



Fig 16.1: north from Avenue Road (14)



Fig 16.2: east from Adelaide Road (15)



Fig 16.3: north from Adelaide Road (e, 16)



Fig 16.4: north from Adelaide Rd (w)

- The north-west movement from Avenue Road is so far the only in this junction to have an ASL (and even a feeder lane!). This does not offset the fact that cyclists will immediately turn into a dangerous six-lane road though the risk is reduced as this has its own signal phase.
- The westwards movement from Adelaide Road is okay. The road is narrowed until this point and so it feels slightly safer, though this too faces the same six-lane peril (without an ASL).
- The southwards movement into Avenue Road from Adelaide Road is one lane, slow and generally all right.
- Any movements south from Avenue Road (16, north) are difficult for cyclists. Getting here is arguably the worst part of the junction given the five lanes and criss-crossing buses and HGVs. Unless entering the gyratory from a position that is opportune to their final movement, it is very difficult for cyclists to change lanes here without great risk, especially between the left- and right-turning lanes.

Issues and recommendations

Short term

- The cycleway at **2** has been poorly maintained. Its paint and paving is faded, is in a suboptimal location both due to its proximity to the market storage area and due to the collision risk from southbound cyclists on College Crescent.
 - **Recommendation 1:** the cycleway at **2** should be realigned to be closer to the tube entrance to provide sufficient separation. It should also be repaved and remarked.
- The jug handle after **2** is poorly designed and does not adequately serve its purpose. The second refuge island at **3** is too short, is awkward to use and has incorrect markings.
 - **Recommendation 2:** the jug handle at **2** should either be redesigned to be perpendicular to College Crescent or straightened earlier. The refuge island at **3** should be reconfigured to be longer, face away from traffic and have appropriate road markings.
- The bus lane at **4** and towards **9** is bumpy and difficult for cyclists to use. Overly generous loading restrictions mean that it is frequently blocked. An obtrusive guardrail makes it difficult for cyclists to seek refuge.
 - **Recommendation 3:** the bus lane at **4** towards **9** should be repaved. Loading bays should have reduced times, be moved northwards or be eliminated entirely. The guardrail should be removed if possible.
- Buses frequently block southbound cyclists at **9**. Cycles have to share a small off-carriageway area at **6** with buses and have poor sightlines of oncoming traffic from the left. The refuge area in the central reservation at **7** is inadequate.
 - **Recommendation 4:** ideally the entire area at **6** and **7** should be redesigned. At the very least, there should be an attempt to clear up street furniture and widen the refuge area.
 - *Unfortunately, cycles and buses cannot be easily separated in the current state of this area as buses turn both left and right.*
- The southbound cycle lane on College Crescent after **7** and leading up to **2** is dangerously (and illegally) narrow. The point at which cyclists rejoin the Eton Avenue cycleway is bumpy and has a high collision risk both between cyclists/pedestrians and other cyclists.
 - **Recommendation 5:** the cycle lane should be widened to at least 1.5m, ideally 2m or above. Cyclists should ideally join onto the pavement area earlier or at least at a point that has a lower collision risk (perhaps from the north of the traders' area).
- The Hilgrove/Finchley/Adelaide Road is very difficult for cyclists to navigate. There are no ASLs and turning lanes are positioned in a difficult manner for

cyclists to use. There are no cycle lanes, even advisory, at all and optimal movements for cyclists are difficult to identify.

- **Recommendation 6:** where a feeder lane can be adequately installed (i.e. not in some awkward configuration between lanes) ASLs should be installed. Other recommendations would require the entire junction to be reconfigured (such as some segregated cycling provision on southbound Finchley Road).
- The modal bypass at St John's Wood Park is useful for cyclists. It is poorly promoted and has not been repaved in some time.
 - **Recommendation 7:** the St John's Wood Park modal bypass should be repaved. It may benefit from indicative road markings for cyclists. The pedestrian refuge island could be shrunk to provide a dedicated cycle facility towards this bypass.
- The Avenue/Finchley Road/Adelaide Road junction suffers from mostly the same issues as that with Hilgrove Road.
 - **Recommendation 8:** refer to recommendation 6.

Long-term

- With the incoming Fitzjohn's Avenue cycle track, there is currently no link for cyclists via Swiss Cottage, arguably the most important route for this ambitious connection. **It is paramount that there is at least some link to/from the Eton Avenue LCN Link.** Otherwise, the Fitzjohn's Avenue scheme may be compromised before it has even begun.
 - This connection is difficult without reconfiguration of the gyratory. Some possible solutions include:
 - **Bidirectional northbound from Eton Avenue and then splitting:** this would involve a bidirectional cycleway on the east side of College Crescent before one side splits to a cycle track on either side. This is impractical in the current configuration, particularly due to space constraints, and may cause conflicts with other road users.
 - **Toucan/parallel crossing to west of College Crescent:** this would involve extending the triangular land where Finchley Road and College Crescent meet southwards. Then, a crossing to the west side of College Crescent can be made by cyclists.
- Without some sort of solution, this scheme will likely be redundant to the Haverstock Hill cycleway that reaches the same destination – and crucially is part of a coherent cycle network.