

East Hampshire Constituency Candidate Responses to Questions from Cycle Alton

(in the order received)

[Richard Knight - Green Party](#)

[Damian Hinds - Conservative and Unionist Party](#)

[Sara Smith - Social Democratic Party](#)

[Jim Makin - Hampshire Independents](#)

[Dominic Martin - Liberal Democrats](#)

[Lucy Sims - Labour Party](#)

No response received from:

Matthew Kellermann - Reform UK

Cycle Alton wrote as follows to all East Hampshire Parliamentary Candidates:

Cycle Alton is a cycle campaign group covering Alton and the local villages, established four years ago with the aim of improving conditions for people cycling in our area. Our achievements so far include:

- Developing the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) in liaison with Alton Town Council, East Hampshire District Council and Hampshire County Council. These organisations are now aware of our work and the active cycling community within the Alton area.
- Organising the delivery by professionals of adult cycle training and ladies' cycle maintenance classes;
- Raising awareness of our presence & work by attending local fairs & our activity on social media; writing & promoting the Alton Cycling Charter which details our vision for Alton; emailing regular newsletters to our nearly-300 supporters.

Our aspiration for the future is to develop fully integrated safe cycling routes suitable for school children (11 yrs+) to cycle to school, for commuters and for utility cycling use. Any new housing developments must be connected with this network, and our aspiration links to East Hampshire's LCWIP and Local Plan.

As a parliamentary candidate for East Hampshire, we would be pleased to learn that, should you be successful, you will commit to the following:

- 1. Support the delivery of long-term investment in cycling, walking and wheeling**, by increasing the investment to at least 10% of the transport budget within the next parliament. Scotland and Wales are increasing spending and already reaping the benefits in public health, people, places, the environment and the future we all want for our children, while England lags way behind.
- 2. Support the provision of an integrated transport strategy** to give people healthy and sustainable transport choices, with the aim of reducing traffic in line with net zero targets. More people will choose active travel if they consider it safe.
- 3. Support the delivery of truly sustainable new homes and developments** by improving the

planning system, so that all new developments are built around public transport links, safe streets and good walking and cycling facilities. Transport guidance states that shops, schools, healthcare and green open spaces should be within a short walk from people's homes.

4. Support speed reduction measures in towns and on rural roads to make our streets safer for all road users, whether walking, cycling, horse riding or driving. Reducing vehicle speeds is one of the quickest ways to improve safety and make all roads more accessible for all types of road user.

5. Support the commissioning of a review of our road traffic laws within the first 12 months of the new parliament. The aim would be to make our roads safer, prevent road crime and deliver justice by ensuring dangerous drivers are removed from our roads, and ensure the justice system effectively deals with road crime.

6. Support responsible access to open land for everyone. This should include increasing access for cyclists and horse riders on existing paths and tracks, and simplifying the system to change the status of public rights of way. This would result in huge public health benefits, including combatting physical inactivity and improving mental health, potentially saving the NHS billions.

We hope that you can support these measures. Improving access to active travel is one of the cheapest and most effective interventions a government can make, and there's clear evidence that if cycling and walking look and feel like a natural choice for short journeys then many more people will do it.

Richard Knight - Green Party

Thank you for getting in touch.

I love this. It all makes perfect sense to me. As a father of a 12 year old and an 8 year old I want to be able to move about with them by bicycle but worry about their safety. I would love to feel good about cycling into central Petersfield from just 1/4 mile out but am not confident that we would be safe. I see hundreds of kids walking to school each day (which is great) and more coming join on busses. It would be great to see more of them on bikes.

I would be happy to support these goals and would happily work towards making them happen.

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Damian Hinds - Conservative and Unionist Party

Thank you for the opportunity to respond on the importance of cycling and to your invitation to make commitments towards it.

At the time of writing the Conservative manifesto, on which I as a Conservative candidate stand, has just been published. It says:

"We will work with Active Travel England to make it safer for people to walk or cycle, including projects like ensuring safe walking routes to schools and measures to protect pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users. Where new schemes are introduced, we will ensure they have local support first."

I have been a member of the government and government-side MP, for some time up to the recent dissolution of Parliament for the election, and have supported government policy in this

area. The strategy to which we have been working can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-report-to-parliament-2022>

That document opens with the statement “The virtuous circles of walking, wheeling and cycling help us tackle environmental issues whilst boosting our health and wellbeing. Expanding active forms of travel is also vital to achieving net-zero ambitions in our great towns and cities. It means cutting carbon, cleaning up our air, reducing congestion on our roads, and making our communities better places to work and live.” I think that sums it up well.

More generally, I confirm that I do support long-term investment in cycling infrastructure, and I do support improvements being embedded in development plans. I commend Cycle Alton’s ambition and work towards cycling facility in and around the town, and have appreciated the opportunity to discuss this with you. As you know, I believe developers’ contributions have an important part to play, and I’m also keen that we harness the potential of Community Payback projects, as we have discussed. I have supported appropriate speed limit reductions. On access to open land, I believe there is a balance to be struck that also allows for the legitimate needs of landowners and farmers. As an education minister, I have been keen to promote active travel, and see this is as a key plank of our drive to encourage exercise and the target of 60 minutes a day of sport and physical activity, and have been a supporter of the Bikeability programme.

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Sara Smith - Social Democratic Party

As parliamentary candidate for the Social Democratic Party in a seat which unfortunately I am unlikely to win, there is no point making any personal commitments. I can however say that the party policies would support all your proposals for the following reasons:-

Their policy is for a supported integrated transport system that is affordable and accessible. This in turn would alleviate the need for people to use a motor vehicle to get to their destination.

They also support proper town planning, especially where new developments are planned. Their aim would be to provide the housing and infrastructure that creates a community. This would include safer roads and means of transport especially for children and families. Proper pavements and cycle lanes should be included in these plans.

Some speed limits and restrictions could be adjusted but in the right places so as not to be disproportionate.

The Road traffic laws are fairly comprehensive already but enforcement could be improved in some areas.

As for access to open land I do not think there is anything in our policies that directly address this question.

I hope this clarifies our stance on the issues you have raised.

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Jim Makin - Hampshire Independents

Thank you for writing and for your list of issues.

I am, as a cyclist of too long standing, very encouraged that you appear to already have matters cycling in hand!

There is certainly much that could be improved.

However, many of these improvements are matters for local authorities, so my involvement as an MP would be in resolving issues with the rules regulations and budgets set by central government within which local authorities currently have to operate. Such top-down control is sclerotic, doesn't work and it is getting worse. Where do all our taxes go??

Certainly I would ask you to think about this.

I am not a fan of rules and regulations, nor of the way they seem to proliferate, always from the top down. In my view, there has over many years been an extremely unhealthy trend toward centralisation of powers to national government that results in a monolithic one-size fits all national approach to many issues which could far more simply usefully quickly and cheaply be handled at the local level, either by local government or indeed by local volunteers with suitable support. Perhaps the only stuff that needs to be handled nationally would be national matters such as defence, national and international transport links, foreign affairs, and supply and distribution of the power (diesel, gas, electric) upon which our civilised lives currently depend (we are where we are).

We can argue eternally over the other stuff like police and justice but even these could be handled at for example county level.

People are not daft and we should expect them, encourage them, trust them and support them to come together spontaneously (as you have!) to resolve their issues as they think best according to the specific circumstances.

The more that can be handled locally the better, since that would encourage development of a wide variety of solutions which (a) better fit local circumstances and (b) can be compared across localities, enabling the best solutions to be both developed and adopted more widely without any need to consult and get approval from higher authorities. The highest authority in principle should always rest with the people on the spot. They will then take the decisions and live by them, no outside interference required.

To higher authorities, your problems are simply a nuisance. Will you get better results by learning how to be an effective nuisance, or by finding ways of getting the damned job done yourself???

There's a reason why our systems of government are sclerotic.

One-size-fits-all decisions handed down from on high with the force of law are a very poor substitute for local responsibility. Top-down both stifles innovation and results in inefficiency - and worse (eg: controversial "medication" of water supplies).

Devolution of power (or enabling people to take responsibility for themselves as I prefer to call it) is a long way from where we are now, but we shouldn't let that limit our thinking.

So do keep making waves, do take responsibility (as have I in standing against apparently hopeless odds!) and keep the faith.

Regarding your specific measures mentioned in your email, I invite you to consider each against my comments above.

The current top-down governance systems invite you to tilt at authorities that hold the "levers of power" but they are remote and in general not exactly responsive.

I invite you to join me in working to invert the current governance systems by taking responsibility back where it belongs, to the lowest level practicable.

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Dominic Martin - Liberal Democrats

Thank you for your message on cycling and transport. The Liberal democrats plan for transport includes 'investing in electric vehicles and clean public transport, including walking and cycling routes, Liberal Democrats will enhance local, regional and national connectivity while boosting the economy, protecting the environment and improving public health'.

Liberal Democrats policy specifically on cycling is as follows.

'Liberal Democrats champion cycling, encouraging people to cycle rather than use cars for short journeys offers health benefits, reduces pollution and helps to relieve congestion.

The Liberal Democrats were the first UK political party to adopt the recommendations of the 'Get Britain Cycling' report as official party policy.

Liberal Democrats would: Transform how people travel by creating new cycling and walking networks with a new nationwide active travel strategy.'

We also intend to devolve greater decision-making powers and resources to local authorities in England to design public transport infrastructure around community needs. With regard to access to open land, Liberal Democrats want to establish a new Open Environment Standard, adding to the UK's rights of way network and expanding everyone's right to sustainable access and roam in areas like green belt, rivers, waterways and woodlands, mapping out new places where people can enjoy sustainable and responsible access to nature.

This covers a lot of the areas in your message, and clearly show our direction of travel. If and when I get elected I would really like to talk to you more about the issues below, and how we can take them forward, particularly in East Hampshire.

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Lucy Sims - Labour Party

Let me begin by saying that my partner and I do not drive and never have done. We walk everywhere we can and find this to be highly beneficial to our mental and physical health and well-being. We have two children, aged 9 and 13, who are at an age where they want to increase their independence and walk to school, shops or their friends' houses without fearing for their safety due to dangerous crossings and speeding cars. I therefore fully recognise and appreciate the importance of linking up housing developments and amenities with safe and green transport routes and it is very important to me.

Whilst I am not able to sign up to all of the pledges, many of them are consistent with Labour's policies surrounding kickstarting economic growth and making Britain a clean energy superpower. Specifically:

Labour will maintain and renew our road network, to ensure it serves drivers, cyclists and other road users, remains safe, and tackles congestion.

We will give local leaders the power to create unified and integrated transport systems, allowing for more seamless journeys, and to promote active travel networks.

Labour's plans will enhance local communities power and voice over 'how' housing is built to best service local people.

We will take steps to ensure we are building more high-quality, well-designed, and sustainable homes and creating places that increase climate resilience and promote nature recovery. Labour rules out building on genuine nature spots and requires plans to include improvements to existing green spaces, making them accessible to the public, with new woodland, parks and playing fields.

Be assured that if I were elected as your MP for East Hampshire, encouraging the development of green and active transport would be high on my list of priorities.

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