Twitter Thread by Sarah ■

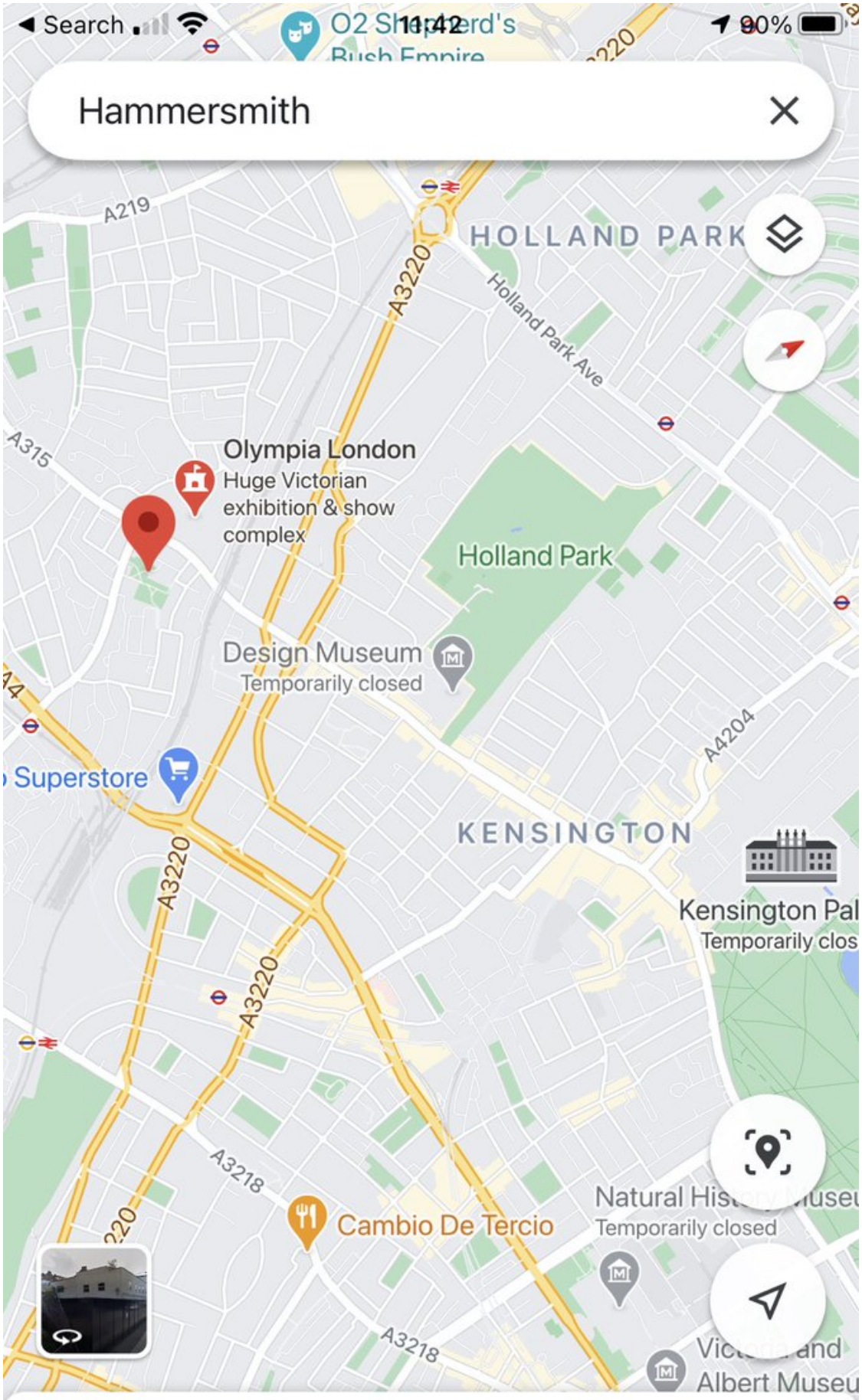
Sarah ■
@SarahJ_Berry

THREAD: I was living in @rbkc when I first learnt how to ride a bike, by taking a @TfL cycle confident course.

But despite having the skills to ride, the roads around my home were so dangerous that I could never build up the confidence to ride a bike ~properly~

> Confirmation that the cycle lane on Kensington High Street, that led to a doubling in the number of cyclists within a matter of weeks, is to be removed within the next few days. pic.twitter.com/F6lUWqYM48
>
> — APPGCW (@allpartycycling) November 28, 2020

I lived just across from Olympia, where the red marker is. Every day I would walk up High Street Kensington to get to Holland Park or Gail's Bakery or even Hyde Park — and I'd wish I was brave enough to cycle the journey.



Hammersmith

Hammersmith, London

At first I thought it would be a problem that would be solved as soon as I learnt how to ride a bike. That straight away High Street Kensington would not look so treacherous but instead would look safe and welcoming.

Nope.

Even once I knew how to ride a bike, High Street Ken still terrified me. I could stay upright on a bike, but I was a bit wobbly — especially when nervous (which I was all the time).

Looking at that road, I knew it was the kind of place where any mistake could cost me my life.

All I needed was to build up my confidence. I figured if I could get some cycling practice under my belt, I'd be okay cycling on the road.

So I walked out to Hyde Park and rented a Santander Cycle to get practicing.

But that didn't go so well either.

10 minutes in, two different people had yelled at me for cycling in the park.

"If you want to cycle, get on the road!" one said.

"The only folk who should be cycling in here are little kids trying to learn," said another.

I was too ashamed to say I was trying to learn too.

So I gave up on cycling. It wasn't possible for me in @RBKC.

It wasn't long after that I moved to Lambeth — and the wonderful day when a letter arrived through my door saying @lambeth_council would be turning my neighbourhood into an LTN.

I went and bought a bike.

Now the streets around my home were suddenly quiet enough to cycle on. I practiced every day, and built up my confidence on longer and longer rides. I started blogging about the things I was learning. I became a cyclist.

So you can only imagine my delight when I heard of the news that @RBKC were offering the same opportunity to folks like me in Kensington.

Giving them a safe, quiet and protected place to get around by bike, to build up their confidence and to feel the freedom that cycling brings

I imagined how much easier it would have been to visit the peacocks in Holland Park, get a honey cake at Gail's and stock up on London's best hummus at Green Valley.

It felt truly transformational and I was delighted for my old neighbours to have this opportunity.

I hadn’t been out there myself yet. The majority of the time it’s been in place the country has been under a “stay home and save lives” instruction — so I was waiting until after lockdown to head out and explore.

And now I won’t get the chance. Because businesses haven’t seen an increase in trade while the cycle lanes have been in, they’re being removed.

I guess @rbkc hadn’t heard that we’ve all been told to stay home until next week — when many shops will re-open.

Cycle lanes take time to bed in.

From the moment I first thought about cycling on the roads to the time I had the courage to go out there and do it was over two years for me. And it took being surrounded by safe infrastructure for me to take the plunge.

Now, that won’t be the case for everyone. I am risk-adverse, anxious and frightened by nature.

But to think you’d see a massive increase in trade DURING LOCKDOWN within two months of installing a cycle lane is just wild — and goes to show @RBKC don’t understand their residents.

But I’ll guarantee you this — in @RBKC there are folks who, in the past 2 months, saw that cycle lane and in it saw possibility.

Maybe they hired a bike to try it out one day.

Maybe they bought their own bike, or a bike for their child.

Maybe they were still building up to it.

Now, they won’t get the chance.

And that’s heartbreaking for them, and heartbreaking for a city that desperately needs its citizens to leave their cars at home and get around by other means.

I’m so, so disappointed in my old home borough.