Dear Standish Voice member, here is our newsletter for June.

**HOUSING PUBLIC INQUIRY**

Our chair, Gill Foster, last week spoke at the public inquiry held on a planning application for more housing on land in Standish.

The inquiry was prompted by the developer HIMOR after they said Wigan Council – which decided it would refuse permission for 128 houses on the land near the railway line on Rectory Lane – was taking too long to consider it.

Gill firmly put across Standish’s case against more housing, telling the planning inspector that far too many houses had been passed already for Standish; the infrastructure, including roads, could not cope with a larger population and that Standish Voice’s survey for the Neighbourhood Plan had shown the vast majority of people were opposed to more housing.

She told the inquiry that the original planning inspector’s decision in 2013 that “approximately 1,000” homes could be built in the village had now been breached, with 1,480 now passed and another 150 also allowed for brownfield land at Bradley Hall.

The inspector heard the case for the housing from HIMOR and against the housing from Wigan Council and she will now give her decision on the issue, probably in late summer.

If the housing is allowed, the chance of putting that parcel of land back in Green Belt, which was a draft policy in the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework plan, will be lost.

However, we do know there is a covenant on that site, so there would be a legal process to go through too before housing could be built there.

Let’s hope the inspector makes the right decision and refuses more housing.

Attached is Gill’s written submission to the inspector.

**STANDISH RAILWAY STATION**

Standish Voice believes the re-opening of Standish Railway Station could be a solution to some of our transport problems in the village.

In 2013, a report said that if the amount of housing suggested for Standish took place, a railway station could be feasible and financially viable.

Over the next five to 10 years, those 1,630 homes passed for Standish are due to be built, which will increase the size of the population by a quarter.

Therefore, over the past year, we have lobbied Wigan Council and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) about looking in more depth at the possibility of a station. We put Standish’s case for a station in the consultation on TfGM’s vision for public transport across the city region to 2040 and have been trying to see if we can add anything in Standish Neighbourhood Plan which would help to bring it about.

Standish Voice’s vice chair, Paul Ogden, recently put the case for a station in Standish at a meeting with TfGM’s Rail Strategy Manager, Robert Fickling, at TfGM’s headquarters in Manchester.

Paul explained the transport problems in Standish, the housing that is planned and put across that the village is the second least accessible community in the local authority area for public transport.

Mr Fickling was especially interested in our Neighbourhood Plan survey which showed that if a station was built, 84% of respondents said they would use it.

At that meeting, we were pleased to hear that a Standish station will be looked at in a detailed report on all possible stations in Greater Manchester. That report will be carried out from this summer, with the results being made public at the end of 2017.

Each possible station across Greater Manchester will be assessed and given an indication of whether the station is achievable.

In the case of Standish, there are technical issues relating to the West Coast Main Line and HS2, but TfGM left us with the impression that if all the housing with permission is built in Standish, a station could be a possibility.

Realistically, this could be beyond the timescale of Standish Neighbourhood Plan, which runs up to 2030. However, Standish is now firmly on the radar of Transport for Greater Manchester and we will be awaiting the outcome of that report later this year.

Attached is a news article about this which was published in the Wigan Observer this week.

**ROADS**

We have been contacted by Standish Voice members who believe the congestion generally around the village has been worse over the past couple of months, especially when roadworks take place.

The question of a bypass from Junction 27 to the Boar’s Head or Beech Hill continues to be talked about by our members or on social media.

There is no such scheme currently being considered by Wigan Council or Greater Manchester’s authority, but we think that when all the housing is completed in the coming years, we as a community will have to look at this issue again as congestion will have been made even worse.

Any such bypass would go through farming land on Green Belt at Standish Hall and it is highly likely more housing would come with it, either to finance such a road or as a consequence of putting it in.

As part of our deliberations on this issue, we have written to Wigan Council to ask if the planned road building and improvements at Junction 26 of the M6 - designed to make it easier to get into Wigan centre - will reduce traffic coming through Standish heading for Wigan.

The new road may make it more attractive for traffic to use Junction 26 to access Wigan, rather than Junction 27, and we have asked that if this is the case, Wigan Council should request Highways England (which has responsibility for motorways) to alter the southbound sign at Junction 27 to omit ‘Wigan’ as a destination.

We would also like the northbound sign at Junction 27 to omit the destination of ‘Chorley’, as we think the roads at Junction 28 are more able to take motorway traffic to the town, rather than it coming through Standish.

The letter we sent to Wigan Council is attached.

**THE CROWN**

You will remember that Standish Voice opposed the demolition of The Crown pub - which closed in January last year - to turn the site into homes.

We have been working with Save The Crown campaign and believe our efforts have successfully prevented the pub from being knocked down up until now.

We both have been lobbying the council to make sure that the historic building is properly marketed as a going concern before any decision is made on its future.

The pub is now up for sale again as a going concern and Standish Voice and Save The Crown met the agents marketing the building, who say there is interest from a number of parties.

These are very early days but there might be some hope in saving the building and it becoming a commercial enterprise once again.

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

We have made representations to Wigan Council on two planning applications which have recently been lodged.

One is to continue the planning permission already passed on the site opposite Bargain Booze on Preston Road.

In 2014, planning permission was given for a superstore, café and parking. This permission is due to expire and the landowner wants it to continue, so has submitted an identical plan.

We contacted the agent for the landowner, who confirmed to us that no deal has been done on this site and none is imminent.

We have asked the council to put a condition on this new planning permission to say that the car park should be available for the general public to use for up to three hours. We have also asked that an entrance be made from the car park to The Line, so people using the upgraded route can get into the village centre that way too.

The second application is a refurbishment and ground floor extension of the Lychgate pub.

The improvements are welcome but we think the planned timber cladding, which would be on the outside of the pub, does not fit in with the general street scene of the conservation area and Market Place/Church Street generally. So we have asked if this could be rendered, in keeping with the rest of the pub and other buildings nearby.

**THE REC**

Our latest consultation on the future of The Rec is being extended. We want people to comment on what facilities they would like to see there if a park was created. This is not a re-run of the original consultation which included asking about the possibility of parking.

Please send in your views and suggestions until June 20 to standishplanconsultation@gmail.com or drop off your written letters in our postbox at Standish Library. Please include your name and address. A letter on the consultation is attached.

We recently met representatives from a campaign group against parking on The Rec and we will continue to listen to their concerns ahead of deciding our policy on it, which will be part of the draft Standish Neighbourhood Plan, hopefully to be published this summer.

However, we continue to receive reports from the public who say false information is being circulated about The Rec and wildly inaccurate claims are being made about Standish Voice itself, designed to discredit the Neighbourhood Forum by people whose sole intent is to keep The Rec as it is. This is highly disappointing.

If you have concerns about what you have heard, or any other issue, please email us at standishneighbourhoodforum@gmail.com and we will give you correct, factual information.

Best wishes

**STANDISH VOICE COMMITTEE**

**HIGHWAYS LETTER TO WIGAN COUNCIL**

Standish Voice has recently received renewed comments and questions regarding the level of traffic on roads in Standish.

The congestion has been particularly bad during roadworks on Preston Road over the past few months, but the perception is that traffic has increased generally.

As you know, traffic congestion was one of the biggest problems highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan survey and the level of house building in the village will mean this situation can only become worse.

Are you able to tell us if the highway improvements around junctions 26 and 25 of the M6 motorway would help ease the situation in Standish? Would these improvements make it more attractive for drivers to use these junctions to access Wigan rather than leaving the motorway at junction 27?

Also, if this is the case, would it be possible for Highways England to look at signage on the motorway with relation to junction 27.

At the moment, junction 27 is signed as a route to both Wigan and Chorley. However, junction 27 is not the ideal exit for either destination for both drivers and the road system of Standish.

It is much more efficient for drivers to exit junction 28 for Chorley and junctions 26 and 25 for Wigan where the road systems are much less overloaded and better designed for through traffic.

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

 Best wishes,

Paul Ogden, Standish Voice

**SUBMISSION TO PLANNING INSPECTOR**

Standish Voice evidence to Planning Inspector – 23rd May 2017

Himor Appeal P/A A/15/81740/OUTMES – Outline for 128 dwellings Rectory Lane

I am giving evidence to this appeal on behalf of Standish Voice. Standish Voice (SV) is the Neighbourhood Forum for the community of Standish and was designated and ratified by Wigan Council on May 14, 2015. I have been chairperson of Standish Voice since that date.

Our Neighbourhood Forum Vision for Standish is:

“By 2030, our village will be a thriving community with an attractive centre where housing meets local need and residents have easy, affordable access to excellent leisure, sports and cultural facilities and high-quality, ecologically sound, open space. It will be a resilient, sustainable, healthy community where traffic congestion has been reduced by better transport initiatives and parking.”

In accordance with Neighbourhood planning legislation, SV conducted the largest consultation exercise ever undertaken in the village during the summer of 2015 to ascertain the key issues people wanted addressed in Standish. The results found that worst issue in our village was traffic congestion and second worst thing about Standish was the level of new housing proposed. The top issue people wanted to see improved was traffic and congestion and second issue was housing.

Standish Voice understands the need for additional housing, and recognises this in itself can bring opportunities for the village. However, it is the scale and speed of approvals for housing developments in our village and resultant impact on the infrastructure and local community which is of grave concern. In our consultation 93% of people considered that given the existing planning approvals for new housing (then 1300) no new homes were needed in the village. If more housing was to be built, 76% of respondees considered that any new housing should be built on Brownfield Land with only 4% wanting new housing on existing Safeguarded Land.

Standish Voice is supportive of Wigan Core Strategy policy SP1 for sustainable housing development in the borough to maintain the focus on the East – West corridor and believes that this application would be detrimental to these strategic objectives of achieving transformational regeneration of the borough. It is our view that additional development in Standish will take away potential development from this East West corridor where it has been identified as being needed.

Wigan Core Strategy also clearly allows in Policy SP4 for around 1,000 new dwellings in Standish on identified Safeguarded Land up to 2026. To date there have been 1,484 houses already approved in Standish which is 50% over that which is stated in the Core Strategy. Another 148 homes have been approved on Brownfield Land. To put this into context this will see the population of our village increase by over 25% in the next few years.

Standish Infrastructure Assessment was formulated on the basis of the capacity for 1,000 additional homes and the impact of these on our village facilities. However we do not consider that the measures identified are now adequate to accommodate the 1,632 houses already approved.

For example Standish schools are already over-subscribed and projected to be so in the future. There is some school capacity in adjoining areas of Wigan, but if new residents send their children to these schools it will harm their ability to integrate into the Standish community. The same is true for healthcare facilities, such the doctors and dentists.

We are keen to ensure that new residents are able to fully integrate into our village- hence our concerns about the impact on existing facilities and infrastructure.

Standish Voice also believes that any further increase in the numbers of houses allowed within Standish will reduce the rate of delivery of house building in the village. Our view is this will reduce the appetite of developers to build out their sites due to issues of competition, supply and demand and economic viability. We firmly believe that approval of additional housing will delay the house building programme in Standish and consequently severely affect the provision of affordable housing in the village. The provision of affordable housing is particularly important in Standish given the high cost of housing in this part of the borough and already we have seen that developers have attempted to renege on their obligations. In addition the existing approvals should be built out before any new developments are approved to prevent further land banking in Standish. Himor obtained outline planning permission on Bradley Lane industrial estate in November 2014 for 148 houses and development has not been undertaken to date.

WE need the bulk of the existing permissions built out to give the Village and the local authority a real-world appreciation of how these extra homes are impacting on the village, especially on the highly constrained road network, which cannot easily be improved or its capacity increased.

Traffic congestion is the major concern in the village and any additional housing developments will continue to exacerbate the situation. The congestion in the village is as a result of the poor public transport available and this necessitates the need for car journeys and any additional housing will inevitably result in more cars and more congestion. Studies of air pollution have shown that there are high levels of air pollution linked to traffic exhaust fumes, particularly in the centre of Standish which has been designated an Air Quality Management Area. Any additional housing will increase the number of car journeys and make air pollution worse in the village.

The site of this application is adjacent to the former Standish railway station and as part of the neighbourhood planning consultation 84% of people said they would use a new station. Standish Voice has met with Transport for Greater Manchester and as a result they are looking into the feasibility of re-opening a station at Standish. Whilst at early stages this site would be key to any proposals and therefore Standish Voice consider that this land should remain available and not be used for housing at this current time.

Access to countryside was considered the third best thing about living in Standish and again this site would result in the loss of green space in the village. The draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework has proposed the re-classification of this site as returning to greenbelt, something that Standish Voice wholeheartedly support given the level of open space that has already been lost for housing development in the village.

Standish Voice believes in engaging fully with the planning process and working with our local authority to do this. We have worked hard to persuade our community – the vast majority of whom are highly disillusioned about the scale and speed of housing approvals allowed via public inquiry through the Local Plan Core Strategy.

However, most people in our community now accept that we have to work within the Local Plan Core Strategy and within the planning process, through our own Neighbourhood Plan, to bring about the best outcome for the village and the wider community for the benefit of all.

**REC CONSULTATION EXTENSION LETTER**

Consultation - How would you like to see the Rec improved?

Standish Voice – the village’s Neighbourhood Forum – is carrying out a consultation as part of the forthcoming Standish Neighbourhood Plan and we would like your views.

Standish Neighbourhood Plan will be able to shape change in our village until 2030 and will cover all aspects of life in our community. It is important that people from all areas of Standish are involved as it will be your plan for your village.

Recent consultation on the Future of the Rec on Southlands Avenue showed that an overwhelming number of people wanted the Rec to be a new community park for the whole of Standish.

This is your opportunity to have your say on how the Rec can be improved and enable it to become a popular park in the centre of Standish with facilities which can be utilised by the whole community, including nearby residents, families with children, youth organisations, shoppers and visitors to Standish centre, as well being a place with more plants and wildlife.

Do you or your organisation have an opinion as to what kind of facilities could be incorporated into such a park?

We particularly want young people to have a say in what kind of park and play facilities should be provided on The Rec, so if you represent young people, it is important to ask their opinions too.

Any policy to improve The Rec in Standish Neighbourhood Plan will go out for further consultation when the whole draft plan is published. This is due to be made public in summer.

Suggestions should come through our dedicated email address, so they can be collated effectively for consideration in Standish Neighbourhood Plan.

Please email your suggestions until June 20 to standishplanconsultation@gmail.com.

Written suggestions, with your name address and postcode can be dropped off at the Standish Voice post-box in Standish Library.