

Government warning to Stockport MBC over lack of progress on development of a local plan.

A personal view of the situation by Greg Pike, Marple Civic Society.

With the new Housing Secretary Steve Reed promising to “build baby build” in the Government’s quest for 1.5 million new homes by 2029, Housing and Planning Minister Mathew Pennycook has threatened to intervene in the Stockport Local Plan process to speed matters up. This usually involves bringing in an independent planning team to complete the process, with the likelihood that they will have less concern for “local issues” and far more concern with identifying development sites that can be delivered quickly.

Identifying adequate land to meet Government-imposed targets for new homes has been a problem in Stockport for many years. The problem has been exacerbated recently by the Lib Dem’s insistence that we won’t build on greenbelt land and by the new Labour Government’s decision to increase the new homes target for our area by over 75%. Our Local Plan will need to identify enough housing land to meet annual housing targets for at least five years, but Local Plans should really be allocating land to cater for our housing needs well beyond that period, and land for all the additional infrastructure requirements - schools, shops, healthcare, transport, utilities, green spaces etc, to service both the new and existing homes.

I have a lot of sympathy for the hard-pressed planning officers charged with the responsibility for drafting the Local Plan, whilst at the same time overseeing the renaissance of Stockport’s town centre and dealing with day to day planning matters across the whole borough. In my opinion they have not been well served by the antics of our politicians at national or local level.

Both the previous Government and the current one have played political games with planning policy and housing targets, without any real understanding of the causes of our housing crisis. Local politicians have made political capital from our wish to protect the greenbelt without understanding all the implications of this. The concept of “Grey Belt” land has effectively pulled the rug from under their feet, and if the completion of the Local Plan is taken out of the hands of our planning team, they will certainly bear some responsibility for this as well. Had Stockport stayed in the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework none of this would be happening.

Stockport’s response to the Minister’s intervention has been to publish a revised time table for completion of the Plan. A draft version of it will be consulted on in November and December this year. The finalised plan will be published in June/July 2026 and will be submitted to Government in November 2026. A public examination of the plan will take place in Spring 2027 and the plan will be formally adopted at the end of 2027, or early in 2028.

That is of course unless the Minister’s enforcers arrive. However things develop, the Civic Society will do its best to keep our community up to speed with events.

GP, 3/10/25.