

**Tiffany F. Lam**

## **Hackney: a cycling borough for whom?**

**Article (Accepted version)  
(Refereed)**

**Original citation:**

Lam, Tiffany F. (2017) *Hackney: a cycling borough for whom?* Applied Mobilities . ISSN 2380-0127

DOI: [10.1080/23800127.2017.1305151](https://doi.org/10.1080/23800127.2017.1305151)

© 2017 Taylor & Francis

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/73593/>

Available in LSE Research Online: April 2017

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's final accepted version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

## **Hackney: A cycling borough for whom?**

Author: Tiffany F. Lam

*Cities Programme, London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom*

*Accepted manuscript: Applied Mobilities*

Email: [T.F.Lam@alumni.lse.ac.uk](mailto:T.F.Lam@alumni.lse.ac.uk) or [Tiffany.f.lam@gmail.com](mailto:Tiffany.f.lam@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*London's internationally acclaimed "cycling revolution" was characterised by an unprecedented investment in cycling infrastructure, particularly cycle lanes manifesting as Cycle Superhighways or Quietways. Despite the hegemony of cycle lanes in London's overarching cycling paradigm, the London Borough of Hackney has historically achieved the city's highest rates of cycling and a long-standing reputation as a cycling borough despite cycle lanes. Instead, Hackney has always opted for spatial interventions (such as filtered permeability, a borough-wide 20mph speed restriction, and speed humps). This paper challenges Hackney's reputation as a cycling borough and the alleged success of its spatial interventions. I argue that Hackney's privileging of spatial fixes treats spatial interventions as apolitical and value-neutral, which ignores inequities entrenched in cycling. I also argue that Hackney has taken for granted its high rates of cycling, therefore effectively adopting a cycle-blind (akin to race-blind) and cycle mainstreaming (akin to gender mainstreaming) approach to cycling policy and interventions. Consequently, Hackney's spatial interventions for cycling raise the profile of already-visible privileged cyclists (white, middle-class men—the middle-aged men in lycra, or the MAMILs, and the hipsters) for whom cycling is a lifestyle choice while further erasing "invisible cyclists" for whom cycling is an economic necessity. In order to be a relevant and sustainable mode of transportation for Hackney residents, equity and social justice must foreground the borough's approach to cycling.*

KEY WORDS: Cycling; Cycling revolution; Invisible cyclists; Spatial interventions; London; Hackney

## INTRODUCTION | LONDON'S CYCLING REVOLUTION

Former London Mayor Boris Johnson's self-proclaimed "cycling revolution" (GLA 2013) was characterised by unprecedented investment in cycling infrastructure and promises of "a proper network of cycle routes throughout the city, a substantial increase in cycling" (GLA 2013, 4). Indeed, infrastructure foregrounds London's cycling policy discourse, particularly infrastructures of mobility that manifest as either Cycle Superhighways or Quietways. Johnson envisioned "two clear kinds of branded route: high capacity Superhighways, mostly on main roads, for fast commuters, and slightly slower but still direct Quietways on pleasant, low-traffic side streets for those wanting a more relaxed journey" (2013, 10). Upon the culmination of Johnson's mayoral term in May 2016, there were 38 miles of protected cycle lanes in London (Blunden, 2016) and cycling remains politically salient.

Given the dominance of infrastructure in London's overarching cycling paradigm, the London borough of Hackney is an anomaly because it has always had high cycling rates and a reputation for being a cycling borough, which have occurred and persisted in of the absence of cycling-specific infrastructure. Hackney has historically been and remains staunchly against cycling-specific infrastructure, like segregated cycle lanes, instead relying on road interventions more broadly, such as filtered permeability and a borough-wide 20mph speed limit. Certainly, cycle lanes are a type of spatial and road intervention, but Hackney's high cycling rates seem peculiar given the lack of spatial interventions specifically designed to encourage and enable cycling. Rather, its spatial interventions seem geared towards road users in general, which fails to challenge the dominant infrastructural settlement that characterises the road as a functional space of movement for motorised traffic. Cycling accounts for 15.4% of all commuter journeys in Hackney, which is the highest in London, and between 2001 and 2011 the borough's population cycling to work increased by 125%, which established a national record (Hackney Council 2015c, Section 4.5).

Despite Hackney's reputation as a cycling borough, there is a gender gap in cycling, as just 37% of Hackney's cyclists are women (Stops 2014). This is smaller than London's overall gender gap in which men continue to make 74% of cycling trips despite the significant rise of cycling in London between 2001 and 2011 (Aldred 2015a, 46). If Hackney boasts a reputation of being a cycling borough, why is there a gender gap in cycling? For whom is Hackney a cycling borough?



This paper challenges Hackney’s reputation as a cycling borough, arguing that Hackney’s privileging of spatial fixes (such as a speed hump or filtering a road to enable cycle traffic) treats spatial interventions as apolitical and value-neutral. This consequently erases sociocultural barriers, marginalises equity and social justice issues, and de-politicises cycling. In order to make cycling an equitable and relevant mode of transportation, equity and social justice must be at the heart of Hackney’s cycling policies and interventions.

## METHODOLOGY

To challenge Hackney’s reputation as a cycling borough and the “success” of its spatial interventions for cycling, I interrogate the ideologies and normative assumptions that underpin its cycling projects.

My research questions were:

- (i) **PROCESS:** For whom and for what are cycling policies and spatial interventions in Hackney designed? To what extent do Hackney policymakers consider social categories of identity, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability/disability, when conceptualising cycling projects?
- (ii) **OUTCOMES:** How do cycling policies and spatial interventions produce disparate raced, classed, gendered, etc. outcomes on the ground and what are their implications?
- (iii) **FUTURE OUTLOOK:** How could Hackney’s cycling projects enhance equity and social justice?

My data collection involved:

- (i) An analysis of cycling policy documents from the Greater London Authority (GLA), Transport for London (TfL), and Hackney Council;
- (ii) Semi-structured in-person and Skype interviews with relevant stakeholders, some of which I transcribed;
- (iii) Ethnography at the Hackney Cycling Conference in June 2016 where I observed and participated in conversations with cycling policymakers and advocates on the current cycling landscape in Hackney and Hackney’s vision and future plans for cycling.

The relevant stakeholders I interviewed included decision-makers at Hackney Council, a Hackney Cycling Campaign (HCC) member, and employees at cycle shops in Hackney. I interviewed Hackney Councillor Feryal Demirci, colloquially referred to as Hackney’s “Cycling Boss,” and Hackney Cycle Training Director

Pat Gannon for their expertise on Hackney's cycling projects. My interviews with an HCC member enabled me to understand the extent to which equity and social justice issues are understood and incorporated in mainstream cycling advocacy in Hackney. In addition to interviewing employees at second-hand cycle shops in Hackney, I interviewed the London Bike Kitchen, a community cycle workshop that has a Women and Gender (WAG) Variant Night targeting women, LGBTQ, and gender variant cyclists. In addition, I spoke to Andy Clarke, a speaker at the 2015 Hackney Cycling Conference and the former Director of the League of American Bicyclists, who provided a valuable cross-cultural comparison between US/UK cycling advocacy.

## **WHY IS HACKNEY A VANGUARD FOR CYCLING?**

Cycling has always been an economic and practical necessity for many Hackney residents due to the borough's historically poor public transportation connectivity, significant economic deprivation, and low levels of car ownership. Hackney has only two Underground stations: Manor House at the extreme north and Old Street at the extreme southwest (Aldred 2012, 13). While the relatively recent addition of seven Overground stations and an expanded bus network has helped, the uneven distribution of public transportation across the borough compounds spatial and social isolation (Sharpin et al. 2013, 121). Hackney's vibrant artist community, abundant green space, and canal network also contribute to the pervasiveness of cycling (Aldred 2012, 13). The towpaths along Hackney's canals provide a direct, scenic cycle route to central London free of motorised traffic. Many residential boaters in Hackney's canals rely on cycling for greater flexibility in where they moor their boats and more efficiency in getting around the city.

### *Hackney's focus on spatial interventions*

Both Hackney Council and the borough's influential cycling advocacy group, the HCC, have historically opposed cycle lanes and there still are no cycle lanes in the borough (Wood, email, 6 July 2016). The opposition partly stems from beliefs that segregated cycle lanes undermine cyclists' right to be on the road, weaken their abilities to cope with motor traffic, and are inappropriate in Hackney due to spatial and financial constraints (Aldred 2012, 31; Stone 2014a). Hackney has taken a vehicular approach to cycling by prioritising filtered permeability, implementing a borough-wide 20mph speed limit, and reducing car parking spots (Hackney Council 2015c; Section 4.10), measures that Johnson has commended (Greater London Authority 2013, 15). Hackney's Cycling Plan boasts of how proactive,

committed, and innovative the Council has been in promoting cycling and that Hackney's measures are regarded as best practice in London (2015, Section 4.9). Although some of Hackney's spatial interventions have benefitted cyclists, much of the rhetoric has been self-congratulatory and misleading since the borough has achieved high rates of cycling without taking any serious measures to promote cycling (Wood, email, 6 July 2016).

Hackney's focus on road interventions may appear as a departure from London's overarching cycling framework that prioritises cycling infrastructure (the Superhighways and Quietways), but both subscribe to and reinforce the hegemony of a spatial fix that treats spatial, material, technical interventions as apolitical and value-neutral. The focus on "spatial design implies that urban-cyclists-to-come can be conjured without a direct confrontation with extant land use patterns and transport networks" (Stehlin 2014, 29), let alone a direct confrontation with hegemonic power structures. Cycling does not occur in a vacuum and structural inequalities in society, such as sexism, racism, and classism, will inevitably be reproduced in cycling. The seemingly populist intentions in Hackney's cycling interventions do not generate equitable outcomes since they ignore the historical legacies of institutional inequality, spatial isolation, and political disenfranchisement that spatial fixes alone cannot eradicate.

## **CYCLE BLINDNESS AND CYCLE MAINSTREAMING**

Hackney Council seems to have taken for granted the borough's high rates of cycling. This is reflected in self-promotional rhetoric in cycling policy documents and prideful statements by Councillor Demirci and Cycle Training Director Pat Gannon on how Hackney's prioritisation of and investment in cycling predates London's "cycling revolution." This lends itself to a "cycle blind" and "cycle mainstreaming" approach to cycling policy, which further entrenches the borough's apolitical approach to cycling and generates inertia that stagnates equitable and inclusive growth in cycling.

### *"Cycle blindness"*

"Cycle blindness" is akin to race blindness, the deliberate disregard of a person's race, culture, or ethnicity. Race blindness seems positive because it suggests that all people should be treated equally regardless of race. However, it is depoliticising because it ignores historical legacies of racism, invalidates people's differential experiences based on race and racism, and detracts from the necessity to confront and dismantle systemic racist oppression. Certainly, Hackney Council's cycling interventions

overlook structural racism as a barrier to cycling, but its cycle blindness ignores the inherent vulnerability of cyclists on roads designed for motorised traffic. It disregards borough's road user hierarchy, which identifies pedestrians and cyclists as the most vulnerable road users, and makes interventions "for all," irrespective of fundamental differences in speed, acceleration and braking capacities, vulnerability, and ability to inflict damage.

Hackney Council's cycle blindness echoes a populist narrative that universalises cycling interventions as indisputable public goods and obscures the neoliberal urbanism within which cycling interventions occur. Statements like, "it was about how do we make our borough a more attractive place for all, so it was about making roads and parks more attractive, more easy to use for everyone" (Cllr. Demirci, interview, 7 June 2016) and "it wasn't just about a specific cycling scheme. It was about how do we make our borough nicer and pleasant for everyone?" (Cllr. Demirci, interview, 7 June 2016), beg the question: *For whom?* They also falsely homogenise the population by assuming that everyone has the same priorities, necessities, and definitions of what more attractive, easy to use, nicer, and more pleasant mean.

More insidiously, these claims preclude structural inequalities and the broader urban development processes within which cycling projects are situated. Such processes can reproduce urban transportation injustices, especially when formulated to attract a more affluent, upwardly mobile demographic (Hoffman and Lugo 2014). Cycling projects can result in a capitalisation of benefits in land prices, thereby displacing existing populations and attracting new people and businesses presumed to add more cultural capital. This further frames residents who have been cycling out of economic necessity but rendered invisible by cycling policymakers and advocates as undesirable, unproductive, and irrelevant (Hoffman and Lugo 2014, 58).

The premium on place attractiveness "for all" and "for everyone" suggests that interventions are tailored towards those who have the privilege, social mobility, and capital to choose where to live based on neighbourhood aesthetics. While an elite minority may be able to relocate based on place attractiveness, it may not be a factor for others for whom affordability, public transit connectivity, and proximity to jobs, schools, and services constrain their choices. The emphasis in Hackney's Cycling Plan (2015) on forthcoming economic benefits of spatial interventions and the Council's insistence on future developments being car-free and equipped with safe cycle storage facilities (Cllr. Demirci, interview, 7

June 2016) reify how cycling projects are formulated to appeal to and attract a specific group of more desirable new users.

### *“Cycle mainstreaming”*

Meanwhile, Hackney’s “cycle mainstreaming” parallels gender mainstreaming, “the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes—design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation—with a view to promoting equality between women and men” (European Commission 2011). This is exemplified by comments like, “cycling is very integrated into everything that we do” (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016), “cycling is a major plank of the mayor’s strategy, so there are people who build it into every level” (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016), and “cycling is part of every decision we take” (Cllr. Demirci, interview, 7 June 2016). Ingraining gender issues into all dimensions of political and public life sounds beneficial but risks the subordination or co-optation of feminist goals by potentially conflicting, overarching institutional goals.

The same critiques of gender mainstreaming apply to Hackney’s cycle mainstreaming. Political will and effective infrastructure, especially education and accountability mechanisms, are requisites for success; too often these are absent, thereby creating a weak translation from rhetoric to action (Rubery 2005, 6). Another critique of gender mainstreaming is that it values quantity over quality, such as an overall increase in women’s employment instead of quality full-time employment with generous benefits (Rubery 2005, 13). Similarly, establishing cycling targets, like 15% of Hackney residents’ weekly journeys are by cycle (Hackney Council 2015c, Section 6.6), encourages a focus on overall growth while ignoring re-distributional measures necessary for equitable growth. It reduces cyclists to numbers, which keeps them “embedded in statistical enumeration and spatial administration” (Stehlin 2013, 27) and obscures how the built environment is shaped by capital (Lugo 2012, 52), among other systemic, structural forces.

The establishment of cycling targets reflects a technocratic, utilitarian approach to urban mobility and transport that is associated with the dominant “predict and provide” paradigm in UK and US transport planning (Doughty and Murray 2016, 308). This paradigm privileges that which is quantifiable, resulting in often-narrow, technical, single-technology fixes that are readily packaged and sold to policymakers (Miciukiewicz and Vigar 2012, 1946). Hackney’s focus on establishing and meeting cycling targets depoliticises the domain of urban mobility and transport by immediately jumping into problem-solving mode without fully understanding the problem. If growth in cycling is prioritised to meet targets then

growth in cycling is treated as inherently positive, which leaves little room for examining gaps in growth and prioritising inclusive growth in cycling.

Disparities in cycling “cannot be properly addressed if advantage and disadvantage are seen merely in terms of holdings of primary goods, rather than the actual freedoms...that women and men respectively enjoy” (Sen 1990, 116). While men and women may have the same resources—a cycle, access to a cycle lane, ability to cycle, and secure cycle parking—there are “variations [race, class, gender, age, etc.] in our ability to convert resources into actual freedoms” (Sen 1990, 121). In Hackney, and in London more broadly, middle-class white men have been accounting for majority of the growth in cycling. Unless quantitative data is contextualised within qualitative analysis and efforts are made to re-distribute growth, cycling in Hackney and in London may continue to grow but not diversify. Cycling cannot remain the purview of middle-class white men given London’s rapidly diversifying population and claims to be an open city for immigrants and refugees.

Hackney’s cycle blindness and mainstreaming function in conjunction to blind policymakers “to rampant reductive understandings of what facilitates a vibrant urban cycling culture, symptomatic of unresolved problems in how cycling is framed within bicycle advocacy itself: as an individual, rational choice of responsible consumption” (Stehlin 2013, 36). Hackney Council credits the HCC as pivotal to the borough’s cycling achievements over the past two decades, especially by identifying and reporting problematic junctions and road conditions (Cllr. Demirci, interview, 7 June 2016). The HCC is predominantly comprised of white, middle-class men (Cllr. Demirci, interview, 7 June 2016) for whom their “race (white), class (middle to upper), and gender (male) have exempted them from structural marginalisation” (Lugo 2012, 52). Until a year ago, the HCC has been aligned with the borough’s opposition to cycling lanes (Wood, email, 6 July 2016). Although concurrence between local authorities and cycling advocates appears ideal, the HCC’s political clout and lack of diversity “accounts for the reproduction of powerful dominant interests in the transport system but also in the spatial structure and land uses of the city, creating a framework of inequality in which decisions about travel are made” (Levy 2013, 51).

#### *Myopic fetishisation of spatial interventions*

Hackney’s focus on spatial solutions reduces the complexities of social inequalities, ignores the political nature of urban mobility, and dismisses “soft” social infrastructure integral to making cycling more

equitable. While policymakers claim that “hard” and “soft” infrastructure must work in tandem (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016), the translation to practice is absent. Councillor Demirci states that the Council is aware of and addressing cultural barriers to cycling through speed restrictions, road closures, putting in parking controls, and other traffic calming measures (interview, 7 June 2016). The Council has mapped the population of the borough that doesn’t cycle, “always pinpointing certain areas, spaces, blocs where there are lower levels of cycling” and targets those areas with interventions like increasing cycle storage in estates (Cllr. Demirci, interview, 7 June 2016). However, applying spatial interventions “to eliminate barriers to bicycling limits the politics of mobility to being about disciplined *uses* of streets when the discipline experienced by *users* should also be taken into account” (Lugo 2012, 52). Instead of challenging the “structure and coherency of the current [infrastructural] settlement” (Latham and Wood 2015, 316), the myopic fetishisation of spatial interventions fortifies it.

## IMPLICIT ANDROCENTRIC BIAS

### *The MAMILs and the hipsters*

Though inadvertent, the HCC’s implicit white, middle-class male bias inevitably produces unequal raced, classed, and gendered cycling outcomes. The absence of intentionality to discriminate does not preclude discriminatory impact. When advocates demand particular cycling policies and infrastructure, they unconsciously consider themselves and their experiences as representative of all (Oudshoorn, Rommes and Stienstra 2004, 41). Like many mainstream cycling advocacy groups, the HCC fail to include the voices of invisible cyclists—immigrants, Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAMEs), and working class people (Lugo 2013, 205). Invisible cyclists may often be unaware of or unable to attend HCC meetings, or they may not even identify as cyclists, especially in Hackney where cycling is largely associated with affluence (Aldred 2012, 26).

As such, Hackney policymakers implicitly conceptualise cyclists as a monolithic group of white, middle-class men who neither need nor desire infrastructure. Established practice becomes increasingly entrenched and oriented around these “typical” users, thereby reproducing exclusion (Lavelle, email, 6 June 2016). These “typical” users, cycling’s “traditional demographic” (Greater London Authority 2016, 9) include the stereotypical athletic, white, “middle-aged man in lycra,” or *MAMIL*, which Johnson praises as “the admirable Lycra-wearers” (Greater London Authority 2013, 5), which perpetuates the notion that cycling is the “preserve of a pretty hard-core bunch of people willing to go out of their way

to cycle, rather than a very natural and easy everyday thing for everybody to be able to do” (Clarke, interview, 24 June 2016).

In addition to the *MAMIL* stereotype, Johnson alludes to the “enviable east Londoners on their fixed-gear bikes” (2013, 5), citing how “[i]n the cooler parts of east London, a bike is the fifth limb for everyone under 30” (2013, 4). The hipster stereotype is also alienating because it portrays cycling as youthful and trendy. *MAMILs* and hipsters are both coded as white, middle-class, and male, which reflects how “cycling in London [has] become attached to a particular White, bourgeois (and to some extent, male) sensibility, such that it is then harder to work to ‘become a cyclist’ if one’s identity is differently constituted” (Steinbach et al. 2011, 1127). Despite acknowledging that neither *MAMILs* nor hipsters are segments that policymakers should concentrate on (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016; Cannon, interview, 15 July 2016), cycling advocacy, policies, and interventions in Hackney continue to primarily serve those demographics.

Instead of reinforcing such narrow, stereotypical representations of cyclists, Hackney policymakers must challenge them. The “*invisibility* of some social bodies among London’s cyclists is perhaps the most obvious factor contributing to cycling’s ineligibility as a candidate mode of transport for many in London’s minority ethnic communities” (Steinbach et al. 2011, 1126). Exclusionary representations of cycling, like the *MAMILs* and hipsters, can compound sociocultural barriers—both cultural stigmas against cycling and sexist ideas that cycling is “unfeminine”—for female BAMEs, which spatial interventions alone cannot resolve. The dual underrepresentation of black women cycling in the media and on London streets is a barrier to cycling for black women, and the widespread perception of cycling as child’s play within certain Asian communities makes cycling unpalatable to Asian women in London (Steinbach et al. 2011, 1126). This underscores the relevance of diversifying representations of cycling and cyclists in order to catalyse a greater and more inclusive modal shift to cycling.

#### *Androcentric bias in technological interventions*

Hackney’s additional “cycle-friendly” measures—the installation of three public cycle pumps and the UK’s first-ever digital display cycle counter on Goldsmith Row—reinforce the dominant paradigm of cycling policy and infrastructure where the default cyclist is white, middle-class, and male. The pump and cycle counter locations were determined by existing high cycling traffic flows (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016) and consequently increase the visibility of already highly visible cyclists, instead of identifying



and serving invisible cyclists and meeting latent demand. The cycle pumps were installed at London Fields Cycles, Lock 7 Cycle Café, and Clissold Leisure Centre. As Figure 1 shows, the cycle pumps and counter were installed in areas of relatively lower deprivation in the borough. London Fields Cycles is near and Lock 7 Cycle Café is on Broadway Market, which was “in decline” fifteen years ago but has since been gentrified to become a “better neighbourhood for everyone...thanks in part to car restrictions and a busy cycle route” (Greater London Authority 2013, 30). Clissold Leisure Centre is in Clissold Ward, Hackney’s least deprived ward with proportionately more white British people and more people in full-time employment than the Hackney average (Hackney Council 2015d).

Hackney is the only borough to have a cycling app, launched in 2014, but it is clearly “designed for one particular segment, and not a segment we [policymakers] absolutely need to concentrate on because that segment has been, already is, cycling, so it might be a bit of a stereotype, but the Shoreditch hipster doesn’t need any more encouragement” (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016). The app gathers data about preferred cycle routes and road defects to inform the Council’s future spatial interventions. It creates a digital divide and skews data collection since the users “are obviously recognised and a sector of a cycling populace, like the Strava generation” (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016). In spite of this, data from the app accentuates that even among highly visible cyclists, women would benefit from segregated cycle lanes. In Hackney, most female cyclists are between the ages of 25 and 44 and are more likely to cycle on quieter routes, whereas men tend to cycle on main roads and continue cycling later on in life, as 30 percent of male cyclists are between the ages of 45 and 64 (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016). Unless cycling interventions are redistributive, cycling will become increasingly inequitable.

#### *Androcentric bias in cycle parking provisioning*

Considering that more women are likely to cycle on quieter routes, the concentration of cycle parking along the A10, a busy main road in Hackney, reflects an androcentric bias by disproportionately supporting men’s cycling journeys. The A10 is heavily trafficked by cyclists and motorists since it provides an efficient and direct north/south-bound route that connects Hackney to the City of London. As illustrated in Figure 2 (red line identifying the A10 is my annotation), Hackney Council fails to designate the A10 as a cycle route. It instead demarcates indirect side streets (the blue, yellow, green, and brown lines), despite repeatedly recognising that cyclists will continue using the A10 (Hackney Council, 2015c). This implicitly privileges motorised traffic by reserving direct routes like the A10 for motorised traffic while funneling cyclists to less efficient routes. However, Figure 3 shows that cycle

parking in the borough is clustered along the A10, which entices cyclists to access the A10 to lock their cycles.

The dissonance between the dense concentration of cycle parking along the A10 and the routes the Council maps exposes fallacies in the Council's thought process and execution of cycling interventions. "[A] government must adopt a vision and promote it...it must not only envision but enact the city" (Peñalosa 2007, 307). Cycle routes and parking must be integrated in order for either type of infrastructure to be feasible. The incongruity in the Council's cycling provisioning undermines its alleged commitment to cycling. These blind spots may largely result from the Council's cycle blindness and mainstreaming that stunts its ability to challenge the embedded, underlying assumption that the default cyclist in Hackney is a middle-class white male who will cycle regardless.

## **POOR UNDERSTANDING OF EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### *Hackney's opposition to Cycle Superhighway 1 on the A10*

The raced, classed, and gendered outcomes of Hackney Council's cycle blindness and mainstreaming are epitomised in its blockage of Cycle Superhighway 1 (CS1) along the A10. Hackney Council objected to TfL's proposal to construct CS1, a segregated cycle lane, on the A10, primarily because it could entail narrowing footpaths or removing bus lanes (Stone 2014b). The Council opted instead for CS1 to follow parallel quieter residential routes (Hackney Council 2015c, Section 7.41), even though Figure 2 shows the absence of such alternatives. Again, this implicitly privileges motorised traffic, as "[a] protected bicycle lane along every street is not a cute architectural fixture, but a basic democratic right—unless one believes that only those with access to a car have the right to [efficient and] safe mobility" (Peñalosa 2007, 313). CS1 is indirect and is "a complete failure, at a cost of £17m" (Wood, email, 6 July 2016). Despite Hackney Council's "desire to see fundamental improvements for cycling on the A10 itself" (Hackney Council 2015c, Section 7.41), there has been insubstantial action (Wood, email, 6 July 2016).

Moreover, Hackney Council's blockage of CS1 along the A10 ignores the evidence that women prefer segregated cycle lanes, disadvantages women and invisible cyclists who have greater time poverty, and inadequately addresses safety concerns. The plethora of research on cycling infrastructure best practices demonstrates that women prefer protected cycle lanes segregated from motorised traffic

because it heightens their perceptions of safety (Garrard, Rose, and Lo 2008; Pucher, Dill, and Handy 2010). Arguably, the failure to provide such infrastructure is discriminatory against women cyclists.

As Figure 2 shows, the quieter routes are indirect, which can be confusing for novice and less confident cyclists and compound barriers for disabled cyclists. Given the gendered division of household labour and the fact that women make more trips for child and/or elderly care, shopping, personal business, and education (TfL 2015, 88), women experience greater time poverty. Invisible cyclists similarly experience greater time poverty as they may work multiple part-time jobs and at odd hours. As such, cycling on indirect, more time-consuming routes may be more burdensome for women and invisible cyclists.

Furthermore, though perceptions of danger from motorised traffic may be diminished on quieter routes, poor street lighting may aggravate women's perceptions of danger from crime or harassment. Quieter routes may also seem more dangerous due to the prevalence of rat running—motorists speeding on quiet residential roads despite speed restrictions—especially in Hackney (Cllr. Demirci, interview, 7 June 2016; Laker, 2016).

Hackney opposed CS1 on the A10 and segregated cycle lanes overall on the bases that:

- (i) Buses are the only feasible way of moving large quantities of people around the city,
  - (ii) Cycle lanes would only benefit middle-class white men at the expense of women, working class people, and BAMEs who would be delayed on buses,
  - (iii) All cyclists should receive cycle training and everyone should try to respectfully share the roads
- (Wood, email, 6 July 2016).

The first rationale perpetuates the exclusion of cycling from transportation justice by failing to recognise cycling as a legitimate mode of transportation that requires provisioning, not an individual choice (Hoffman and Lugo 2014, 48). Is cycling marginalised because it is a mode of transport for an elite minority that cycles regardless of infrastructure provisioning and adequate enforcement, or because working class people and BAMEs who have been cycling out of necessity have been invisible and ignored in mainstream cycling advocacy and policy?

The second argument is premised on the faulty assumption that public transportation is single modal when a robust public transportation system should be multi-modal for heterogeneous users. Hackney's

historically poor public transport connectivity underscores the significance of cycling *and* buses in enabling residents' urban mobility. Framing cycle lanes, pedestrian footpaths, and reliable bus service as mutually exclusive "manufactures scarcity in what should be a public resource: urban streets" (Hoffman and Lugo 2014, 45). The commuting patterns to work for Hackney residents cycling and taking the bus are similar (Hackney Council 2015a, 22), which suggests that safe, quality cycling infrastructure could induce a greater modal shift to cycling, especially given the evidence that safety concerns are the main deterrent to cycling (TfL 2015). Equitable access to quality and safe infrastructure supports those who already cycle and reduces barriers for those who don't cycle but are interested. A protected, segregated cycle lane visually and spatially conveys "that a citizen on a US\$30 bicycle is as important as one in a US\$30,000 car" (Peñalosa 2007, 313).

On the surface, the second argument appears democratising and sensitive to race, class, and gender issues. Hackney Council recognises that white, middle-class men are overrepresented in cycling. However, it merely bolsters that status quo by accepting it as a given. This further marginalises invisible cyclists and re-inscribes cycle lanes as elite, white, middle-class, male spaces (Steinbach et al. 2011, 1127). It ignores evidence that without separation from motor vehicles on dangerous main roads like the A10, women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities will continue to be excluded from cycling (Hackney People on Bikes 2014). As such, cycling in Hackney remains "the preserve of a pretty hard-core bunch of people willing to go out of their way to cycle, rather than a natural and easy everyday thing for everybody to be able to do" (Clarke, interview, 24 June 2016).

Hackney Council's third rationale for opposing CS1 on the A10 reflects its overreliance on Cycle Training as a "principal 'soft' measure" (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016), which reinforces the notion that cycling is an individual choice fraught with liability. Alleging that cycling is "one of the greatest things people can do to keep themselves safe on the road, it's not relying necessarily on infrastructure" (Gannon, interview, 1 June 2016) justifies the Council's sustained failure to provide safe, quality infrastructure. It lends itself to victim-blaming narratives that place the onus on cyclists to ensure their safety. Even with cycle training, novice and vulnerable cyclists may continue avoiding main routes like the A10 or stop cycling altogether (Hackney Council 2015c, Section 7.52). Cycle training cannot replace quality, safe infrastructure; both must be mutually reinforcing.

### *A missed opportunity to mitigate gender and race disparities in cycling*

The Council's blockage of CS1 on the A10 is more problematic considering that the A10 is the most dangerous road in Hackney for cyclists (see Figure 4). The most serious and fatal cyclist collisions in Hackney in the past seven years have occurred on the A10 (Hackney Cyclist 2014). Hackney's opposition to CS1 on the A10 is a missed opportunity to mitigate gender disparities in cycling. The Near Miss Project (Aldred 2015b), the first study to calculate the rate of near misses—road incidents that may not result in injuries but induce fear and stress—for cyclists in the UK, found that cycling speed is the main factor affecting near miss rates, which are consistent across London. Women tend to cycle more slowly than men do, which increases their risks of close passes, near misses, traffic injuries, and fatalities (Aldred 2015b). The Near Miss findings further problematise the branding of Superhighways: Not only does the narrative of speedy cycling alienate women, it also penalises them, sometimes costing them their lives.

Hackney's blockage of CS1 on the A10 is also a missed opportunity to ameliorate the racial gap in road safety. TfL reports that black adults in London are 1.36 times more likely to be injured on the roads than white adults and 1.32 times more likely to be injured than Asian adults (2015, 52). Although this data is not disaggregated by transport mode or road user, one could conjecture that cycling injuries and fatalities along the A10 have a disproportionate adverse impact on black Londoners, given the increased uptake of cycling among BAMEs, the fact that BAMEs are London's fastest growing demographic, and Hackney's high levels of ethnic diversity.

## **CONCLUSION | POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

To prioritise equity and social justice, Hackney Council must take cyclists' safety seriously by enforcing the borough-wide 20mph speed limit and penalising rat running. The HCC has repeatedly flagged this with the Council to no avail (Wood, email, 6 July 2016). Hackney Council's enforcement failures shatter the borough's cycle-friendly façade since in practice it privileges motorised traffic, particularly buses (Stone 2014b). The lack of enforcement also nullifies the effectiveness of road interventions to improve cycling. Given the gendered differences in perceptions and experiences of safety and the latent demand for cycling among women and BAMEs, the failure to enforce the speed limit and penalise rat running produces discriminatory impact and preserves cycling as the domain of middle-class white males. Given that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups (BAMEs) comprise 40% of London's population, are London's fastest growing demographic, and 41 percent are under the age of 24 (TfL 2015, 22), it is

crucial to ensure that their transport needs will be met. Cycling may be a greater economic necessity for BAMEs because they are likelier to be students, not in full-time employment, and disproportionately burdened by rising public transportation costs.

Considering Hackney's ethnic diversity and the substantial evidence that informal peer networks are critical in low-cycling contexts, especially among underrepresented groups (Aldred 2012, 33; Lugo 2012), targeted education and encouragement to women and BAMEs could promote equitable growth in cycling. The higher levels of pre-contemplation of cycling among London women and the gender gap in knowledge of how to cycle (TfL 2015, 84) suggest that cycle training, which Hackney Council prides itself on, could be more targeted to women. To optimise effectiveness, cycle training should be better advertised and networked with grassroots encouragement schemes. Educators should also reflect the diversity of the borough.

Community-driven encouragement initiatives could be instrumental for women after completing cycle training to help them sustain cycling. Councillor Demirci sees the value of such mentoring and motivational schemes, reflecting on how when she started cycling her Kurdish relatives frequently disapproved of how "unfeminine" and low-status cycling is (interview, 7 June 2016). She commends a women's cycling initiative at a Muslim women's community centre, but the Council hasn't reached out to them (interview, 7 June 2016). Policymakers must identify, support, and strengthen social infrastructure for cycling.

Cycling policies and projects in Hackney primarily serve an elite minority of middle-class white men who cycle out of choice while further marginalising invisible cyclists and ignoring latent demand among underrepresented groups, like women, BAMEs, the elderly, youth, and people with disabilities. The implicit androcentric bias in Hackney's cycling interventions and the poor institutional knowledge on equity and social justice issues within Hackney Council perpetuates inequalities in cycling. In order to make cycling relevant for London's rapidly increasing and diversifying population, Hackney Council must "diversify and develop a cultural competency that they do not have at the moment" (Agyeman, quoted in Cohen, 2016).

To prioritise equity and social justice, Hackney Council could begin by:

- (i) Heeding evidence that quality cycling lanes are necessary (but not sufficient) for those interested in cycling but concerned about safety,
- (ii) Recognising and validating the experiences and needs of invisible cyclists who have been cycling out of necessity long before London's "Cycling Revolution" in order to ensure that cycling truly is an accessible, convenient, and safe mode of transportation for Hackney's diverse communities,
- (iii) Establishing a Diversity and Inclusion Office to institutionally embed and demonstrate a symbolic commitment to equity and social justice. This would dedicate staff and organisational capacity to explicitly address cycling inequalities. Such an office could take proactive measures to prevent implicit bias in cycling projects, training staff on the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression, and engage in sustained targeted community outreach (education and encouragement) to strengthen social infrastructure for cycling.

After all, in order to truly live up to its reputation as a cycling borough, Hackney's "cycle-friendliness" must be equitable and inclusive.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aldred, R. (2012). *Cycling Cultures: Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations*. Retrieved from: <http://cyclingcultures.org.uk/Final-report-cycling-cultures.pdf> (Accessed: 1 August 2016).

Aldred, R. (2015a). *Culture, Equity and Cycle Infrastructure*. Retrieved from: <http://rachelaldred.org/writing/culture-equity-and-cycle-infrastructure/> (Accessed: 3 June 2016).

Aldred, R. (2015b). *Cycling Near Misses: Findings from Year One of the Near Miss Project*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nearmiss.bike/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Nearmissreport-final-web-2.pdf> (Accessed: 6 June 2016).

Aldred, R., Woodcock, J. & Goodman, A. (2016). Does More Cycling Mean More Diversity in Cycling? *Transport Reviews*, 36(1), 28–44. doi: 10.1080/01441647.2015.1014451.

Blunden, M. 2016, March 31. Campaigners Urge Mayoral Candidates to Triple London's Cycle Routes. *The Evening Standard*, <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/campaigners-urge-mayoral-candidates-to-triple-londons-cycle-routes-a3214831.html> (Accessed: 2 June, 2016).

Cohen, J. (2016, 25 April). Building a Bikeable City for All. *Next City*. Retrieved from: <https://nextcity.org/features/view/cities-build-bike-lanes-bike-share-bike-equity> (Accessed: 12 July 2016).

Doughty, K. and Murray, L. (2016). Discourses of Mobility: Institutions, Everyday Lives and Embodiment. *Mobilities*, 11(2), 1–20. doi: 10.1080/17450101.2014.941257.

European Commission. (2011). *Tools for Gender Equality*. Retrieved from: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/index_en.htm) (Accessed: 21 June 2016).

Garrard, J., Rose, G. & Lo, S.K. (2008). Promoting Transportation Cycling for Women: The Role of Bicycle Infrastructure. *Preventive Medicine*, 46(1), 55–59. doi: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2007.07.010.

Greater London Authority. (2013). *The Mayor's Vision for Cycling in London*. Retrieved from: [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cycling\\_vision\\_gla\\_template\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cycling_vision_gla_template_final.pdf) (Accessed: 26 May 2016).

Greater London Authority. (2016). *Human Streets: The Mayor's Vision for Cycling Three Years On*. Retrieved from: [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/human\\_streets\\_0.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/human_streets_0.pdf) (Accessed: 26 May 2016).

Hackney Council. (2015a). *Census 2011 Travel to Work Data: Transport Analysis*. Retrieved from: <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/media/2676/Transport-analysis/pdf/Census-2011-transport-report> (Accessed: 2 June 2016).

Hackney Council. (2015b). *Hackney Transport Strategy: 2015-2025 Cycling Plan*. Retrieved from: <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/media/7007/Cycling-plan/pdf/Transport-Strategy-2015-25-CYCLING> (Accessed: 29 May 2016).



Hackney Council. (2015c). Clissold Ward Profile. Retrieved from: <https://www.hackney.gov.uk/Assets/Documents/clissold-ward-profile.pdf> (Accessed: 1 August 2016).

Hackney Council (2015d). Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 Briefing. Retrieved from: <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/media/2666/Deprivation/pdf/Deprivation> (Accessed: 1 August 2016).

Hackney Cyclist. (2014, 22 February). Serious and Fatal Cycle Collisions in Hackney 2009-2014 [Blog]. Retrieved from: <http://www.hackneycyclist.blogspot.co.uk/2015/02/ten-years-of-serious-and-fatal-cycle.html> (Accessed: 14 June 2016).

).

Hackney People on Bikes. (2014, 27 November). Open Letter to Hackney Cycling Campaign [Blog]. Retrieved from: <https://hackneypeopleonbikes.com/2014/11/27/draft-letter-to-hackney-cycling-campaign/> (Accessed: 5 July 2016).

Hoffman, M. & Lugo, A. (2014). Who is “World Class”? Transportation Justice and Bicycle Policy. *Urbanites*, 4(1), pp. 45–61.

Laker, L. (2016, 1 June). *Gilligan: Quietways Programme Is A Failure*. Retrieved from: <http://road.cc/content/news/193478-gilligan-quietways-programme-failure> (Accessed: 5 August 2016).

Latham, A. & Wood, P.R.H. (2015). Inhabiting Infrastructure: Exploring the Interactional Spaces of Urban Cycling. *Environment and Planning A*, 47(2), pp. 300–319. doi: 10.1068/a140049p.

Levy, C. (2013). Travel Choice Reframed: “Deep Distribution” and Gender in Urban Transport. *Environment and Urbanization*, 25(1), 47–63. doi: 10.1177/0956247813477810.

Lugo, A. (2012). Planning for Diverse Use/ers: Ethnographic Research on Bikes, Bodies and Public Space in L.A. *Kroeber Anthropological Society*, 101(1), 49–65.

Lugo, A. (2013). CicLAvia and Human Infrastructure in Los Angeles: Ethnographic Experiments in Equitable Bike Planning. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 30, 202–207. doi: 10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2013.04.010.

Miciukiewicz, K. & Vigar, G. (2012). Mobility and Social Cohesion in the Splintered City: Challenging Technocentric Transport Research and Policy-making Practices. *Urban Studies*, 49(9), 1941–1957. doi: 10.1177/0042098012444886.

Oudshoorn, N., Rommes, E. & Stienstra, M. (2004). Configuring the User as Everybody: Gender and Design cultures in Information and Communication Technologies. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 29(1), 30–63. doi: 10.1177/016243903259190.

Peñalosa, E. (2007). Politics, Power, Cities. In R. Burdett & D. Sudjic (Eds.), *The Endless City: The Urban Age Project* (pp. 307–318). London, UK: Phaidon Press.

Pucher, J., Dill, J. & Handy, S. (2010). Infrastructure, programs, and policies to increase bicycling: An international review. *Preventive Medicine*, 50, S106-S125. doi: 10.1016/j.jpmed.2009.07.028.

Rubery, J. (2005). Reflections on Gender Mainstreaming: An Example of Feminist Economics in Action?, *Feminist Economics*, 11(3), 1–26. doi: 10.1080/13545700500300876.

Sen, A. (1990). Means versus Freedoms. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 19(2), 111–121.  
[http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265406?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265406?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents).

Sharpin, A.B., Castro, J., Thayne, J. & Carballo, G.P. (2013). Accessing Hackney. Retrieved from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/LSECities/citiesProgramme/pdf/Local-City/06-Accessing-Hackney.pdf> (Accessed: 4 May 2016).

Stehlin, J. (2013). Regulating Inclusion: Spatial Form, Social Process, and the Normalization of Cycling Practice in the USA. *Mobilities*, 9(1), 21–41. doi: 10.1080/17450101.2013.784527.

Steinbach, R., Green, J., Datta, J. & Edwards, P. (2011). Cycling and the City: A Case Study of How Gendered, Ethnic and Class Identities Can Shape Healthy Transport Choices. *Social Science & Medicine*, 72(7), 1123–1130. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.01.033.

Stone, J. (2014a, 20 February). Hackney's Cycling Boss Interviewed: 15 New Things We Learned About the Future of Cycling in the Borough [Blog]. Retrieved from: <http://www.londoncyclist.co.uk/9-new-things-hackneys-transport-boss-told-interviewed-cycling/>

Stone, J. (2014b, 3 March). Why is Hackney Blocking Cycle Superhighway 1 on the A10? [Blog]. Retrieved from: <http://www.londoncyclist.co.uk/hackney-blocking-cycle-superhighway-a10/> (Accessed: 29 July 2016).

Stops, V. (2014, 3 June). How Hackney Became London's Most Liveable Borough. Retrieved from: <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/how-hackney-became-london-s-most-liveable-borough> (Accessed: 5 June 2016).

Transport for London. (2015). *Travel in London: Understanding Our Diverse Communities*. Retrieved from: <http://www.content.tfl.gov.uk/travel-in-london-understanding-our-diverse-communities.pdf> (Accessed: 6 June 2016).

## LIST OF FIGURES

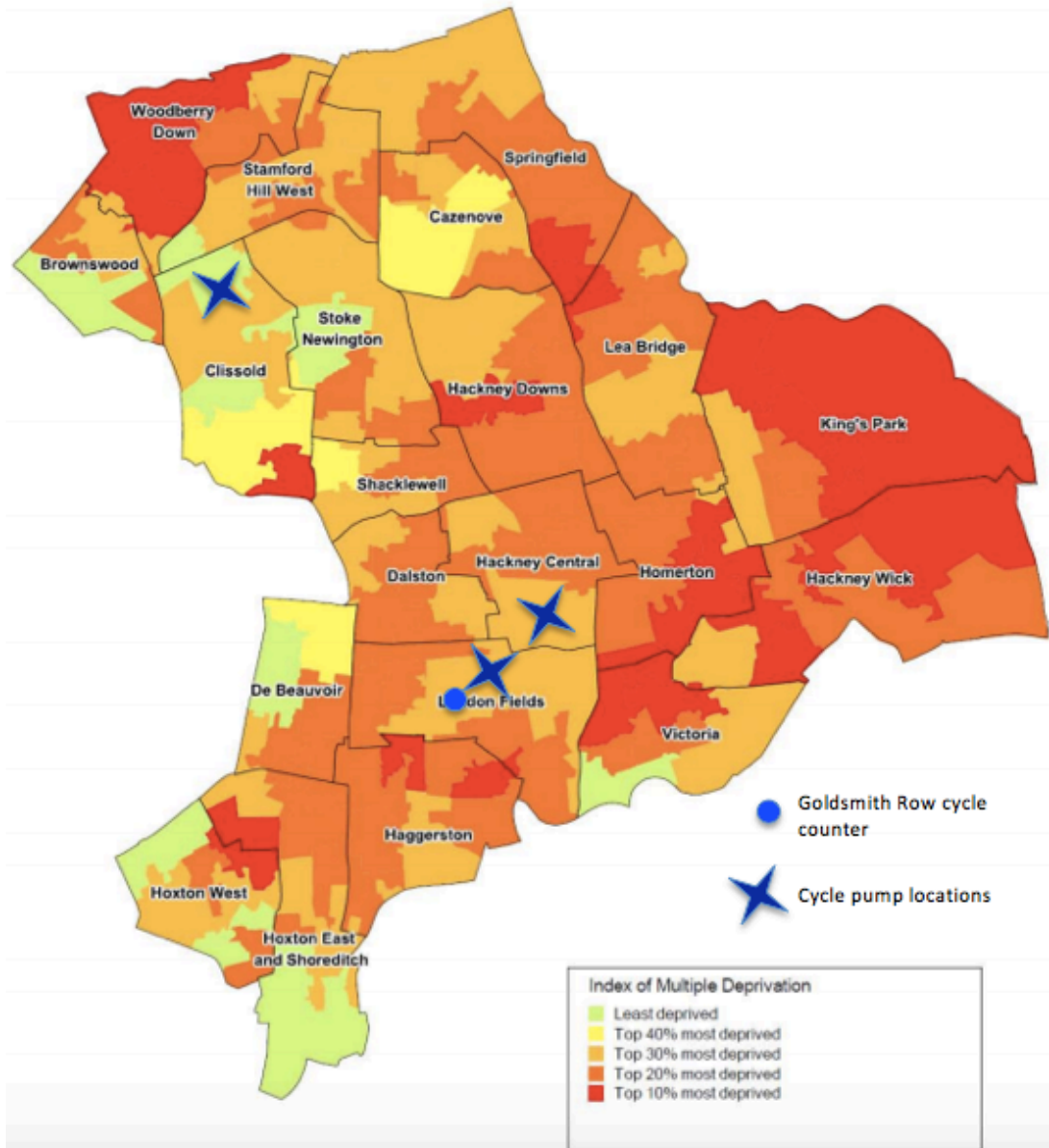
**Figure 1:** Map of Cycle Pumps and Cycle Counter in Hackney. Source: Hackney Council, 2015d.

**Figure 2:** Hackney Council's Map of Cycle Routes in Hackney. Source: Hackney Council.

**Figure 3:** Hackney Council's Map of Cycle Parking in Hackney. Source: Hackney Council.

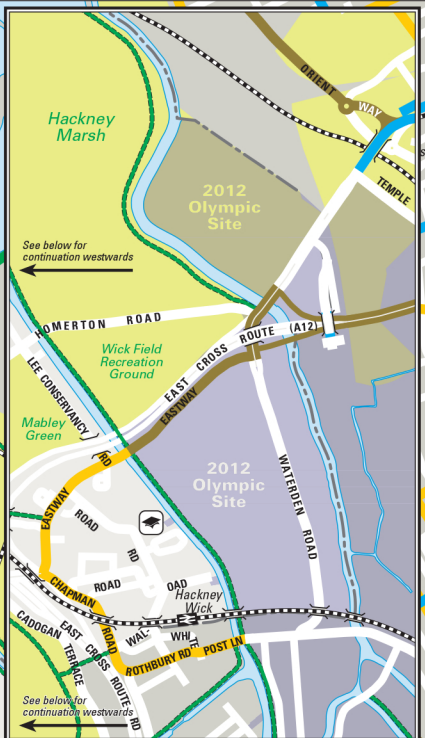
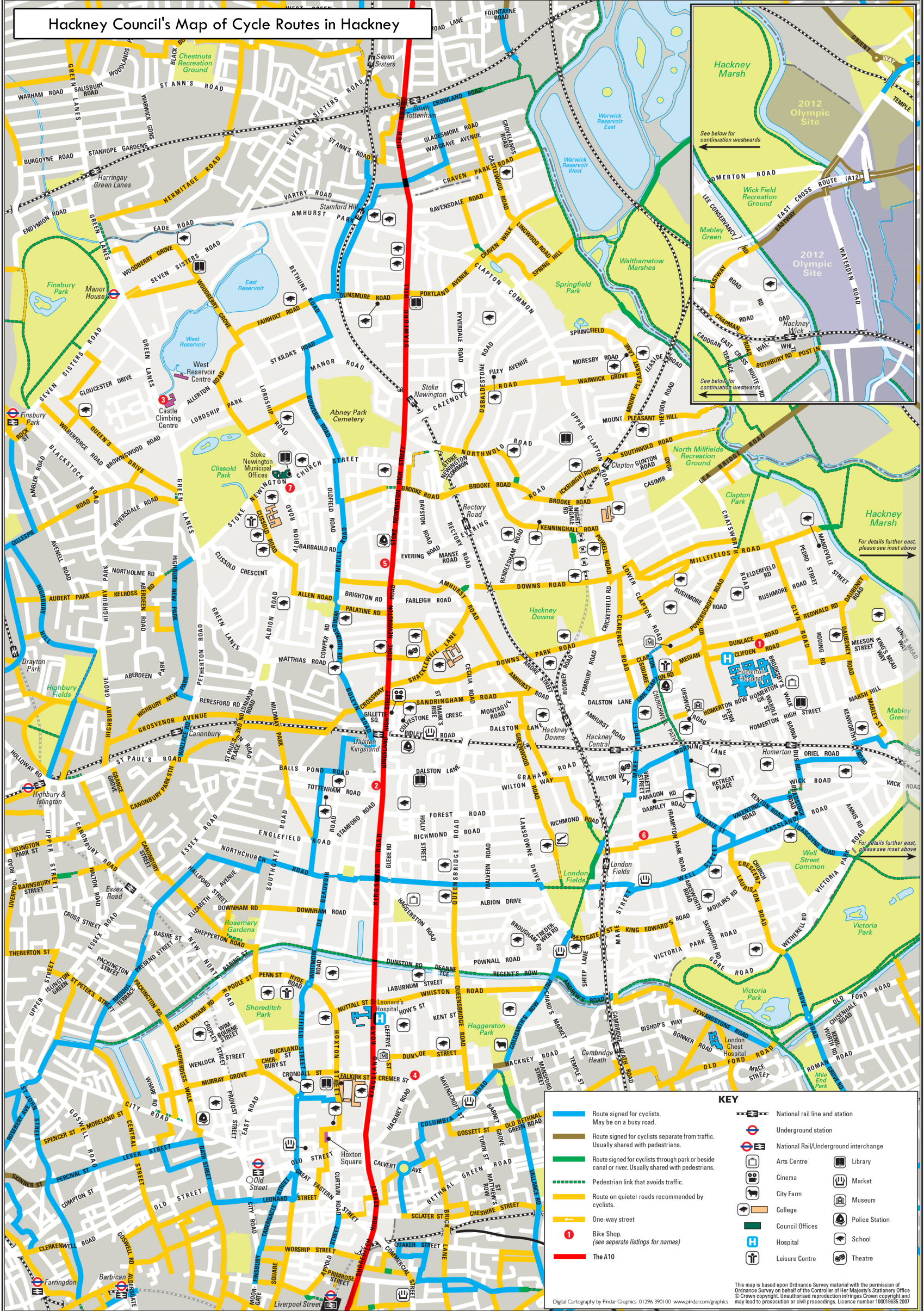
**Figure 4:** Serious and Fatal Cyclist Collisions in Hackney 2009-2014. Source: Hackney Cyclist 2014.

Figure 6: Map of Cycle Pumps and Cycle Counter in Hackney (Hackney Council, 2015f)





# Hackney Council's Map of Cycle Routes in Hackney



**KEY**

	Route signed for cyclists. May be on a busy road.		Route signed for cyclists separate from traffic. Usually shared with pedestrians.		National rail line and station
	Route signed for cyclists through park or beside canal or river. Usually shared with pedestrians.		Route on quieter roads recommended by cyclists.		Underground station
	Pedestrian link that avoids traffic.		One-way street		National Rail/Underground interchange
	The A10		Hospital		Arts Centre
	Bike Shop. (see separate listings for names)		Cinema		Library
	Museum		Market		Police Station
	College		School		Theatre
	Council Offices		City Farm		
	Leisure Centre		Museum		

This map is based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Licence number 100019635 2007  
 Digital Cartography by Pindar Graphics 01296 390100 www.pindar.com/graphics



# Cycle Parking in Hackney

