



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Jake Austin
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The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP,
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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3rd September 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

During the Makerfield by-election, we both stood on a platform in front of the electorate that emphasised the need for balance between delivering the country's housing need, and protecting the much-loved green spaces that our communities use in the sub-urban districts of places like Stockport.

We both praised the progress that has been made in regenerating Stockport, with the local council and your office as Mayor of Greater Manchester working hand-in-hand to deliver that regeneration, putting place before party to do so. Our town's regeneration is a success story that we both pointed to as a way to achieve a sustainable balance - taking a truly brownfield-first approach to housing across the country. It is a balance that I believe the country, and our residents in Stockport, can get behind.

However, here in Stockport, we now find ourselves at the precipice of needing to deliver a local plan that disrupts that balance. Our emerging local plan is set to reach its Regulation 19 consultation in a matter of weeks. I am writing to you as the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment at Stockport, alongside my colleagues as Leader of the council and two of our MPs, who represent areas most heavily impacted by the government's National Planning and Policy Framework changes in recent years.

Stockport's housing requirement has effectively doubled, requiring the delivery of over 32,000 homes. This enormous target makes it increasingly difficult for us to protect the green belt within our local plan and maintain the balance that residents rightly expect between development and environmental protection.

The introduction of the so-called "grey belt" concept has also caused considerable concern. What was presented as a mechanism to unlock limited, lower quality land has increasingly become a route to permit development on areas that our communities clearly understand and value as green belt. In practice, this risks serving the interests of speculative development while doing little to strengthen existing communities or support genuinely sustainable growth.

In July 2024, Stockport Council published a Local Plan based on a genuine brownfield-first approach. That plan demonstrated the potential to deliver more than 15,000 new homes on sustainable brownfield sites, particularly within and around Stockport Town Centre and our district centres.

Cllr Jake Austin
Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment
Hazel Grove Ward



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This approach reflects the kind of regeneration-led growth that governments of all colours have long sought to encourage and is exactly the type of approach we both advocated for in front of the electorate.

To honour that commitment, we urge the Government to provide Stockport with the flexibility needed to adopt a Local Plan founded on sustainable brownfield regeneration. Current viability challenges mean that releasing green belt land risks drawing investment away from more complex brownfield sites, undermining the very approach we are seeking to pursue.

We recognise that balancing housing delivery with green belt protection is not straightforward. However, we urgently ask the Government to reconsider the recent changes to the NPPF and housing needs formula, which disproportionately impact authorities such as Stockport. With greater local flexibility, we can deliver a truly sustainable Local Plan that meets housing need, supports regeneration and protects the green belt for future generations.

I urge you to take this opportunity, as the new Prime Minister, to honour the commitments and strategy you made during your bid to change the government and its approach to planning.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Jake Austin

Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment
Stockport Council

With the support of:

Tom Morrison MP

Member of Parliament for Cheadle

Lisa Smart MP

Member of Parliament for Hazel Grove

Cllr Mark Roberts

Leader of Stockport Council

Cllr Jake Austin
Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment
Hazel Grove Ward