

Technical Facilitation- Housing Evidence and Policy

Standish, Wigan, Lancashire

March 2016
Final Report

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Glossary | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| 1 Introduction | 8 |
| 2 Housing numbers at Standish | 10 |
| 3 Housing type at Standish | 13 |
| 4 Position of Wigan Council | 15 |
| 5 Current housing need evidence base | 20 |
| 6 Conclusions, recommendations and next steps | 23 |

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| <i>Project Role</i> | <i>Name</i> | <i>Position</i> | <i>Actions Summary</i> | <i>Signature</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---|---|-------------|
| Project Manager | Jesse Honey | Principal Planner | Developed draft text |  | 10/02/2016 |
| Director/QA | Una Mcgaughrin | Technical Director | QA of draft for comment | Confirmed via e-mail | 11/02/16 |
| Qualifying Body | Gill Foster | Chair, Standish Voice | Co-ordinated Standish Voice inputs and comments | Confirmed via-e-mail | 29/02/16 |
| Project Coordinator | Ffion Batcup | Housing Needs Advice coordinator | Reviewed final report |  | 01/03/16 |

Glossary

| | |
|-------|---|
| CPRE | Campaign to Protect Rural England |
| DCLG | Department for Communities and Local Government |
| HCA | Homes and Communities Agency |
| NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework |
| ONS | Office for National Statistics |
| PPG | Planning Practice Guidance |
| SHMA | Strategic Housing Market Assessment |
| SHLAA | Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment |
| SIA | Standish Infrastructure Assessment |
| SV | Standish Voice |

Executive Summary

1. Standish Voice (henceforth SV), as the Neighbourhood Forum for Standish in Lancashire, has commissioned AECOM to investigate the factors driving housing growth in the village. This project comprises a necessary evidence-gathering stage (known as Technical Facilitation) ahead of a full neighbourhood-level housing need assessment (HNA).
2. The reason why the Technical Facilitation is necessary is that housing development at Standish in recent years has been very active. The level of development, Wigan Council's response to that development and the types of housing that were delivered all require further investigation to provide a basic understanding of the baseline situation for a future HNA.
3. Our conversations with SV raised the following questions, which we will seek to answer in the report:
 - Why has permission been granted, both by Wigan Council and the Planning Inspectorate, for more than 1,000 units at Standish if the Core Strategy target is 1,000?
 - What are the drivers behind the production of Wigan's draft SHMA given that the Core Strategy was adopted relatively recently?
 - Why has so much executive housing been provided and has either the Planning Inspectorate or Wigan Council expressed any kind of concern about this? If so, what have they said - if not, why not?
 - When does the existing SHMA date from, and to what extent did it inform the recent permissions and appeal?
 - Are Wigan open to sharing of relevant information on the forthcoming SHMA to assist our housing needs assessment and enable us to start earlier?
4. In researching the answers to these questions, we reviewed all relevant documents and spoke to Wigan Council. We found that in terms of housing numbers, at the Wigan Core Strategy Examination in Public (EiP), the Inspector noted (paragraph 28 of his Report)¹ that a target of 1,000 new houses at Standish would provide the opportunity for affordable housing meeting Standish's need to be provided locally.
5. A conversation with David Kearsley, Principal Planner at Wigan Council, subsequently confirmed that two recent applications that were refused (then allowed at appeal) were refused by the Council on the grounds that permitting them would exceed the Core Strategy target. A review of both appeal decisions showed that the key factor in the Inspector allowing the appeals was that the Council was unable, at the time of the appeal, to demonstrate a five-year supply of land allocated for housing development.
6. According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 47, a local authority unable to demonstrate a five-year supply is vulnerable to speculative developer applications, as at that point, the NPPF's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is triggered.

¹ Available online at <http://www.standishvoice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Wigan-Core-Strategy-Inspectors-Report-pdf.pdf>

7. What is notable is that there was no discussion of housing types at either appeal, as the issues considered focused more on housing numbers and the spatial distribution of those houses.
8. Having discussed the situation with the Council, it appears that they are almost as frustrated with the outcome of the appeals as Standish Voice. AECOM spoke to David Kearsley, the Council's Principal Planning Officer, who stated that the preparation of the emerging Wigan SHMA was driven in part by the recognition that, as highlighted by these lost appeals, more up-to-date and detailed evidence on housing need across the Borough was required, particularly given that the previous best available evidence was the Greater Manchester SHMA Update 2010².
9. The Council has summarised its position on future development on Standish in a new 'Policy H3: Further Housing Development in Standish' in its emerging Allocations and Development Management Local Plan³. Policy H3 states that:

'Further housing development on safeguarded land in Standish will only be permitted if:

1. *80% of the homes already permitted on safeguarded land as at 13 October 2015 have been developed and occupied in line with their respective planning permissions,*
2. *All of the necessary infrastructure works required through legal agreements for that level of housing have been completed and implemented, and*
3. *It is demonstrably evidenced that further housing development can be accommodated across the full range of transport, health, education, open space, community and utility infrastructure without detriment to the character and well-being of Standish as a viable place to live, work and visit.*

Prior to any additional development on remaining safeguarded land at Rectory Lane (south), a strategic green infrastructure corridor shall be provided between Rectory Lane and Fairhurst Lane, linking to the open space at the former Victoria Colliery site.

10. The current housing need evidence base for Standish consists of the 2010 Greater Manchester SHMA Update and the emerging 2016 Wigan SHMA.
11. The Greater Manchester SHMA Update, though very high-level and as such not mentioning Standish by name, includes a number of conclusions of relevance that SV could in fact deploy immediately to argue for a more appropriate housing mix for applications where it is yet to be determined. Its conclusions do not appear particularly supportive of large-scale provision of high-end executive/family housing in the sense that they include the following:
 - (page 56) There is a continued need to diversify the housing offer available;
 - (page 56) Demand for social rented stock remains high and in particular for family accommodation; supply is not meeting this demand however
 - (page 57) Bridging the affordability gap should remain as a priority for Greater Manchester. Despite significant falls in average house prices, the lack of accessible finance means that in practice housing remains unaffordable for many.

12. More specifically for Wigan, the SHMA Update notes:

² Available online at http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14074/gm_strategic_housing_market_assessment_shma_update_may_2010.pdf

³ Available online at http://wigan-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/allocations_plan_initial_draft

- (page 26) Wigan consistently has the lowest average house prices for detached properties (which could be an indicator of low demand, high supply or both- either way, it factors against further large-scale provision of detached properties);
- (page 36) Wigan has the highest proportion of semi-detached properties in Greater Manchester (46.5%) but the lowest proportion of flats (7.5%)
- (page 37) Wigan has the highest proportion of 5-6 room houses in Greater Manchester (58.4%) but less than the GM average provision of 1-4 room houses- indeed, Wigan has the lowest level of 1-2 bedroom houses in Greater Manchester.

13. The emerging Wigan SHMA⁴ and its specific implications for development at Standish will be interrogated fully as part of Standish's forthcoming Housing Needs Assessment. However, the most important point for Standish is the SHMA's general conclusion (pages 204 and 205) that states:

'the homes delivered need to be suitable for the needs of all households in the borough. The assessment has shown a range of housing need, including single people, families with children, and the elderly and vulnerable groups.

The average household size in the borough is reducing and there is now a growing mismatch between the supply of homes and reducing family size....the predominant house type in the borough is three bedroom semi-detached and the majority of new delivery is of larger family sized homes which will not meet the needs of smaller households.

A high proportion of pensioner households are living in large houses which may be better suited to families with children. Consultation with estate agents has confirmed that many older households are keen to downsize, for both financial and quality of life reasons, but are frustrated by the lack of attractive down-sizing options available locally..... as the proportion of older people in Wigan increases, so will their level of housing need.

An ageing population will also increase demand for housing related support and other health and social care services to enable older residents to remain in their own homes for longer. It is therefore important to promote the development of suitable housing tenures and types, including specialist supported housing solutions, to meet the needs of our ageing population and to mitigate some of the increases in demand for these services. Therefore, there will need to be a greater need for smaller accommodation of the type to meet future households needs, particularly elderly households....Options to address these challenges include:

- *Promoting the development of independent living options for older people, including specialist and supported housing solutions that offer more cost effective and better quality care solutions.*
- *Expand support services and aids and adaptations to enable older people to remain in their own homes for longer*
- *Influence house builders to include a better mix of housing on new developments, including the provision of attractive down-sizing options, including bungalows to better match housing supply to housing need.'*

14. Based on the evidence uncovered in this report, AECOM propose nine key recommendations for Standish Voice in respect of housing need and emerging Neighbourhood Plan housing policy at Standish as follows:

⁴ Available online at <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Planning/Local-plan/Background/Key-Local-Studies/Housing-Market-Assessment.aspx>

- Recommendation 1: Apply for the Housing Needs Assessment package through Locality
- Recommendation 2: Aim to help and support Wigan Council in demonstrating a five-year housing land supply
- Recommendation 3: Consider an 'upper limit of development scale' policy
- Recommendation 4: Comment on Reserved Matters applications to influence type of housing developed
- Recommendation 5: Argue that further development would not accord with the NPPF
- Recommendation 6: Highlight supply-side constraints
- Recommendation 7: Lobby the Council to develop an updated Standish Infrastructure Assessment
- Recommendation 8: Continue working closely with and sharing information with Wigan Council
- Recommendation 9: Consider instigating judicial review of any further successful appeals

1 Introduction

15. Standish Voice (henceforth SV), as the Neighbourhood Forum for Standish in Lancashire, has commissioned AECOM to investigate the factors driving housing growth in the village. This project comprises a necessary evidence-gathering stage (known as Technical Facilitation) ahead of a full neighbourhood-level housing need assessment (HNA).
16. The reason why the Technical Facilitation is necessary is that housing development at Standish in recent years has been very active. The level of development, Wigan Council's response to that development and the types of housing that were delivered all require further investigation to provide a basic understanding of the baseline situation for a future HNA.
17. Based on our conversations with SV, the situation is understood to be as follows:
- Wigan Council's adopted Core Strategy (2013)⁵ gives Standish a dwelling target of 1,000 dwellings up to 2026;
 - Since the Core Strategy was adopted, planning permission has been granted at Standish for the development of more than 1,000 dwellings and there are more to come;
 - Some of the permissions were granted by Wigan Council, another two applications were refused by Wigan, then granted on appeal;
 - SV is unhappy with the type of dwellings given permission, which appear to be more aimed at the executive housing market (large, detached dwellings of 4 or more bedrooms) rather than what the NP group feel is needed by local people;
 - Wigan Council is working on a draft SHMA, but this will not be completed until summer 2016; and
 - SV is concerned that even more development of executive housing will come forward unless a Standish-specific housing needs assessment, highlighting the need for more housing for local people, can be produced.
18. We will test and check the assumptions in the bullet points above throughout this report as appropriate. The bullet points then raise the following questions, which we will seek to answer in the report:
- Why has permission been granted, both by Wigan Council and the Planning Inspectorate, for more than 1,000 units at Standish if the Core Strategy target is 1,000?
 - What are the drivers behind the production of Wigan's draft SHMA given that the Core Strategy was adopted relatively recently?
 - Why has so much executive housing been provided and has either the Planning Inspectorate or Wigan Council expressed any kind of concern about this? If so, what have they said - if not, why not?

⁵ Available online at <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Planning/Adopted-Core-Strategy.pdf>

- When does the existing SHMA date from, and to what extent did it inform the recent permissions and appeal?
- Are Wigan open to sharing of relevant information on the forthcoming SHMA to assist our housing needs assessment and enable us to start earlier?

19. It is AECOM's view that answering these questions is in the interest of all parties in order for progress to be made on the neighbourhood plan's housing evidence and policies, and the remainder of this report will focus on these answers.

2 Housing numbers at Standish

20. Policy SP4 of the Wigan Core Strategy states that approximately 1,000 dwellings will be provided on safeguarded land at Standish up to 2026. Both the Key Delivery Items table (page 46) and the Indicators table for Policy SP4 (page 117) show that the base date for the 1,000 dwellings at Standish is actually 2011 rather than the Core Strategy publication date of 2013. The same Indicators table uses, as a guideline for monitoring, 200 dwellings by 2016, 950 dwellings by 2021 and the full 1,000 by 2026.
21. It is therefore the case that housing far in excess of the Core Strategy target has been developed at Standish since 2011. **Table 1** summarises housing permissions at Standish within the Core Strategy period as of the time of writing (February 2016).

Table 1: Housing developments with permission or in the pipeline at Standish within the Core Strategy period

| Site ID | Development | Developer(s) | Number of dwellings | Status |
|---------|---|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Land behind Almond Brook Road | Wainhomes | 300 | Approved |
| 2 | Land behind Pepper Lane and the Robin Hill estate | Bloor Homes | 300 | Approved |
| 3 | Land at the former golf course on Rectory Lane (Phase One) | Morris Homes, Persimmon Homes | 250 | Approved |
| 4 | Land at the former golf course on Rectory Lane (Phase Two). | Morris Homes, Persimmon Homes | 250 | Refused, then won at appeal |
| 5 | Land to the north of Rectory Lane | Countryside Properties | 150 | Approved |
| 6 | Land off Old Pepper Lane | Redrow | 39 | Approved |
| 7 | Land at Bradley Hall Trading Estate | HIMOR Group | 148 | Approved |
| 8 | Land at Almond Pastures, off Almond Brook Road | Mr. A Taylor | 5 | Approved |
| 9 | Land off Lurdin Lane, Chorley Road | Jones Homes | 110 | Refused, then won at appeal |
| 10 | Land off Rectory Lane | HIMOR Group | 128 | Being determined |
| 11 | Land off Langham Road | Wainhomes | 80 | Being determined |

Source: Standish Voice website

22. Standish Voice advise that, in total, there have been 1513 dwellings recently approved at Standish, with a further 208 under consideration as of February 2015 (an application for six more has at the time of writing recently been submitted, but this can be discounted for the purposes of this report).
23. As noted by the Standish Voice website, there are other sites in Standish of 'safeguarded' land which could accommodate about 515 homes, albeit that Wigan Council will only consider these being developed after 2026. However, in the meantime, house builders could ask for permission to build on them and take any refused application to appeal.
24. The first topic to investigate is the original justification for Standish having a target of 1,000 dwellings. The Core Strategy (para 8.31) names only three broad locations considered suitable for development, specifically North of Rectory Lane, South of Rectory Lane and Almond Brook. It notes that Standish is not part of the East-West Core⁶ and that it is '*identified as a broad location for new development to assist in meeting housing needs, particularly in the short term and to provide choice.*'
25. At the Wigan Core Strategy Examination in Public (EiP), the Inspector noted (paragraph 28 of his Report)⁷ that housing at Standish would provide the opportunity for affordable housing meeting Standish's need to be provided locally.
26. He further noted (paragraph 98) that '*it is important to provide sufficient clarity and a reasonable degree of certainty in terms of the scale of development at the broad locations. In the case of Golborne, Lowton and Standish this is particularly important given their crucial role in the supply of housing land, the total capacity of safeguarded land in these settlements and the potential implications for the focus of development on the east-west core.*'
27. Finally, the Inspector's comments in paragraph 105 are worth quoting:

'The potential total capacity of safeguarded land at Golborne and Lowton and at Standish significantly exceeds 1,000 dwellings in both cases and I appreciate the Council's concerns in terms of dealing with specific proposals that may come forward in the short term, particularly given the pressing need to release additional housing land supply in advance of the Allocations Plan⁸.

*However, this is to a large extent a direct consequence of the particular circumstances which currently exist in terms of the balance between housing requirements and land supply. Whilst there is a need to modify Policy SP4 to provide more flexibility and to allow for proposals to be approved in advance of the Allocations Plan, **the modified policy would also make it clear that such proposals would need to reflect the scale and form of development envisaged in each broad location.*** (emphasis added)

Clear criteria would also be retained to ensure that account was taken of the capacity of local infrastructure, the ability to integrate development with the local community and the ability to deliver the development taking account of site constraints and additional infrastructure needs.'

28. A conversation with David Kearsley, Principal Planner at Wigan Council, subsequently confirmed that the two applications that were refused (then allowed at appeal) were refused by the Council on the grounds that permitting them would exceed the Core Strategy target. A review of both appeal decisions is therefore helpful at this point.

⁶ Policy SP1 of the Core Strategy states that although development will be primarily directed to the East-West Core of the Borough, outside the Core development will be focused on Golborne and Lowton as well as Standish.

⁷ Available online at <http://www.standishvoice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Wigan-Core-Strategy-Inspectors-Report-pdf.pdf>

⁸ At the time of writing, the Allocations Plan is still being developed, and is at Initial Draft stage.

Planning appeal on land at the former golf course on Rectory Lane (Phase Two)

29. This appeal has the reference number APP/V4250/W/15/3003142 and the decision to allow development is dated 26th August 2015.⁹
30. It was agreed by all parties that the Council was unable, at the time of the appeal, to demonstrate a five-year supply of land allocated for housing development. According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 47, a local authority unable to demonstrate a five-year supply is vulnerable to speculative developer applications, as at that point, the NPPF's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is triggered.
31. The Inspector noted that the Council's grounds for refusal were that development would exceed the Core Strategy target for Standish and that the spatial strategy (whereby most development is directed to the 'East-West Corridor', including the town of Wigan itself but excluding Standish). Broadly speaking, he accepted that this was reasonable, but that the lack of housing land supply across the borough as a whole effectively rendered this policy ineffective¹⁰, and that this appeal and other recent developments would not cause 'material harm' to the focus on the East-West Corridor in the Core Strategy or the prospect of brownfield land coming forward there as opposed to this greenfield site at Standish.
32. He further concluded that the development needed to be assessed against the plan as a whole, and so notwithstanding its poor performance against Policy SP4, it did not conflict with the Plan's other policies.
33. Finally, the inspector noted that, at the time of the appeal, the neighbourhood planning process was at too early a stage to be a material factor in his decision.

Planning appeal on land off Lurdin Lane, Chorley Road

34. This appeal has the reference number APP/V4250/W/14/3001130 and the decision to allow development is dated 26th August 2015.¹¹ It was determined simultaneously with the appeal summarised above.
35. Like the previous appeal, it was refused by the Council on the grounds of its cumulative impact on Standish, and like in the previous appeal, it was accepted by all parties that not only was the Council unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing on allocated sites, but also that there was significant under-provision of housing from previous years.
36. In terms of the housing policy context, the Inspector's other conclusions on this appeal were identical to those on the previous appeal. What is notable is that there was no discussion of housing types at either appeal, as the issues considered focused more on housing numbers and the spatial distribution of those houses.

⁹ Decision notice available at <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

¹⁰ As per NPPF paragraph 49.

¹¹ Decision notice available at <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

3 Housing type at Standish

37. The inspector referenced in neither of the two appeals summarised above the implications of the Greater Manchester SHMA 2010, which was the most recent evidence available on housing quantity and type at the time of the appeal. Indeed, there was very little, if any, reference to the type of housing being proposed in either appeal, as both were outline applications, with housing type being reserved for separate determination at a later date.

38. Now that the appeals have been allowed, it is instructive to see that the developments are being marketed as containing particular types of housing despite the fact that in neither case have reserved matters yet been applied for. The Rectory Lane development, for example, is being marketed by Persimmon as The Fairways and has its own website¹², according to which the development offers, among other advantages:

- A choice of two, three and four-bedroom homes
- Good access to the motorway network
- A choice of good quality schooling nearby

39. Below these bullet points, the development is claimed to offer '*a mixture of house types to suit first time buyers, professionals, couples, families and those wishing to downsize*'.

40. This is broadly in line with the Environmental Statement submitted as part of the application, which states that 'The homes will mostly be 2 or 2.5 storeys, with front and back gardens and parking. The mix is not yet fixed but will include terraced, semi-detached and detached homes up to 5 beds, and 25% affordable.'¹³

41. Meanwhile, at Lurdin Lane, the planning statement submitted as part of the application¹⁴ states: '*The development will include a mix of types of two-storey housing mainly comprising family homes providing both open market and affordable dwellings. The gross density of development on the site would be just over 30 dwellings per hectare. Car parking will be provided in proportion to the size of each dwelling with a minimum of 150% for two bedroomed dwellings and 200% for larger dwellings. All dwellings will have access to their own private garden areas.*'

42. **Table 2** sets out available information on the mix of housing types on these and the other developments given permission recently.

¹² See <http://www.persimmonhomes.com/the-fairways-10274>

¹³ Available online at

<http://planningdocuments.wigan.gov.uk/Planning/StreamDocPage/obj?DocNo=12888914&content=obj.pdf>

¹⁴ Available online at:

<http://planningdocuments.wigan.gov.uk/Planning/StreamDocPage/obj?DocNo=12820231&content=obj.pdf>

Table 2: Available information on dwelling type at recent developments in Standish

| Site ID | Development | Developer(s) | Available information on dwelling type |
|--------------|---|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Land behind Almond Brook Road | Wainhomes | Unspecified mix of 298 three, four and five bedroom homes |
| 2 | Land behind Pepper Lane and the Robin Hill estate | Bloor Homes | 185 four bedroom market homes, 40 three bed market homes; 75 affordable homes, of which 21 three bed, 52 two bed and 2 one bed |
| 3 | Land at the former golf course on Rectory Lane (Phase One) | Morris Homes, Persimmon Homes | 3 five bedroom homes, 63 four bedroom homes, 26 three bedroom homes, 1 two bedroom home |
| 4 | Land at the former golf course on Rectory Lane (Phase Two). | Morris Homes, Persimmon Homes | (see above) |
| 5 | Land to the north of Rectory Lane | Countryside Properties | 34 three bedroom market homes, 71 four bedroom market homes, 8 five bedroom market homes, and 37 affordable homes, of which 22 three bed and 15 two bed |
| 6 | Land off Old Pepper Lane | Redrow | 29 four bed and 8 three bed homes |
| 7 | Land at Bradley Hall Trading Estate | HIMOR Group | 148 dwellings, of which 20 two bedroom homes, 85 three bedroom homes and 43 four bedroom homes. |
| 9 | Land off Lurdin Lane, Chorley Road | Jones Homes | 110 'mainly family homes' |
| 10 | Land off Rectory Lane | HIMOR Group | 128 market homes of unspecified type |
| 11 | Land off Langham Road | Wainhomes | 80 'two to five bed houses' |
| TOTAL | | | 728 dwellings whose size is known, of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 (0.3%) one bedroom, • 88 (12%) two bedroom, • 236 (32.4%) three bedroom, • 391 (53.7%) four bedroom and • 48 (6.6%) five bedroom. |

Sources: Planning statement for each development at www.wigan.gov.uk, AECOM calculations

4 Position of Wigan Council

43. As noted in our review of the two appeal decisions, Wigan Council opposed development exceeding the 1,044 dwellings at Standish that had already been given permission, on the basis of its impact on the Core Strategy's spatial distribution, whereby the aim was to direct most development to the largely brownfield sites in the East-West Corridor.
44. Unfortunately, as we have seen above, the Inspector at the appeals did not consider that allowing further development at Standish would cause 'material harm' to the spatial strategy and that Wigan's lack of a five-year supply of housing supply was felt to tip the balance in favour of a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', as per the NPPF.
45. Having discussed the situation with the Council, it appears that they are almost as frustrated with the outcome of the appeals as Standish Voice. AECOM spoke to David Kearsley, the Council's Principal Planning Officer, who stated that the preparation of the emerging Wigan SHMA was driven in part by the recognition that, as highlighted by these lost appeals, more up-to-date and detailed evidence on housing need across the Borough was required, particularly given that the previous best available evidence was the Greater Manchester SHMA Update 2010¹⁵.
46. The Council stated that, although the draft SHMA was not complete at the time of writing (February 2016), the delay is explained largely by ongoing debate with relevant stakeholders over the quantity rather than the type of housing needed. This is good news for Standish Voice, as the Council indicate therefore that the draft SHMA's conclusions on housing type are likely to stand. As such, an HNA could be prepared to inform SV's neighbourhood plan policies on housing even before the SHMA is scheduled to be officially complete in June 2016.

Wigan Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (Wigan Council, 2015)

47. We have reviewed the Wigan Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which comprises the Council's main evidence on the supply side- i.e. those sites submitted to the SHLAA by landowners/developers wishing to promote them for housing development. The SHLAA shows that all of the sites in Standish submitted had, by the time of writing (February 2016) either been given permission for development or were being determined, with the exceptions of the following:
- Land North of Victoria Colliery, off Cranleigh (owned by Ainscough Strategic Land).¹⁶
 - Land to rear of 43-99a Pepper Lane (owned by Bloor Homes and Persimmon Homes)¹⁷
 - Land rear of Rowton Rise (owned by Seddon Homes)¹⁸
48. The Victoria Colliery site, at over 15 hectares and with an assessed capacity of 306 homes, is large scale. As such, this could be a factor in it not being developed before 2026 given the existing over-supply at Standish in Core Strategy terms, though again it is Wigan Council being

¹⁵ Available online at

http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/14074/gm_strategic_housing_market_assessment_shma_update_may_2010.pdf

¹⁶ See SHLAA Appendix G, Part 3, site reference SHLAA0274, available online at

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Planning/Local-plan/Background/Key-Local-Studies/WiganStrategicHousingLandAvailabilityAssessment.aspx>

¹⁷ See same document, site reference SHLAA0270

¹⁸ See same document, site reference SHLAA0276

able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply that would be one of the most important factors in avoiding development here in the medium term.

49. However, the Rowton Rise and Pepper Lane developments, with capacity for 75 and 144 homes respectively, could come forward in a shorter timescale as it would be relatively easy to promote them for development and then develop, in the continuing absence of a five-year housing land supply.
50. The SHLAA has a base date of 1 April 2015 and was subject to consultation between June and July 2015. The fact that it is a recent assessment is on the face of it reassuring in the sense that apart from the three sites noted above, it could be assumed there are no other sites in or around Standish being promoted for development in the near future. However, in some circumstances, developers may choose to hold back a site they wish to promote for a variety of reasons, so this is by no means guaranteed.

The requirement to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land

51. A review of the two applications currently being determined shows that on one of the two (specifically, Wainhomes' application for land off Langham Road), the applicant is claiming that Wigan still cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land. The Planning Statement¹⁹ states (paragraphs 5.61-5.61):
52. *'The SHLAA claims that the Council is able to identify sites for 7,469 dwellings over the five year period between 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2020. However, the five year supply requirement is identified as 8,902, [and thus the SHLAA's 7,469 dwellings equate to a] 4.2 year supply. Consequently, the SHLAA acknowledges that the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a deliverable five year housing land supply.'*
53. As SV may be aware, the NPPF's requirement on local authorities to be able to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land has led to numerous disputes between Councils and developers (both at appeals and Examinations in Public) over whether the Council really can demonstrate a five-year supply or not.
54. This tends particularly to be the case where the actual figure is close to five, as it is claimed to be by Wainhomes in this case. Later in the Planning Statement, a more detailed calculation of five-year supply, including, as required by the NPPF, a 20% buffer to allow for under-delivery in the past, reduces the claimed supply to 4.1 years, and the applicant claims this is a best-case scenario.
55. The applicant also quotes the Inspector at the recent Inquiry (para. 6.12), who concluded that the Council's supply *'is unlikely to be greater than around 3.7 years' (as at August 2015- and notwithstanding the Council's own assessment in the SHLAA that there is between 4.32 and 5.14 years' supply)*²⁰. Finally, the applicant concludes:
- 'As a result, planning applications for housing development benefit from the added presumption in favour of sustainable housing development. This means that applications should only be refused if the adverse impacts of doing so would 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits (Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework).'*
56. AECOM contacted Wigan Council to determine the Council's view on current years' supply of available housing land. The Council informed us that the position has not changed since the publication of the SHLAA and the Summer 2015 appeals; in other words, it remains the case

¹⁹ Application reference A/15/81542, available online at <http://kinnear.wigan.gov.uk/planapps/PlanAppsAppSearch.asp>

²⁰ SHLAA page 13.

that there is no demonstrable five-year housing land supply in Wigan, and therefore the claims of the applicant are substantially correct.

57. Moreover, and unfortunately for Standish, there seems little prospect of land in the East-West Corridor, owned by the Council or others, being brought forward over and above the SHLAA sites in the foreseeable future; the Council blame paragraph 49 of the NPPF²¹ incentivising developers to avoid tackling more difficult brownfield sites in cases where the presumption in favour of development applies, as it does at present in Wigan given that there is no demonstrable five-year supply of housing land.
58. The Council do, however, point out that more homes at Standish would not, however, improve the five-year supply position given that development would be likely to occur in the 6-10 year window in any case. They would not increase the delivery rate over the next five years, which is already sufficient given the existing permissions, and will simply be 'banked' for the 6-10 year period.

Standish Infrastructure Assessment (Wigan Council, 2013)

59. A Standish Infrastructure Assessment (SIA)²² was produced by Wigan Council in 2013. Part of the evidence base to inform planning decisions rather than a policy document, its aim is to demonstrate the infrastructure considerations and improvements that would need to accompany development of up to 1,000 homes at the Standish broad location as per the Core Strategy.
60. The SIA concludes (para 9.1) that *'the impact of development on the local transport network, including highways, public transport and walking and cycling, is the most fundamental consideration when determining how development should be distributed across Standish. The impacts on other elements of infrastructure are less geographical specific and do not change fundamentally wherever development is located within the broad location.'*
61. The Inspector at the Rectory Lane and Lurdin Lane planning appeals stated (paragraph 53 of both his Decision Notices) that he had taken the SIA into account in his decision-making. By implication, therefore, he found nothing within it to alter his conclusion that both applications should be allowed, even though it supported development of up to 1,000 units, and by allowing both appeals, development at Standish has now substantially exceeded this ceiling.
62. Specifically, he noted that the traffic and transport improvements it required were now being implemented, and in terms of education infrastructure he noted (para 58 of both his Decision Notices) that since the preparation of the SIA, classrooms at Shevington High School, which serves Standish, had been closed due to excess capacity, providing, in his view, evidence that the transport and education impact of both applications could be dealt with appropriately.
63. The SIA also states (para 1.2) that *'Policy SP4 identifies Standish as a broad location for new housing development with approximately 1,000 new homes on safeguarded land to 2026. However there is capacity for double that amount of housing on safeguarded land in Standish and there are parties interested in developing most, if not all of it.'*
64. However, despite this accurate statement, the SIA does not otherwise address the implications for infrastructure if the target of 1,000 dwellings at Standish were to be exceeded, and in this sense, the door was left open for developer-submitted evidence of manageable infrastructure impact once the target of 1,000 was exceeded. As this evidence was indeed successful in persuading the Inspector to grant permission at Lurdin Lane and Rectory Lane, the time may

²¹ 'Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.'

²² Available online at <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Resident/Planning-and-Building-Control/StandishInfrastructureAssessmentNov2013.pdf>

now be ripe for an update to the SIA on the basis of developments at Standish since it was originally drafted, and this is covered in our recommendations below.

Wigan Allocations and Development Management Local Plan (Emerging, Wigan Council, 2015)

65. The Council has summarised its position on future development on Standish in a new 'Policy H3: Further Housing Development in Standish' in its emerging Allocations and Development Management Local Plan²³. Policy H3 states that:

'Further housing development on safeguarded land in Standish will only be permitted if:

1. *80% of the homes already permitted on safeguarded land as at 13 October 2015 have been developed and occupied in line with their respective planning permissions,*
2. *All of the necessary infrastructure works required through legal agreements for that level of housing have been completed and implemented, and*
3. *It is demonstrably evidenced that further housing development can be accommodated across the full range of transport, health, education, open space, community and utility infrastructure without detriment to the character and well-being of Standish as a viable place to live, work and visit.*

Prior to any additional development on remaining safeguarded land at Rectory Lane (south), a strategic green infrastructure corridor shall be provided between Rectory Lane and Fairhurst Lane, linking to the open space at the former Victoria Colliery site.

66. In the comments received by the Council on this policy, Standish Voice were welcoming of the policy but sought:

- The figure in 1 to be raised to 90%
- The words 'that level of housing' in 2 to be amended to 'all the housing already permitted on safeguarded land as of 13th October 2015'
- An additional point 4 stating 'Unless a local housing needs study concludes that a specific housing need has been identified within Standish'.

67. Some of the other comments on the proposed policy were from housing developers, as follows:

68. Persimmon Homes commented, in respect of their landholding at Pepper Lane. They objected to the site not being allocated and stated that they considered the criteria within the draft policy to be flawed because additional development within Standish would provide 'an opportunity to address affordable housing shortfalls in Standish and the immediate area'. They quoted the Core Strategy Inspector, who commented that the safeguarded land was required to meet identified housing needs and in particular to provide a realistic prospect of a five-year supply of housing land. However, Persimmon concedes that its land is not part of the safeguarded land.

69. HIMOR also commented on the draft policy in respect of their landholding east of Rectory Farm in Standish, forming part of the safeguarded land. They argue that the criteria in draft policy H3 are unjustified, as follows:

- the requirement for 80% of the committed dwellings to be complete before further development is unnecessary as impact assessment at the time of determination of both the committed and any further dwellings would be sufficient, and a further criterion is unnecessary;

²³ Available online at http://wigan-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/allocations_plan_initial_draft

- the cumulative infrastructure impact of all developments would also need to be considered at application stage anyway; and
- it is not justified that these requirements apply to Standish alone- they should apply to development across the Borough.

70. A further comment was submitted by Persimmon Homes and Morris Homes jointly. It argued that:

- The choice of 80% as a threshold appears arbitrary, inflexible and does not consider the impact of further appeals prior to the adoption of the (currently emerging) plan
- The requirement for necessary infrastructure to be in place does not sufficiently distinguish between infrastructure necessary at site-specific level or necessary at a settlement-wide level, and the former should not be used as a reason to limit development on other sites; and
- The third criterion unnecessarily replicates Policy SP4 of the Core Strategy, which states that proposals need to take account of infrastructure impact.

71. Persimmon Homes and Morris Homes also cited the recent appeal decisions in that the Inspector did not indicate that Standish is at the limit of its capacity to absorb development. They cited the fact that safeguarded land was specifically identified for the settlement's growth as evidence that this is not the case, and also evidence that Standish with Langtree ward is amongst the least affordable within Wigan, as indicated in the Wigan SHMA.

72. Seddon Homes also commented on the policy in respect of land at Rowton Rise. Again, they quoted the Inspector at the recent appeals and argued that limiting housing growth at Standish would be unlikely to slow the delivery of new housing in the East West Core. Specifically, they argue that Policy H3 is not positively prepared and that it is contrary to NPPF paragraph 47 (which seeks to 'boost significantly the supply of housing'), Core Strategy Policy SD1 (a presumption in favour of sustainable development) and NPPF para 14 (which is supportive of flexibility in plan-making).

73. Finally, Seddon Homes cite, in a similar way to other developers, the fact that policy should not be used to determine the infrastructure impact of proposals, as this is a matter for the development management process. Finally, they argue for an updated Wigan SHMA, as they feel this would be more supportive of new housing development.

5 Current housing need evidence base

74. The current housing need evidence base for Standish therefore appears to consist of the 2010 Greater Manchester SHMA Update and the emerging 2016 Wigan SHMA. A brief review of these documents could be helpful at this stage prior to a more detailed assessment of implications of the 2016 SHMA within a forthcoming Standish HNA.

Greater Manchester SHMA Update (2010)

75. The Greater Manchester SHMA Update, though very high-level and as such not mentioning Standish by name, includes a number of conclusions of relevance that SV could in fact deploy immediately to argue for a more appropriate housing mix for applications where it is yet to be determined. Its conclusions do not appear particularly supportive of large-scale provision of high-end executive/family housing in the sense that they include the following:

- (page 56) There is a continued need to diversify the housing offer available;
- (page 56) Demand for social rented stock remains high and in particular for family accommodation; supply is not meeting this demand however
- (page 57) Bridging the affordability gap should remain as a priority for Greater Manchester. Despite significant falls in average house prices, the lack of accessible finance means that in practice housing remains unaffordable for many.

76. More specifically for Wigan, the SHMA Update notes:

- (page 26) Wigan consistently has the lowest average house prices for detached properties (which could be an indicator of low demand, high supply or both- either way, it factors against further large-scale provision of detached properties);
- (page 36) Wigan has the highest proportion of semi-detached properties in Greater Manchester (46.5%) but the lowest proportion of flats (7.5%)
- (page 37) Wigan has the highest proportion of 5-6 room houses in Greater Manchester (58.4%) but less than the GM average provision of 1-4 room houses- indeed, Wigan has the lowest level of 1-2 bedroom houses in Greater Manchester.

Emerging Wigan Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2016)

77. The emerging SHMA²⁴ and its specific implications for development at Standish will be interrogated fully as part of Standish's forthcoming Housing Needs Assessment. However, the key headlines with relevance for Standish are as follows:

- (page 29) Standish is listed as among the areas of Wigan with higher levels of owner occupation and semi-detached and detached properties than the borough average. These areas also have stronger links with neighbouring areas as people are more mobile, have good access to motorways and trunk roads and commute longer distances than people in the inner area;
- (page 35) Standish has a high proportion of family households;

²⁴ Available online at <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Planning/Local-plan/Background/Key-Local-Studies/Housing-Market-Assessment.aspx>

- (page 40) Standish is wealthier than the Borough average;
- (page 63) Standish has higher house prices than the Borough average;
- (page 69-70) Standish had the fourth lowest level of housing completions in the Borough between 2005 and 2014, with only 182 in total over this period (a rate of just over 20 dwellings per year);
- (page 82) That as a result of the above factors, Standish with Langtree is now the fifth least affordable ward in the Borough, with an affordability index of 7.1 (the Borough average is 6.5)
- (page 141) Perhaps unsurprisingly, affordable housing demand in Standish is high- as noted on page 142, it currently has only 10% social housing, the seventh-lowest in the Borough, and significantly less than the Borough average (17.35%)
- (page 181) In line with the Borough average increase of 23.65%, the number of pensioners in Standish with Langtree ward increased by 23.2% between 2001 and 2011, but as an absolute percentage (page 183) the ward has the third highest proportion of pensioners in the Borough.

78. The most important point for Standish is the SHMA's more general conclusion (pages 204 and 205) that states:

'the homes delivered need to be suitable for the needs of all households in the borough. The assessment has shown a range of housing need, including single people, families with children, and the elderly and vulnerable groups.

The average household size in the borough is reducing and there is now a growing mismatch between the supply of homes and reducing family size....the predominant house type in the borough is three bedroom semi-detached and the majority of new delivery is of larger family sized homes which will not meet the needs of smaller households.

A high proportion of pensioner households are living in large houses which may be better suited to families with children. Consultation with estate agents has confirmed that many older households are keen to downsize, for both financial and quality of life reasons, but are frustrated by the lack of attractive down-sizing options available locally..... as the proportion of older people in Wigan increases, so will their level of housing need.

An ageing population will also increase demand for housing related support and other health and social care services to enable older residents to remain in their own homes for longer. It is therefore important to promote the development of suitable housing tenures and types, including specialist supported housing solutions, to meet the needs of our ageing population and to mitigate some of the increases in demand for these services. Therefore, there will need to be a greater need for smaller accommodation of the type to meet future households needs, particularly elderly households....Options to address these challenges include:

- *Promoting the development of independent living options for older people, including specialist and supported housing solutions that offer more cost effective and better quality care solutions.*
- *Expand support services and aids and adaptations to enable older people to remain in their own homes for longer*

- *Influence house builders to include a better mix of housing on new developments, including the provision of attractive down-sizing options, including bungalows to better match housing supply to housing need.'*

79. Note that the SHMA had not yet been published at the time of the August 2015 appeals, and as such forms new, up-to-date evidence that can be used to influence the types of houses to be developed at Standish. Crucially, the high level of need for affordable dwellings and the high (and growing) level of pensioner households both provide evidence that a greater number of smaller dwellings in walkable/accessible locations is required.

80. As the provision of such dwellings is likely to trigger downsizing of older people into smaller units, the family-size housing becoming vacant could help to meet the no doubt sustained demand from families through a second-hand market, without needing to provide such high levels of new-build family housing.

6 Conclusions, recommendations and next steps

81. This final section draws together the evidence uncovered in this report into nine key recommendations for Standish Voice in respect of housing need and emerging Neighbourhood Plan housing policy at Standish.

Recommendation 1: Apply for the Housing Needs Assessment package through Locality

82. AECOM recommends that SV apply immediately for the HNA support package on receipt of the final version of this report. The HNA can form a third strand of housing need evidence for Standish alongside the emerging Wigan SHMA and this technical facilitation report.

83. A locally-specific Housing Needs Assessment would have the potential to verify and, if possible, challenge, some of the developer-submitted arguments against Policy H3 of the emerging Wigan Site Allocations plan, specifically in relation to affordability of housing at Standish, which has not been assessed since the 2010 Greater Manchester SHMA Update, and indeed appears never to have been assessed specifically for Standish itself since the Wigan SHMA in 2008, now substantially out-of-date.

Recommendation 2: Aim to help and support Wigan Council in demonstrating a five-year housing land supply

84. Our analysis of the appeal decisions indicates that there are a number of other avenues open to SV in seeking to resist further applications or appeals of the types analysed. Although a comprehensive, up-to-date HNA drawing as appropriate from an up-to-date Wigan SHMA will be very helpful, even more helpful would be Wigan being able to demonstrate a fully up-to-date, defensible five year supply of land, so that the Council can regain control of its spatial strategy in the face of developer challenge and rigid approach from the Planning Inspectorate in respect of national policy.

85. This could entail, for example, SV helping Wigan identify and allocate housing land in suitable locations within the Borough but away from Standish (now that Standish's own Core Strategy target has been exceeded).

86. For example, SV could review which housebuilders are promoting land in the Borough away from Standish (by reviewing the SHLAA and/or developer comments on relevant Wigan planning documents) and approach these developers to identify any ways to unblock constraints to development.

87. It could also include responding to relevant Council consultations in terms of supporting the EW Corridor strategy and/or forging ahead with a 'brownfield first' approach. Although it may appear unconventional for SV to focus in this way on land outside the immediate boundaries of Standish, clear support for new development within the EW Corridor is likely to be one of the most effective ways of redirecting that development away from Standish itself for the rest of the plan period.

88. CPRE Lancashire²⁵ have, like other branches of CPRE, worked for many decades to limit new greenfield development, and, as such, they may be able to provide useful advice on the best approach to use in the Wigan context, based on past experience in Wigan or elsewhere in Lancashire or beyond.

89. However, note that the Council has stated it has already been working hard to build the housing land supply but it has proven very difficult. In its proof of evidence at the 2015 planning appeals, the Council stated:

²⁵ Website: <http://www.cprelancashire.org.uk/>

'the Council has been active in trying to facilitate progress and therefore expedite delivery by:

- *Regularly liaising with landowners and developers to progress the submission of reserved matters applications, including with North Leigh Park Group at North Leigh; Peel at Garrett Hall; and with Morris and Persimmon, Wainhomes, Countryside Properties and Bloor Homes on their proposals at Standish. This regular liaison has all been at Director/Assistant Director level.*
- *Forming partnerships with developers to deliver planning permissions and bring large sites to the market e.g. North Leigh, South of Hindley, and Westleigh Waterfront.*
- *Offering up Council assets to unlock schemes and assist the delivery of key associated infrastructure e.g. at North Leigh, Landgate, Westwood.*
- *Using New Homes Bonus to assist delivery of housing sites.*
- *Agreeing Section 106 contributions below policy requirements where applicants can demonstrate non-viability. This is primarily in the form of reduced levels of affordable housing provision below the 25% target set in Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy e.g. at Rothwells Farm, Golborne where 17% has been agreed in 2015.*

In this context, the Council's inability to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites clearly shows the lack of control the Council has in addressing its 5 year supply position.'

90. To these points could be added the possibility of the Council submitting a bid for funding from the HCA or DCLG to kick-start the development of new homes on brownfield land in the East-West Corridor or elsewhere in Wigan. Councils are encouraged to apply to the HCA's Local Infrastructure Fund²⁶ for this purpose. Additionally, in 2014, the Government announced the creation of thirty Housing Zones for brownfield sites across the country.²⁷
91. Although the first round of Housing Zones has now closed²⁸, Wigan Council should be encouraged to bid for future rounds, or at the very least enter into a dialogue with DCLG to discuss all options for promoting large brownfield sites, making use of existing or future funding initiatives.
92. There is also now the possibility for Wigan Council to explore initiatives offered by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)- for example, their Core Investment Fund, Low Carbon Fund, European Funds or Greater Manchester Housing Fund.²⁹

Recommendation 3: Consider an 'upper limit of development scale' policy

93. One further option open to the group is to consider a policy placing an upper limit on the size of each individual development, which should have the effect of avoiding oversupply at Standish for the rest of the Wigan Core Strategy period in the event that developers continue to submit applications here and/or the Council continues to lack a five-year supply of housing land and/or the Planning Inspectorate continues to apply national policy rigidly.
94. SV may be aware of precedents from other neighbourhood plans in this regard. One of the very first neighbourhood plans, Tattenhall in Cheshire, was the subject of a High Court judgement in part because developers (including Wainhomes, also active in Standish) disagreed with its aim to limit individual developments to no more than thirty homes each. However, the judge found in

²⁶ See <http://cfg.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/local-infrastructure-fund>

²⁷ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-zones>

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/areas-shortlisted-to-become-englands-first-housing-zones>

²⁹ See https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/info/20002/investment_strategies

favour of the Neighbourhood Plan, meaning the policy stayed in place and now carries legal weight. This is encouraging for Standish. The Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan³⁰ states:

“This plan is not anti-development and the community understands the need to accommodate housing growth. But there is great concern that new development in Tattenhall could erode the very qualities that make the village special if it is not carefully managed in terms of its scale and design. The next layer of growth for the village must create developments of quality which contribute to the character of the village and which provide local benefit. It must be more than an exercise in meeting housing supply ‘numbers’ by the addition of characterless estates on the rural fringes of the village more typical of suburban developments. Our objective, therefore, is to enable the provision of a choice of new homes to meet the needs of all sections of the community in a manner which respects the character of the village and wider parish.”

95. However, more recently, also in Cheshire, an Examiner required Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan to strike out exactly the same policy.³¹ Although the neighbourhood plan justified the policy in terms of “the strong community desire to avoid larger homogenous developments which are not well integrated into the existing settlements”, the Inspector considered that the plan should be less rigid in case of a future housing shortfall at the Cheshire East level. This would, stated the Inspector, ‘ensure that future decisions about the scale and location of additional housing development are plan-led rather than piecemeal which seems to be one of the principal concerns raised during preparation of the plan’.
96. The inspector also noted said he noted concerns “raised by house builders and others that restricting future housing growth to smaller sites of up to 30 dwellings may threaten the viability of schemes and is not consistent with the town’s current role (and identified role in the emerging Local Plan) in the settlement hierarchy, and could constrain future housing supply, including the supply of affordable housing.”
97. Although on the face of it this seems to be inconsistent with the Tattenhall decision, it appears to have been motivated by a lesser degree of certainty over future housing supply at Sandbach- emphasising the importance of Councils, including Wigan and in this case Cheshire East, being able to demonstrate a future supply of housing land.
98. In the case of Standish, it is hoped (but by no means guaranteed) that an Inspector would look more favourably on any such policy in the light of the village’s Core Strategy housing target already having been exceeded at an early stage in the Core Strategy period- unlike at Sandbach, where the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan has, at the time of writing, not yet been adopted. Again, were such a policy included, demonstrating elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan that SV is actively and positively welcoming development that can meet evidenced local need would likely carry weight in the Inspector’s decision-making process.
99. However, note also the Inspector’s conclusion at Sandbach that ‘While restricting the scale of individual housing developments in smaller settlements and villages may be a realistic way of conserving the form and character of settlements that is not necessarily an appropriate response in the case of larger settlements’. For Standish, it is a judgement for the Inspector as to whether it counts as a ‘larger’ or a ‘smaller’ settlement- though some comfort could be derived from the fact that in the Census 2011, the population of Standish (12,182 residents)³² was smaller than that of Sandbach (17,976 residents).
100. Note also that as soon as developers get wind of such a policy, which would make the delivery of larger sites such as land north of Victoria Colliery far more difficult, you would be

³⁰ Available online at <http://tattenhallpc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Tattenhall-Neighbourhood-Plan.pdf>

³¹ For the Inspector’s report, see http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood_plans/sandbach-neighbourhood-plan.aspx

³² Population of Standish and Langtree Ward in 2011 Census.

opening yourself up to potential legal challenge and/or a rush of last-minute larger outline applications to beat the neighbourhood plan coming into effect.

101. Note also that experience elsewhere suggests that developers tend to challenge these kinds of policy on the grounds that they are arbitrary or not sufficiently evidenced as having the support of the community. This suggests that if this policy is a solution that Standish would consider, it will be very important to build a sound evidence base supporting the upper limit, including a full consultation audit trail, and testing the draft policy through public events. For example, you could seek the views of local people on recent smaller developments versus their views on recent larger developments to determine the precise cut-off point you would use as a maximum.

Recommendation 4: Comment on Reserved Matters applications to influence type of housing developed

102. AECOM also notes that, as well as the two applications being determined at the time of writing (Site IDs 10 and 11, both as outline applications only), the following applications also have outline permission only, meaning there should still be some scope to influence their housing mix in favour of local need at the time that reserved matters is applied for:

- Site ID 4 (Phase 2 of former golf course, Rectory Lane)³³
- Site ID 7 (Land at Bradley Hall Trading Estate)³⁴
- Site ID 9 (Land off Lurdin Lane, Chorley Road)

103. We recommend that SV stay in close contact with the relevant Case Officers at Wigan Council to ensure that they are made aware when reserved matters are applied for on each of the above outline permissions, as this will give the group the opportunity to put forward their case for a housing mix based more on the needs of local people, given that the Council must take into account comments received at the reserved matters stage, just as at outline permission stage.

104. The fact that the two appeal sites (Site IDs 4 and 9) appear on this list, incidentally, explains why there was no discussion of housing type at the appeals themselves- because this consideration was not relevant at outline stage.

105. As such, the Planning Inspectorate has not needed to provide any view in support of or in opposition to the proposed housing mix within any recent applications at Standish. However, our conversations with Wigan Council in this respect are at least encouraging, with the emerging SHMA appearing to provide support for smaller houses, and as such it could very well be a material consideration when the Council determines reserved matters on all five of the sites where housing mix is yet to be determined.

106. SV should, in its comments on these five reserved matters, refer to the emerging SHMA now forming a material consideration, as well as cross-referring the conclusions of the SHMA with **Table 2** of this report to demonstrate that there is a significant risk of over-supply of executive housing if the outstanding dwellings are not smaller units more in line with local need. At the

³³ Reserved matters for Phase 1 of the former golf course, Rectory Lane has recently been approved

³⁴ Note that although this application is outline only at the time of writing, the drawing submitted as part of the application shows 118 semi-detached units, 14 terraced units and 16 detached units, suggesting that its eventual housing mix may at least be a little more aligned with Wigan's stated need for smaller units than some of the other recent applications. HIMOR are currently still seeking a developer to sell the site to, so it appears unlikely to come forward in the immediate term.

same time, AECOM will seek to develop a Standish HNA in a timely manner so that it, too, can influence the SV comments.

Recommendation 5: Argue that further development would not accord with the NPPF

107. Paragraph 49 of the NPPF comes into play when a local authority cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (as is currently the case in Wigan), but tips the balance in favour of the developer only where the development is demonstrably sustainable as detailed in NPPF paragraph 14.³⁵ Supported by the SHMA and the forthcoming HNA, and ideally by further supply-side evidence (see Recommendations 6 and 7 below) it should be possible to make the case that further development of executive housing would damage Wigan's economic, social and environmental sustainability by generating adverse impacts such as:

- Encouraging out-commuting to jobs outside Wigan and therefore not growing the Council's own economic base; and/or
- Not meeting the needs of the local population, leading to the creation of two communities side-by-side but not interacting- thus creating a lack of social integration between large suburban estates of out-commuters and existing residents in smaller dwellings closer to the urban core; and/or
- Promoting the use of cars, by providing housing with garages and generous parking aimed at high-income families close to a motorway junction, without sufficient consideration of new public transport infrastructure. It is particularly notable that in none of the documents reviewed by AECOM for this report, either supporting or resisting development, does there seem to have any mention of Standish's lack of railway connections, whereas there are ten railway stations across the rest of the Metropolitan Borough³⁶

108. Wigan Council notes, and AECOM agrees, that the more developments aimed mainly at car-based commuters come forward at Standish, the more likely an Inspector would be to attach weight to these issues and the greater the degree of uncertainty that any development would accord with NPPF paragraphs 14 and 49, which are material consideration in planning decisions.

109. Wigan Council quoted NPPF paragraph 14, as well as commenting on the unsustainability of the housing types being delivered, when it argued against the applications at the 2015 planning appeals.

Recommendation 6: Highlight supply-side constraints

110. AECOM's experience of neighbourhood planning suggests that where neighbourhood groups are seeking to limit development for any reason, it is generally easier to do so on the supply side rather than the demand side, partly because demand for housing across England is high in most places, and particularly in wealthier, more accessible locations like Standish- whereas supply-side constraints apply for almost any side.

111. This would entail building a case against development on the following possible grounds, depending on the individual site(s) in question:

³⁵ Which states: 'planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework as taken as a whole'

³⁶ Specifically: Atherton, Bryn, Gathurst, Hag Fold, Hindley, Ince, Orrell, Pemberton, Wigan North Western, and Wigan Wallgate.

- Landscape and visual impact
- Heritage impact
- Ecological impact
- Agricultural land impact
- Infrastructure impact (including, for example, schools and health services)
- Flood risk (including surface water flooding)
- Transport and traffic impact
- Urban design (including layout, massing, architecture and so on)
- Spatial impacts (e.g. risk of coalescence of two or more settlements)
- Cumulative impacts

112. It appears to be the view of Wigan Council that, before long, it is the cumulative impacts of the permissions (in particular, traffic impacts) that may have the greatest potential to impact negatively on Standish, and indeed this was a central argument in the Council's proof of evidence at the 2015 appeals. As such, this could be one of the more fruitful lines of argument.

Recommendation 7: Lobby the Council to develop an updated Standish Infrastructure Assessment

113. Linked with, but separate from, Recommendation 6, is the opportunity for Wigan Council to develop its own supply-side evidence base on the impact of further development at Standish by updating its existing Standish Infrastructure Assessment. This is considered important as the SIA carried weight at the Lurdin Lane and Rectory Lane appeals, but is effectively now out-of-date due to the large amount of development at Standish since it was prepared in November 2013.

114. An updated SIA should be developed to make clear the full supply-side impacts of further development at Standish, taking all development that has recently been granted permission (both at appeal and otherwise) as its baseline. It may be the case that further development may have such onerous infrastructure requirements that developers are deterred from further applications.

115. In particular, it appears that an updated SIA would have the potential to provide evidence rebutting many of the developer-submitted arguments against Policy H3 of Wigan's emerging Site Allocations plan.

116. However, there is of course also the risk that an updated SIA could demonstrate significant infrastructure capacity remaining at Standish. Although, on the basis of the evidence interrogated by this report, this is considered unlikely to say the least, it is nevertheless a possibility that SV should consider before choosing to lobby the Council to update the SIA.

Recommendation 8: Continue working closely with and sharing information with Wigan Council

117. Researching and developing this report has made it clear to AECOM that, following the publication of the SHMA, the positions of SV and Wigan Council on further development at Standish are now very similar. Although in the past this may not have been the case, and communication may have been limited between the two organisations, it seems that it is now in

the mutual interest of both to co-operate closely on the planning of Standish; indeed, there is in any case a legal obligation on the Council³⁷ to support neighbourhood planning efforts within its area.

118. AECOM understands that the relationship between SV and Wigan Council has been improving recently in the face of continuing developer challenge driven by the Council's lack of a five-year housing land supply. We recommend that SV and the Council continue to improve their relationship by working together, sharing information, and finding common ground in terms of housing evidence base and policy, with a view to strengthening the case against further large-scale development of housing at Standish that does not appear to meet the needs of local people.
119. One specific issue for SV to draw the Council's attention to is the Inspector's comment in paragraph 105 of his report on the Core Strategy that '*there is a need to modify Policy SP4 [of the Wigan Core Strategy] tomake it clear that such proposals [for new development] would need to reflect the scale and form of development envisaged in each broad location*'. Clearly, this is an amendment that could be beneficial for Standish.

Recommendation 9: Consider instigating judicial review of any further successful appeals

120. This report has been prepared by AECOM town planning specialists rather than planning law experts. With this caveat in mind, there could nevertheless be merit in seeking legal advice on launching a judicial review (i.e. legal challenge) of any further successful appeals for development. Though this could be relatively expensive and is not to be undertaken lightly, it is nevertheless helpful to consider this option as a last resort.
121. Any such challenge could draw from and build on the case against further development presented in this document, the forthcoming Housing Needs Assessment, and/or site specific considerations of supply-side constraints, either infrastructural (possibly supported by an updated SIA) or otherwise.
122. Wigan Council, sharing many of the same concerns as SV, could potentially be a useful ally in any challenge- on this basis, should SV decide to launch a challenge at any point, we recommend discussing it with Wigan Council first.
123. Note that any judicial review of a planning determination must be launched within six weeks of the application being determined. There is a lot of helpful information online about the judicial review process; in particular, CPRE have a useful overview on their website.³⁸

³⁷ For further details, see <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/the-role-of-the-local-planning-authority-in-neighbourhood-planning/>

³⁸ Available at <http://planninghelp.cpre.org.uk/improve-where-you-live/how-to-challenge-a-planning-decision/court-challenges>

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Address: 6-8 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1PL
Phone number +44 (0)20 7798 5000