

George Potter, Liberal Democrats, Guildford East - Surrey County Council

Do you regularly walk or cycle to get to work, the shops, your doctors etc? If not, what is stopping you

I walk or use the bus - for long trips I sometimes use the car club and I'm currently looking at getting an electric bicycle.

What do you think about the current walking and cycling infrastructure provision in your local area and how can it be improved for all (including those who hard of hearing, partially sighted or us...

In Burpham and Meroo cycle infrastructure is poor to non-existent - the best it gets is some paint on the tarmac. Walking infrastructure is better but the area is car dominated and some key road junctions are pedestrian unfriendly.

What we desperately need are good quality, proper width segregated cycle paths along the arterial routes of Epsom Road, London Road, Park Lane and New Inn Lane, as well as improved pedestrian crossings and low-traffic safer neighbourhood zones in residential areas which prioritise pedestrian and cyclist safety.

I've already succeeded in pushing for a segregated cycle route to link Burpham to the town centre along London Road, with construction due to be begin in 2020/21, but we need to get the County Council to properly fund the cycle infrastructure needs identified in the Guildford Cycle Plan.

How do you see walking and cycling provision contributing to the decongestion and de-pollution strategy

As a Liberal Democrat I believe it is impossible to tackle air pollution, traffic congestion or the climate emergency without a massive investment in walking and cycling provision. Right now the only viable or safe option for many people is to drive. But if we make walking, cycling and using public transport a safe, practical and low-cost alternative then we can get people out of their cars, tackling congestion and air pollution at the same time.

For Burpham and Meroo the key element has to be providing the infrastructure so that people can walk, cycle or get on a bus to access the town centre and local facilities like a GP's surgery. The biggest obstacle to this so far is the Conservative-run County Council's refusal to properly fund this type of infrastructure and obsession with prioritising motor transport at the expense of all other modes of travel, but more Lib Dem county councillors in Guildford could be the key to force a change in mindset at County Hall.

What have you done personally to improve cycling and pedestrian mobility in your area? If you are standing for re-election outline improvements you have put forward or voted for previously.

I was first elected to the Borough Council for Burpham in 2019. Over the past two years I lobbied the County Council to successfully bid for £6.75 million of government active travel funding to provide a segregated cycle route to link Burpham to the town centre, I've helped push for new pedestrian crossings across busy roads and I've started the ball rolling on the process to get a speed limit review for roads near Burpham Primary School. I also proposed the motion which led to the Borough Council declaring and acting on a climate emergency, and I've lobbied the County Council to review options for providing better public transport and for finding new sources of funding for active travel. In all of these efforts I have had the constant support of my Liberal Democrat colleagues.

Given the push towards active travel, what could you do to promote more considerate behaviour towards people using bicycles and those walking.

There are two different parts to encouraging more considerate behaviour towards cyclists and pedestrians. The first is making sure that proper space for cyclists and pedestrians is prioritised and is kept separate from motor traffic, as well as making sure that pedestrians and cyclists don't come into conflict over using the same space. The second is making sure that the cues from the street scene - everything from planting to road surfaces to street furniture to speed limits - make it clear that our streets are for people, not cars and encourage a mindset of a shared space rather than a car-only space.

Additionally, if we can make cycling and walking as commonplace as car travel then that in itself will change minds. In places like the Netherlands there aren't cyclists and motorists, there are just people because a person driving in a car is also the same person who will be cycling or walking another day. The more attractive and safe we make cycling and walking the more people will do it, and the more people do it the more considerate behaviour towards cyclists and pedestrians will become.

What is preventing Guildford becoming a cycling city with mini-holland type infrastructure, where the majority of people doing short journeys choose to walk or cycle?

People often forget that Amsterdam was just another car-congested European city in the 70s and 80s. Mass uptake of cycling doesn't just happen, it needs sustained action and political courage to make the necessary changes. We must make it convenient and practical for people to cycle or walk when making short journeys.

This means ubiquitous cycle racks in the town centre, at local shopping parades, at parks and at community facilities. It means providing proper space for walking and cycling, segregated from traffic and prioritised over traffic where necessary. It means cycle hire schemes, safer streets in residential areas, public information campaigns and changing our urban street scenes to be ones which are designed for people, not for cars.

All of this will take both money and a willingness to make bold decisions even when doing so attracts scepticism. At the Borough Council we Liberal Democrats are writing walking and cycling infrastructure into planning policy and developing joined up plans for the infrastructure Guildford needs, but it is ultimately the County Council's responsibility to actually provide this infrastructure. If elected green transport and road safety will be two of my key priorities and I will push hard to get County Highways to understand that every pound invested in walking and cycling yields many pounds more in social, health and environmental benefits than a pound invested in new road infrastructure for cars.