

SUBMISSION TO WIGAN COUNCIL ON WIGAN BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN FROM STANDISH VOICE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

INTRODUCTION

Standish Voice (SV), the Neighbourhood Forum for Standish, would like to submit views on Wigan Borough Local Plan: Initial Draft for Consultation (LP).

Generally, SV is pleased that Standish Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) has been considered when formulating policies for the LP – and that SNP will be part of the overarching development plan – however, we feel there are areas where the LP can be strengthened and further safeguards and policies added to improve the effectiveness of it, and to help Standish to flourish or protect its environmental and historic assets.

These submissions are also given in the context of the timeframe of SNP, which ends in 2030, and we believe important policies within it should be adopted in the LP to give them greater longevity.

All our submissions relate to Standish Neighbourhood Area (SNA), the geographic area associated with the catchment of the Neighbourhood Forum and SNP. For clarity, Standish Voice refers to Standish as a village, rather than a town, as a poll of residents found this was the preferred terminology for SNA.

SV is disappointed that there is no consultation event planned for north Wigan. While this is probably due to other areas of the borough having policies within the LP that are more contentious than those for Standish and surrounding areas, there are general and specific policies which residents of WN6 would want to discuss at a public forum with planning officers.

SV's comments on the LP are made in the context of a huge housebuilding programme adding a large volume of new homes to greenfield land in Standish, one half of Bradley Hall Trading Estate being demolished for housing, and other brownfield sites being used for new units, most notably the Chadwick's site on Wigan Road.

This level and speed of housebuilding has had a considerable, and detrimental, impact on the infrastructure of Standish, which has been only partly mitigated by improvements. This is particularly evident in health provision and highways, with a marked increase in demand for health services without enhanced capacity and increased road congestion in many parts of the village. There has also been a heavy environmental cost, with a marked reduction in biodiversity and green space in Standish.

However, Standish is still a desirable place to live in and work in, with excellent schools, good transport links to the wider region, a healthy village centre, and relatively easy

access to Green Belt land. Its increasing size and growing proportion of Council Tax and Business Tax revenues mean it is an important centre within Wigan Borough and needs to be protected from over-development. Arguably, over-development has already taken place but more would severely reduce Standish's attractiveness and liveability and infrastructure needs to be enhanced to mitigate the steep population increase that has already taken place.

Homes

All the housing sites for Standish identified in the LP are all greenfield land, running contrary to the general ethos of the LP, which has a brownfield land first philosophy.

The conclusions of the borough's Housing Needs Assessment (2024) (HNA) tallies with the HNA commissioned for SNP in that smaller homes and homes for older people are needed.

Standish has one of the oldest populations in the borough, which in turn has one of the oldest populations in Greater Manchester. The HNA and LP states that housing for older people should be a priority. This is especially needed in Standish where the vast majority of new homes are designed for families. As these people age, they will need homes specifically designed, or able to be adapted, for older people.

Therefore, we would believe the housing allocation sites in Standish should be specifically designed for older people, strengthening the LP's commitment in Homes 5.5, 5.25 and 5.26, and ensuring housing provision for older people is achieved.

The LP states that the HNA also shows a need for affordable housing, and levels of affordable housing provision needs to be robustly enforced in the housing sites in Standish.

Standish has seen large-scale development over a short period of time with mitigating infrastructure being inadequate to prevent a detrimental impact, especially in health provision and highways. Any future development of housing sites needs to be mindful of this and so those sites should only be brought forward towards the end of the life of the LP, specifically in the years 2035-2039.

Therefore, we propose that Policy H9 should also include:

Developments on these sites should:

1. Come forward for development only from 2035
2. Deliver homes for older people, or which can be adapted for older people

Jobs

The retention and creation of jobs in Standish should be a priority, especially after half of the village's main trading estate (Bradley Lane) was demolished for housing. This was

short sighted and prevented the site being a source of local jobs which – as well as providing a livelihood for many people – reduced the need for travel to other areas for employment, increasing car use and congestion.

We welcome the Mayflower area of Bradley Lane being designated as an employment area in line with a policy in Standish Neighbourhood Plan.

We believe Standish's two employment areas need to be retained exclusively for this use and protected from speculative developers who see this land as able to drive profits as through housebuilding. We would like to see provision in the LP to ensure this is not possible and residential planning applications would not be approved.

Standish also needs to capitalise on its popularity as a retail and hospitality centre, which increases jobs in these sectors. There is also the opportunity to encourage more office space to bring in more employment. Enhancing the village centre to support these sectors is necessary and outlined in the town centre section of this submission.

Town Centres

We acknowledge that Standish centre is thriving. But this is due to the large increase in population in SNP over the past 10 years, and not an improvement in amenity or facilities for residents, businesses or people visiting our retail or hospitality outlets.

Therefore, this vitality cannot be taken for granted and improvements in the public realm of Standish centre needs to take place to ensure its is an attractive place to visit for decades to come.

This is in line with 7.8, reinforcing Standish centre as a place to dwell, as well as engage in commercial activity.

Standish crossroads is an area with a high concentration of motorised vehicles and while it is a commercial centre, the areas of Pole Street, Market Street, Market Place and Cross Street are much more attractive as places for people to dwell in.

Therefore, we would like Policy TC10 to have greater emphasis on improvements to these streets to enhance the public realm, increase attractiveness to pedestrians, give greater availability for human interaction and improve the overall visual amenity of this area which is in the shadow of St Wilfrid's Church, the borough's only Grade 1-listed building. This would accord with 7.93. We would also wish to add a priority in the LP of enhancing Standish centre's Conservation Area to improve this amenity.

Despite the increase in capacity through the redevelopment of Quakers Place car park, there is still a need for more car parking in Standish. The current LP does not reflect this, merely stating in Policy TC10 (4) to "better manage car parking provision within the centre".

There is also no mention of cycle parking provision. The increased connectiveness of Standish centre to residential developments through the improvements to The Line, both to the north and south, means more people have the opportunity to cycle into the village centre. There is no designated cycle parking provision in the centre and this needs to be addressed.

Therefore, we would like to see TC10 (4) changed to “better manage car parking provision within the centre, and work to increase the number of parking spaces and provide cycle parking”.

The derelict site on Preston Road should also be allocated as a mixed-use space in the LP, as currently designated in Standish Neighbourhood Plan, increasing the availability of it to support new retail and hospitality opportunities and office space, so enhancing job creation. We acknowledge some above-unit housing provision may be needed to increase viability, but the priority for this site should be an extension to the commercial offer in the village centre. The possibility of a new neighbourhood square at the heart of this development, as well as car parking, should be explored.

We believe this site needs to be allocated as a mixed-use site in the LP as this would improve the viability and attractiveness of Standish centre and not doing so could increase the likelihood of the site being developed for housing. If this were to happen, it would lead to a loss of opportunity for an extension to the commercial area of the village centre, necessary as Standish grows. It would add an unwelcome large housing site in an area which is already extremely congested.

Enhancing Standish as a place to visit gives an opportunity for increased footfall and is in line with Policy J8: The visitor economy.

Transport

While we understand it is difficult to improve the transport infrastructure of Standish, we would like to see innovative ideas to reduce congestion and enhance the opportunities for non-car journeys in the village. Policies for improved transport in Standish is absent in the current LP, which we believe is a missed opportunity. Indeed, there are no initiatives to improve accessibility through transport in the whole of North Wigan.

While the scrapping of HS2 has reduced the chance to free up capacity on the West Coast Main Line and give an increased opportunity to re-open a railway station at Standish, this long-term vision should continue to be on the local authority’s radar and should be mentioned in the LP.

Congestion has been a problem in the centre of Standish for many years, due to the increase in population since the opening of the M6 motorway and the village being a

through route to many other centres. This has become worse over the past 10 years due to the high level of housebuilding in Standish.

The crossroads in the centre of Standish is a particularly bad choke point, especially at peak times and other roads have also see increased traffic and congestion, namely Bradley Lane, Pepper Lane, Old Pepper Lane, Rectory Lane and Chorley Road.

The allocation of housing sites in the LP will increase this problem and so developers bear responsibility to look at how this can be mitigated.

We would like the LP to reflect this and include a policy for Standish that ensures developers of any residential site in Standish over 25 units should create a local Travel Plan and Transport Assessment – as outlined in the LP – for Standish. Each plan and assessment also must include Standish centre crossroads in its considerations.

Previous planning conditions which agreed improved bus links on Rectory Lane should be brought forward as a matter of urgency.

Places

No remarks.

Environment

Standish has a great deal of green space both inside and outside of the Green Belt.

A number of greenfield areas have been lost to housing development in the past decade, reducing biodiversity and the opportunity of residents to access green space for exercise and physical and mental wellbeing.

Standish Neighbourhood Plan safeguarded a number of sites which are of particular importance to residents, wildlife and plant life.

The designated Green Corridors in Standish are not reflected in the LP apart from suggesting that these areas are undevelopable and them being taken out of housing site provision.

These Green Corridors are designed to:

- i) Create a buffer between existing housing and proposed development
- ii) Create access to more green space and woodland
- iii) Mitigate the loss of green infrastructure by new housing development
- iv) Protect and enhance the existing green infrastructure and biodiversity

Therefore, the Green Corridors at Robin Hill and between Rectory Lane and Chorley Road, as allocated in SNP, should be included in the LP, which would be in line with the Local Plan's green policies. We ask that they be added to Policy EN1 (e) – "Other sites,

including the Green Corridors allocated in Standish Neighbourhood Plan, that are not designated...”

Also, three areas of Local Green Space, which are of particular importance to residents in Standish, were allocated in SNP. These were Southlands Rec, Robin Hill Field and Ponds at Robin Hill. These should be allocated as such in the LP.

These policies would be in line with the LP’s Objectives 6 and 8.

People

Health provision in Standish is a problem. The increased population has led to a reduction in access to primary care services, especially GP services.

Therefore, we wish to see any housing development in Standish of more than 25 homes having to submit a Health Impact Assessment, rather than the 150 proposed generally for Wigan, to reflect this ongoing problem.