

## **LETTER TO THE EDITOR – WIGAN OBSERVER – JUN 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**

### **SCHOOL LANE WIDENING**

Standish Voice Neighbourhood Forum stands aside from party politics and among our 1,500-strong membership across the village we have supporters from all political parties and none.

However, while local elections usually divide, the recent one in Standish showed an unusual consensus in one respect. All four candidates for Standish ward came out against the council's proposal to widen School Lane.

All candidates were resolutely opposed the scheme, which would allow much more through traffic in Standish, increasing emissions, reducing road safety and ruining an entrance to our historic village centre and Conservation Area.

Widening School Lane does not solve the perceived rush-hour congestion problems in Standish and over time will just make the situation worse. It is merely a short term solution to a statistical measure of capacity at the village crossroads – which would allow developers to build on more greenfield sites in Standish, further increasing congestion.

Before the election, the three serving ward councillors joined with Standish Voice to oppose the proposal, and this was echoed in the local election.

Sitting councillor, Conservative Ray Whittingham, stated: "The widening of School Lane will not solve the traffic problem we are facing. Instead, it will change the character of the centre of our village and increase air pollution with more stationary cars crammed into a small section of highway."

Labour candidate Dave Wood stated: "The proposal for the extra lane is not needed in my opinion and, if elected, I will make the objections of Councillor Parkinson and myself known within the Council."

Liberal Democrat candidate Caroline Waddicor has stated: "This clearly forms part of the larger plan for Wigan's Labour council to develop on green spaces in outlying villages like Standish which I do not support. In addition, to plan for additional traffic so close to Wood Fold Primary School is, in my opinion, irresponsible. I can therefore say I am fully opposed to any plans that might see Standish lose its iconic village charm, including widening School Lane."

Independent candidate Debbie Fairhurst stated in her campaign: "It will not ease traffic but just put more children's lives at risk going to and from school plus worsen the traffic pollution."

Standish Voice instigated the improvements to The Line and in Standish Neighbourhood Plan – overwhelmingly endorsed by the community two years ago – further improvements to footpaths and cycleways were called for. Standish Voice is pleased that Wigan Council has identified ways in which footpaths and cycleways can be improved in Standish – when the work is completed they will complement the The Line, which is a hugely popular route for people going to and from the village centre.

However, Standish is united against this unnecessary and backward-looking School Lane road widening proposal and urges the council to use the money it would cost – from housing developments in the village – on a different scheme.

Standish Voice has put forward an alternative vision – which Wigan Council says is viable – to improve the village centre, making pedestrians a priority away from the busy crossroads and enhancing the Conservation Area to make it a much more attractive place to shop in, work in, socialise in and visit.

We ask the council to develop this scheme in partnership with the three Standish councillors and Standish Voice to create a much more sustainable and long-term strategy for our historic village.