

Response: Jenny Wilkinson (Liberal Democrat)

Our transport systems across the West Midlands are inadequate, meaning that cars are seen as a necessity for many journeys. This in turn has made air pollution – much of it caused by cars – one of the biggest causes of preventable illness. The transport strategy for the West Midlands should be designed to ensure the preferred mode for many journeys is not the car. This requires a combination of investment in public transport, reducing the need to travel and promoting cycling and walking.

Active travel, with the additional health benefits it provides, is a key element of my plans for the West Midlands transport network. It must be fully considered and integrated throughout our transport plans – not just a nice-to-have add on. As Mayor, I would place a high priority on encouraging and facilitating both walking and cycling, providing dedicated safe cycling lanes, re-modelled cycle and pedestrian priority junctions, increased space for pedestrians and a 20mph speed limit in urban areas. We also need to manage the location and design of new developments to improve convenience and reduce the need for travel – I am a big fan of the 15-minute community concept.

I would be pleased to sign up to all these pledges.

I have recently given up my car (likely only temporarily, unfortunately) and, as someone who is not a confident cyclist, I have not felt comfortable or safe cycling on our busy roads. My family and I would always regularly walk for the most local journeys but cycling makes slightly longer distance active travel more feasible. I am absolutely committed to developing comprehensive cycling and pedestrian infrastructure across our region, alongside an improved public transport network, so we can get people out of their cars.

Specifically, looking at the individual pledges:

1. Yes – we urgently need to reduce car use across the West Midlands and, in order to do that, we need practical, safe alternatives. I firmly believe that providing suitable infrastructure for cycling in particular is a key part of that. At the moment, many do not feel safe cycling on our busy roads. Dedicated cycle lanes, away from busy traffic, cycle priority junctions and

cycle storage facilities will play a key role in moving people out of cars and onto bikes.

2. Yes – we need a comprehensive, detailed LCWIP in order to develop a comprehensive cycle network across the West Midlands that enables people to safely travel to where they want to go. It's no use just to shove a token cycle lane along a short stretch of road (as happened briefly in my home town of Sutton Coldfield) and claim that you are providing for cyclists – it's insulting! Active travel considerations should be taken account of in all developments and form a core part of the overall transport plan.
3. Yes – I have already signed the Vision Zero pledge.
4. Yes – I completely agree that we need to move people out of cars and that electric cars, while they have a place, are not the answer that some believe them to be. We have to provide viable transport alternatives in order to reduce car use. I will work with residents, local community groups and experts to develop local community plans. It's important that, for plans to be effective, they are developed with local input and buy-in. We've all seen the problems with the Kings Heath LTN due to lack of local consultation.
5. Yes – if elected, I will appoint an active travel commissioner to ensure we give appropriate focus on and priority to active travel.