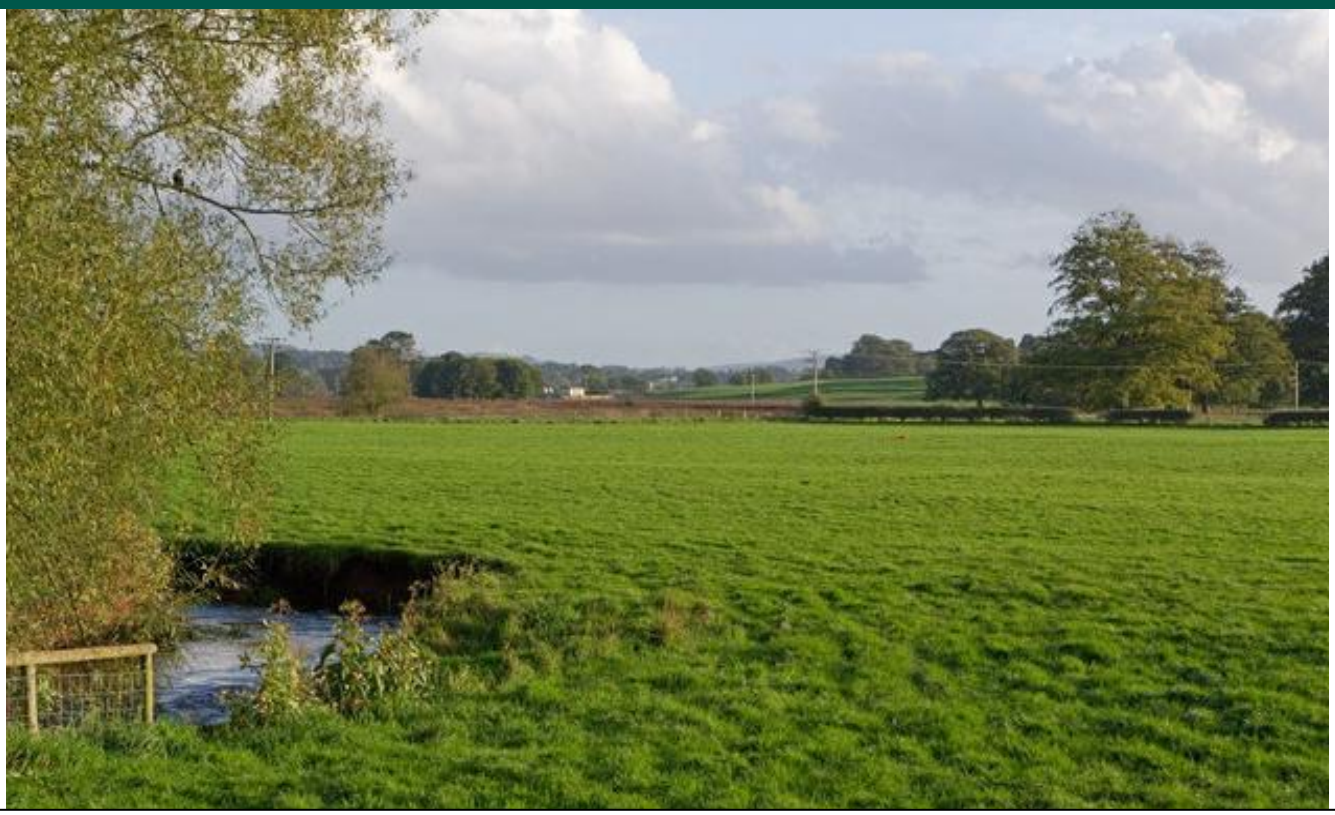
Campaign to Protect Rural England Cheshire

CPRE Cheshire Branch registered charity number 248304



River Dean at Adlington by Ian Capper

Unsuspecting Adlington, a rural idyll – about to be targeted for a New Town of 20,000 homes

on earth

Why Adlington?

A report by Lillian Burns, January 2026

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Photographs from the Adlington Parish Council website (https://adlington-pc.gov.uk/)

Adlington Marina

War memorial

Post box, Adlington

Village Hall

WHAT INCENTIVISED THIS REPORT?

There were two key components which provided the incentive to produce this report:

1. The conviction that the decision by the New Towns Taskforce to recommend an idyllic but poorly served rural corner of Cheshire as a suitable location for a New Town was the wrong one and
2. The discovery that this recommendation would not have been made were it not for a letter implying support that was sent last year by the leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council – without the knowledge of their colleagues – to the Taskforce chairman. A fact that was confirmed by the chair, Sir Michael Lyons, when answering questions at a hearing into New Towns held by the House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on January 13th 2026: https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/4345fbaf-3820-460c-8dc4-265b8c496548.

The situation that exists is that a recommendation has been made by a government-appointed task and finish body and government is now seriously considering it. This means it is necessary to examine as much evidence as is available to the public of the case promoting the site by the landowners, Belport, to question unsubstantiated claims, correct mis-statements and table opposing arguments to present an alternative picture. This task has been undertaken separately by CPRE and Stop Adlington New Town (SANT). (See cross referencing to the SANT interim report in this document).

However, this would not have been necessary if the Taskforce had not been misled into believing that Cheshire East Council were backing the idea of a New Town – when in fact almost the entire Council had no knowledge of it. The first that they knew of it was when it was announced as a leading contender for reviving a New Towns building programme at the Labour Party conference in late September 2025.

The now, somewhat infamous, letter (revealed as the result of a Freedom of Information request) was sent to Sir Michael Lyons by Councillors Nick Mannion and Michael Gorman, leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council, on June 19th 2025. (See scanned version of it in Appendix 1). The two Councillors have since apologised to the full council for that correspondence which they described as clumsily worded. The Council voted unanimously to oppose the Adlington New Town proposal at its meeting on December 10th, 2025 and an unequivocal letter objecting to it was sent to the Communities Secretary, Steve Reed. That letter is replicated in Appendix 2.

Answering a specific question about Adlington New Town – posed towards the end of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee hearing in January – Sir Michael explained that, when his taskforce came to prepare its report to government, it explicitly asked, in every case, if the Councils were content to be listed amongst those to be recommended to government. He went on to say that the response he received from the leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council indicated that they were. He then confirmed that if there had been objections from Councils in respect of any of the 12 sites, they would not have appeared on the list.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Of the 12 recommendations for New Towns made by the New Towns Taskforce to government, the Adlington New Town proposition stands out as being completely illogical and unsustainable as well as being complex and costly to turn into a reality. Whilst CPRE understands the need for new housing, we believe it should be focused on truly sustainable locations. Research described in our report shows that demand exists in those locations. So, why (on earth) Adlington?

Claims by the promoters, Belport, that work could start quickly in Adlington bear no relationship to the reality of providing the necessary infrastructure in such a rural location. Even the feat of improving the rail services would be a major undertaking, whilst the surrounding road systems are not designed to cope with the thousands of new vehicle movements per day that would be generated. And the losses in terms of ecology, environmental capital, food production and tranquillity would be very substantial.

Sweeping statements about economic benefits have yet to be justified. There is currently a strong agricultural based economy. On the other hand, there is no guarantee of new businesses moving into the New Town. Would it simply become another dormitory extension of Greater Manchester?

Much stronger and more deserving cases for New Towns have been put forward for deprived and/or brownfield areas and should be given serious consideration, such as the North Liverpool bid for a brownfield area of Merseyside in need of regeneration. Liverpool City Region is begging for a New Town whereas Cheshire East Council has voted unanimously to reject attempts to have one imposed upon it. The population of North Cheshire are bitterly opposed. So are the area's MPs. The New Towns Taskforce were unaware of the Council's lack of support when shortlisting. In fact, they were misled.

The speculative acquisition of a large area of green belt land by private companies cannot, rationally, be regarded as an adequate reason for selecting an area for a New Town. Delivery vehicles such as Development Corporations will be appointed to progress the New Towns with powers over land acquisition. And they will find it much easier to deliver them in places where the infrastructure already exists and the community and their political representatives are in favour.

As far as the green belt land being targeted for development is concerned, according to the analysis conducted on behalf of Cheshire East Council for its Local Plan, it is of high quality. The green belt analysis, carried out by Ove Arup as part of the evidence base for the plan, assessed almost all the parcels of land surrounding Adlington as making either 'a significant contribution' to the green belt or 'a major contribution'. And the entire parish of Adlington – with the exception of the two small industrial estates on the northern border with Poynton – is washed over with green belt.

Before any serious building work could be carried out, there would have to be very thorough geological excavations because the area is riddled with old coal mine workings, many of which were not logged years ago. A detailed environmental appraisal needs to assess how this area, with such a high water table, could cope with massive development. There has been no testing to see if the young River Dean could handle the run-off (and waste water?) from a New Town. Questions about health services need to be answered. The promoters have offered health centres but not a hospital, yet both close hospitals are stressed in different ways. And the economic claims need to be seriously tested. (Refer SANT report).

The hurdles involved in delivering development at scale in this unsuitable location, where research has shown there is not a particularly high demand for housing, would be legion and lengthy. It is not a sound proposition. It is opposed by the principal authority, Cheshire East Council, a clutch of local MPs and Town and Parish Councils and 19,000 signatories to a petition. It should not be taken forward.

INTRODUCTION/ ABSTRACT

Cheshire residents were shocked and genuinely puzzled when they discovered that a quiet rural backwater adjoining the Peak District National Park with no infrastructure and a poor train service that would require major infrastructure interventions to upgrade had been recommended by the New Towns Taskforce as a suitable New Town site. Especially as it did not comply with the 'lessons learned' from previous New Town programmes as set out in the taskforce's interim report of February 2025, 'Building New Towns for the Future': https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-new-towns-for-the-future. These included the need for a ***"locally specific vision of what each town is seeking to achieve, grounded in local communities"*** and being ***"supported by existing infrastructure"***.

This report on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is not about the justification for New Towns per se. In fact, it is worth clarifying at the outset that CPRE recognises the need for more homes and endorses the shortlisted New Towns proposed for totally brownfield sites. This critique is focused on the reasons given for shortlisting Adlington. It draws on a variety of material that demonstrates why it is a wholly unsuitable location from a planning, environmental, social, geological, economic and transport viewpoint. If this location is validated, CPRE predicts that Adlington will simply become another suburb of the Greater Manchester conurbation.

To date, no robust appraisal of food security or farm business resilience has been carried out. Yet highly productive farmland as well as ancient woodlands and hedgerows would be lost. Hydrology, nutrient and flood pressures on the Rivers Dean and Bollin need to be assessed and there are major queries in terms of supplying adequate water and sewerage facilities.

Who the report is for and what it is trying to achieve

This report has been prepared for those members of the UK government who will be deciding which New Towns to endorse. (It is also a resource for elected representatives at all levels). Its intention is to test the soundness of the concept of locating a New Town of up to 20,000 homes at Adlington in Cheshire. The information herein reflects specialist reports, publicly available material, information released through FOI and EIR requests and local knowledge. (N.B. The links in the report were accessed between January 18th and 22nd, 2026).

Authorship and acknowledgement

The author, Lillian Burns, a journalist with 30 years planning experience, holds no financial interest in the land in question or in any competing development proposals. Nor does she live in or have family in the area that would be covered by the Adlington New Town. No benefits, payments or inducements have been received from any promoters, landowners or commercial interests – or from any charities. The work has been completed independently and voluntarily in order to supply decision-makers with the information they need when weighing up the pros and cons of siting a New Town in North East Cheshire. This report represents the judgement of the author based on the information available at the time of writing and she is indebted to Beverley Moore, CPRE Cheshire Branch's volunteer comms manager, for her help.

PART 1 - KEY POINTS

A RURAL ECONOMY, PORTRAIT AND SETTING THE PHYSICAL SCENE

- Adlington lies immediately to the west of the Pennine foothills, 20 miles south of Manchester city centre and 5 miles north of Macclesfield. It is intersected by the River Dean and the West Coast Main Railway Line. It has the River Bollin to the west and Macclesfield Canal to the east. The two young river basins within which it sits have high water tables and it is unknown how they, particularly the Dean (a tributary of the Bollin), would cope with the run off from and any waste water from a New Town.
- The proposed new town location would reach very close to and most probably, in due course, adjoin the boundaries of existing villages and towns in Cheshire and help close up the gap with the Greater Manchester conurbation, along with other developments taking place.
- Cheshire East's Local Plan explicitly states that the area has important landscape qualities. It describes it as being: *"characterised by a high density of wooded, historic field patterns and interspersed with semi-natural habitats including lowland grassland and small mosses, meres and ponds"* and it propounds the importance of conserving the rural character.
- The area has more tree cover than the average for Cheshire and it includes popular walking trails and a marina.
- The Local Plan also gives the eastern part of the Adlington area additional protection from development by designation as the Peak Fringe Local Landscape.
- The area has a successful rural economy. The land is largely in agricultural use. It produces significant quantities of food and also supports a number of other rural businesses.
- There is a strong likelihood of unlogged coal mine workings in multiple locations.

ADLINGTON – A rural economy

Adlington = milk production, beef, sheep, lambs and potatoes.

Conservative estimates are that it is responsible for:

Rearing 530 calves and producing over 100,000 kg of beef each year

Producing 4.5 million litres of milk per annum

Roughly 1,500 ewes producing 2,500 lambs per year

There is also a specialist breeder who breeds 500 rams every year

Other income-generating, rural offerings that exist in the area:

Farm shops, a petting farm, a poultry farm and a flower farm

Significant equestrian/ livery/ riding facilities and a stud

Rustic wedding/ event venue/ cafe

Holiday accommodation in farms, cottages and guest houses and at a caravan park

Tree surgery, stump removal, logs and kindling and landscaping businesses

Dog spa and kennels businesses

Beverley Moore

Adlington seen from the slightly elevated Long Lane on the eastern border of the parish

This view of the flat Adlington landscape shows how rural and well treed the area is.

SNAP PORTRAIT OF THE AREA BEING TARGETED FOR A NEW TOWN

The Parish of Adlington lies in the Cheshire plain, overlooked by the hills of the South West Peak immediately to the east. It sits in the catchment areas of the Rivers Dean and Bollin, the latter on the western periphery of the Adlington Hall estate. Both rivers rise in Macclesfield Forest nearby. The area is green and lush and populated by more cows and sheep than people and with deer that come across from Lyme Park a short distance to the east. The winding lanes are lined with hedgerows and dry stone walls and have bowers of tree canopies over them and quirky names such as Roundy Lane and Moggie Lane.

ID 90583587 – Brenda Kean – Dreamstime.com

Adlington Hall

GENUKI – Bill Moston

The 'Tin Tabernacle' – St. John's Church

Beverley Moore

Farmer moving cattle on Holehouse Lane

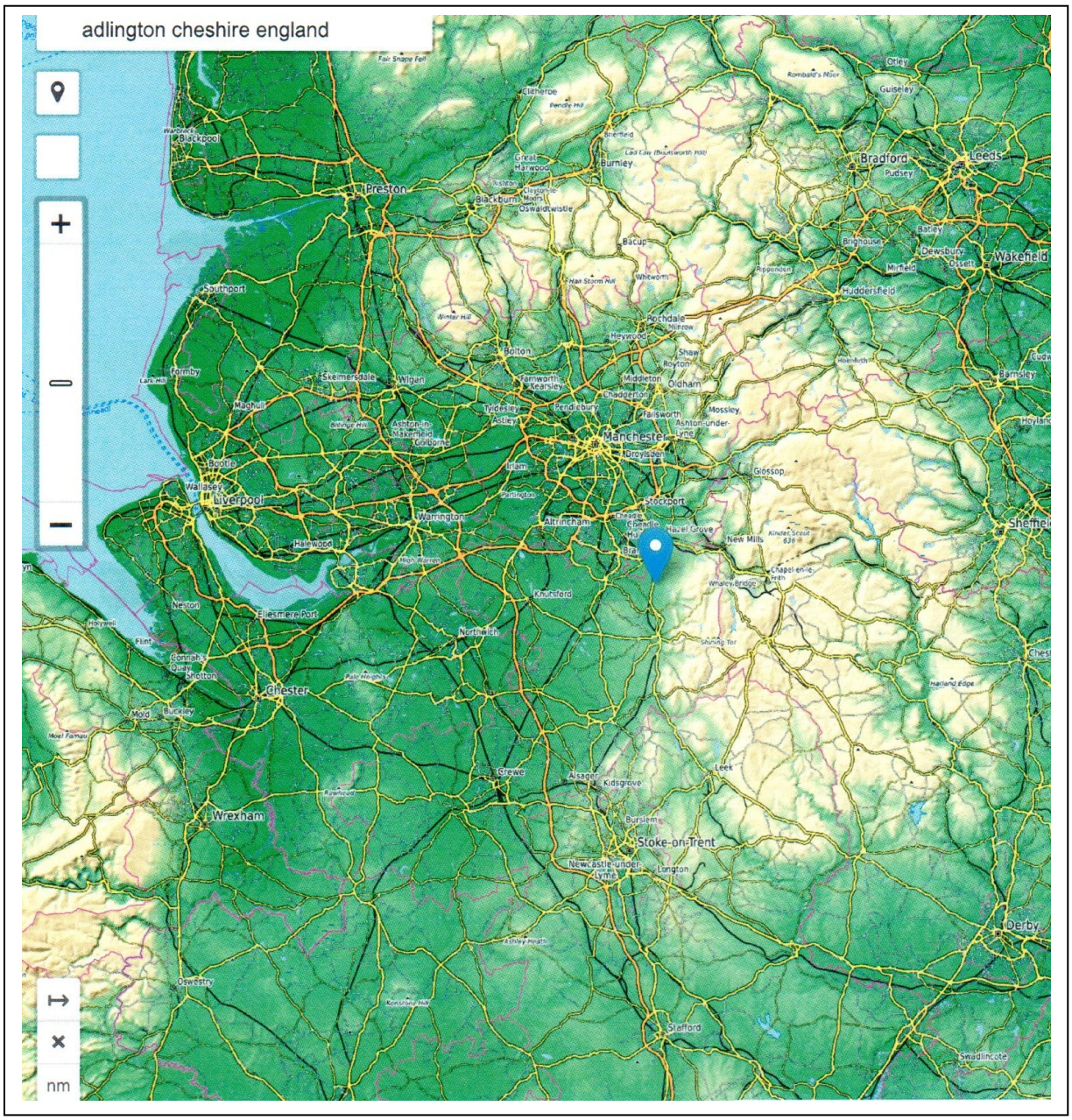
ID 250471092 ©Mrallen | Dreamstime.com

Aerial view, Adlington Marina Steve Allen

Like so many rural English parishes, Adlington throws up remarkable contrasts and variety. On the one hand, the Grade 1 manor house of Adlington Hall sits proudly in listed parkland to the west of the West Coast Main Railway Line that passes through the area north to south. On the other, to the east, it has a small mission church (St. John's) housed in a corrugated iron building, lined with pitch pine, that has stood the test of time since the late 19th century and which is fondly referred to as 'the Tin Tabernacle'. Other than that, Adlington consists of a handful of hamlets, farms, liveries and a population of a little over 1,000, represented by a Parish Council. There is no village centre and there are no shops. It is simply a rural enclave with a primary school – rated 'outstanding' – that runs a unique forest school experience, a well-used Village Hall, two pubs and a marina. The Macclesfield Canal passes through the area as do the walking trails of the North Cheshire Way and the Middlewood Way – an ex railway line. Adlington has a higher tree density than the Cheshire average and much wildlife.

SETTING THE PHYSICAL SCENE

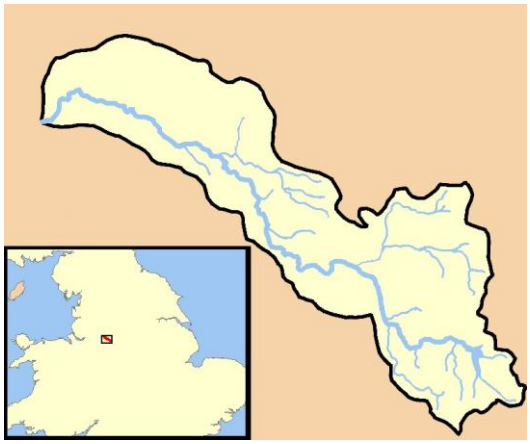
TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF ADLINGTON



Open Topo Map from OpenStreetMap downloaded from elevationmap.net

Adlington, as the topographical map shows, sits immediately to the west of the Pennine foothills, which it looks up to. It is governed by the Unitary Authority of Cheshire East Council. It has borders with Stockport to the North West at Woodford and with the parishes of Poynton to the North, Pott Shrigley to the east, Bollington to the south, and Prestbury to the west. Macclesfield town centre is five miles to the south. Manchester city centre is 20 miles to the north by road (17 as the crow flies).

THE RIVER DEAN



Wikimedia Commons - RichardB

River Dean catchment area

Alamy - Jane Barker

Bridge over R. Dean in Adlington Hall wilderness area

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0

David Dixon

Holehouse Lane bridge over the River Dean

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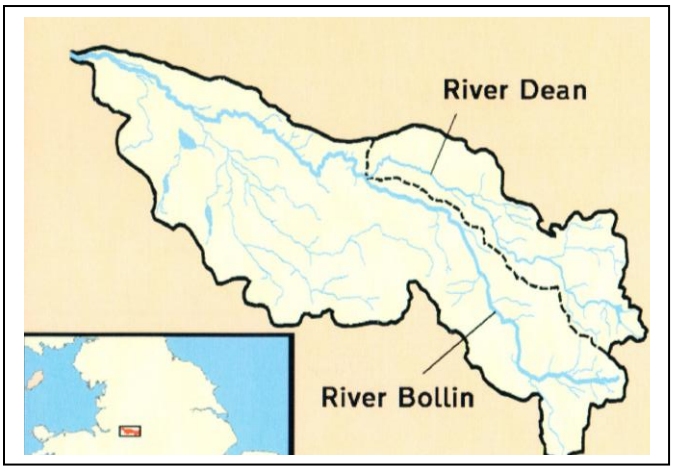
Roger May

River Dean near Mill Lane bridge

The River Dean, which dissects the Adlington parish diagonally, (south east to north west), rises at Longclough on the western edge of the Peak District above the village of Rainow. Together with a number of tributary streams, it is impounded by the dam at Lamaload. The Lamaload Reservoir provides the water for much of the Macclesfield area. From Lamaload, from where there are some wonderful vistas of surrounding countryside, the river flows through Rainow, Bollington, **Adlington** (at Whiteley Green), Prestbury (at Butley Town) and on through the estate grounds of **Adlington Hall**.

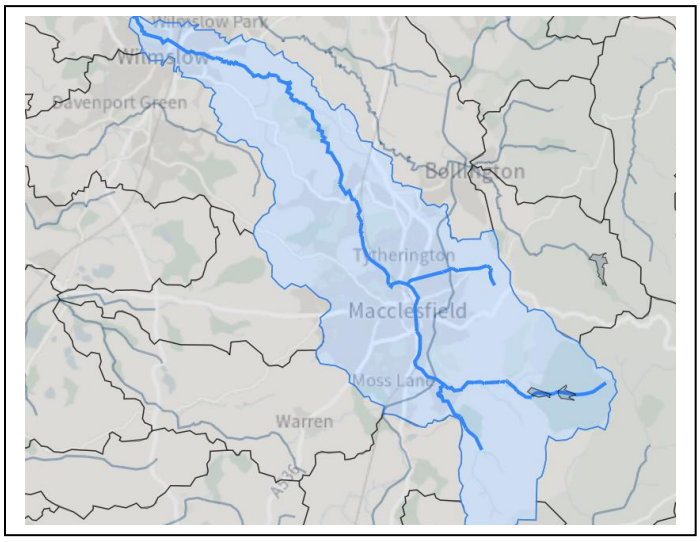
For part of the Dean's passage through the Adlington area, the river itself forms the boundary with Prestbury Parish. Although, at this point, the Dean runs relatively close and parallel to the River Bollin – which is to its west – it does not actually join the Bollin until north of Wilmslow, close to the village of Styal.

THE RIVER BOLLIN



Wikimedia Commons - RichardB

The diagram above shows the Rivers Bollin and Dean in relation to each other. The Bollin is 30 miles (48 km) long. The Dean joins it half way along its length. The catchment area of the two rivers combined is 273 sq. km.



The main source of the Bollin is on Toot Hill on the edge of the Macclesfield Forest. From there it flows through Macclesfield, Tytherington, Prestbury and Wilmslow, passing under Manchester Airport and through Bowdon, to Partington where it falls into the Manchester Ship Canal. The map above, from the government's environmental data website (https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB112069061320), shows the eastern end of the Bollin catchment area – up to the point where it is joined by the Dean.

North of Tytherington, the Bollin runs through the centre of Prestbury and then, north of Prestbury village centre, the river becomes the boundary between Mottram St. Andrew (to the west) and Prestbury parish (to the east). Some of this part of the Bollin catchment that lies to the west of Bollington falls within and adjacent to the Adlington Hall estate. Prestbury is therefore caught up in the Adlington New Town proposals.

WATER RETENTION ON THE LOW-LYING CHESHIRE PLAIN

Having come down from the hills, the two rivers and their tributaries flow through fairly flat, only slightly undulating, countryside as they pass through Adlington. The Dean in particular has a flood plain and the area is notable for its high water table and large quantities of surface water in the form of ponds.

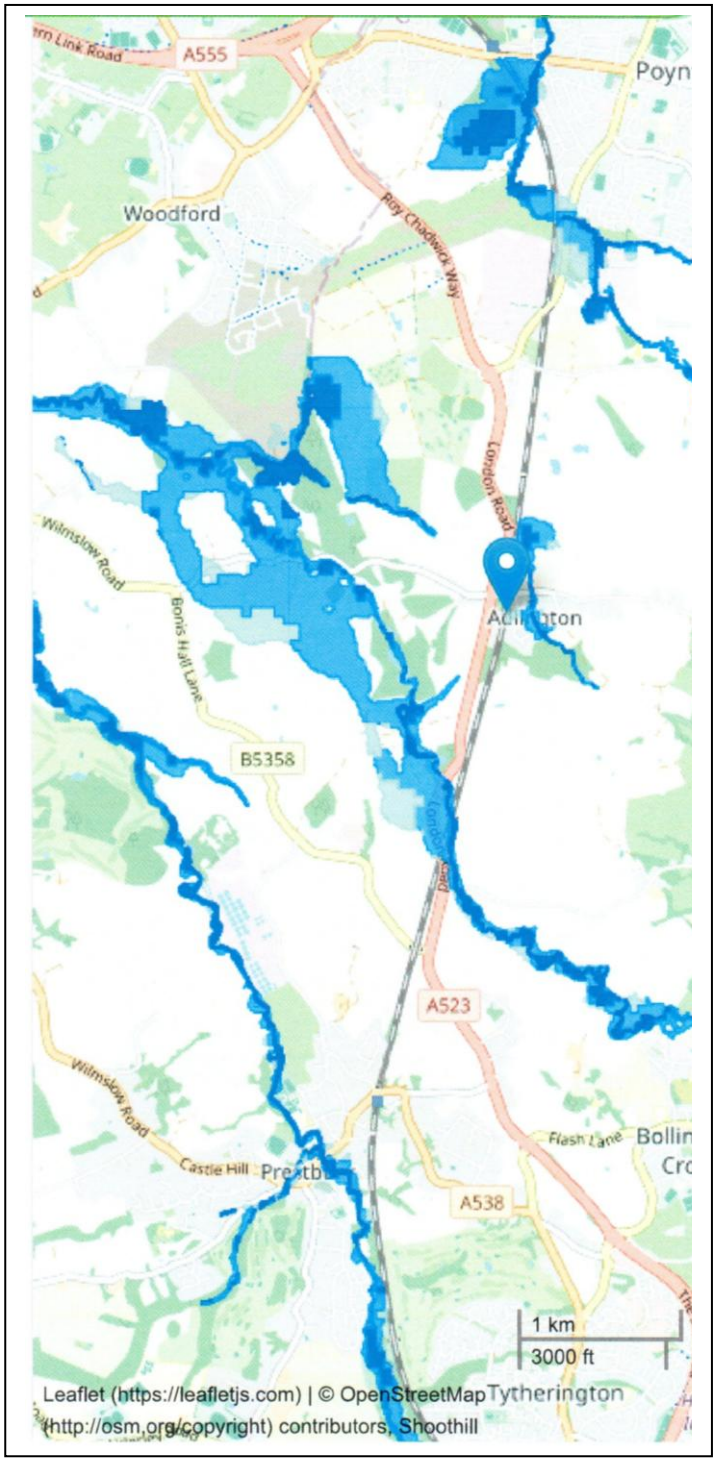


Image from https://nafra.azurewebsites.net

These two flood maps from different sources mirror each other in detail

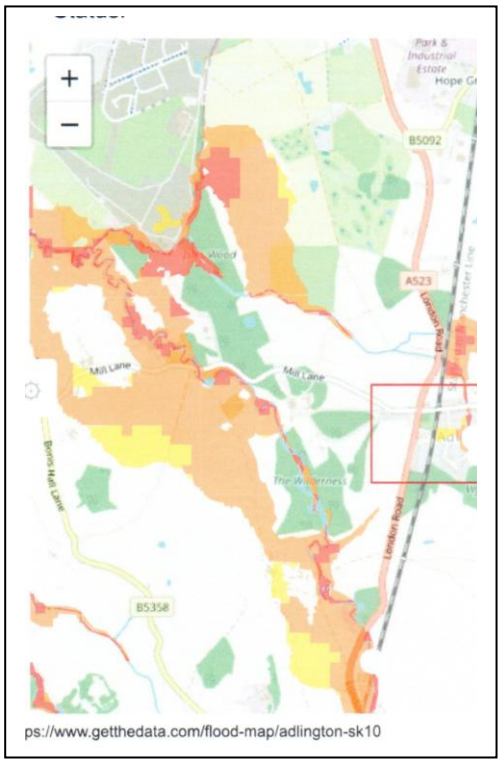
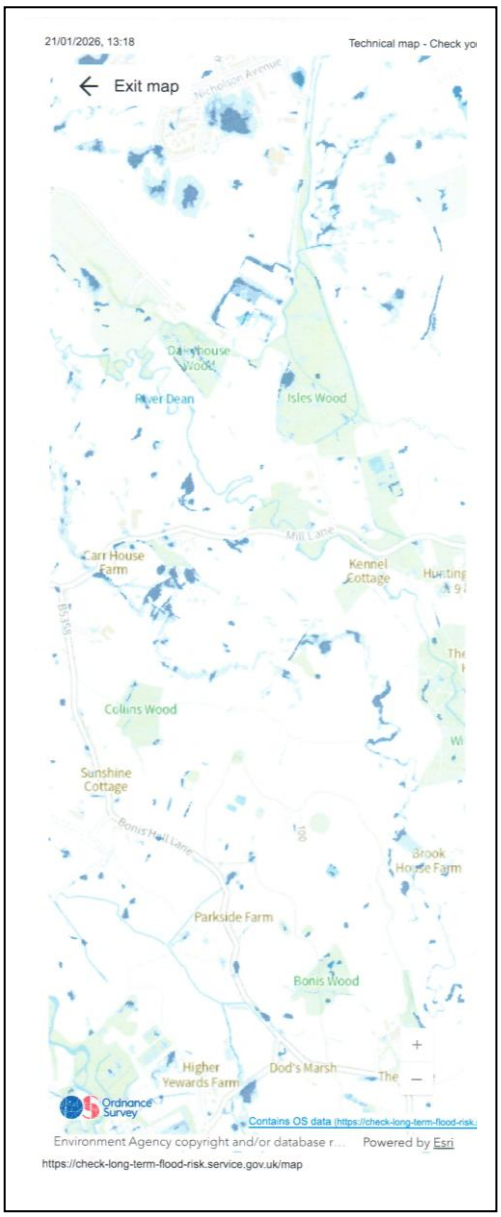


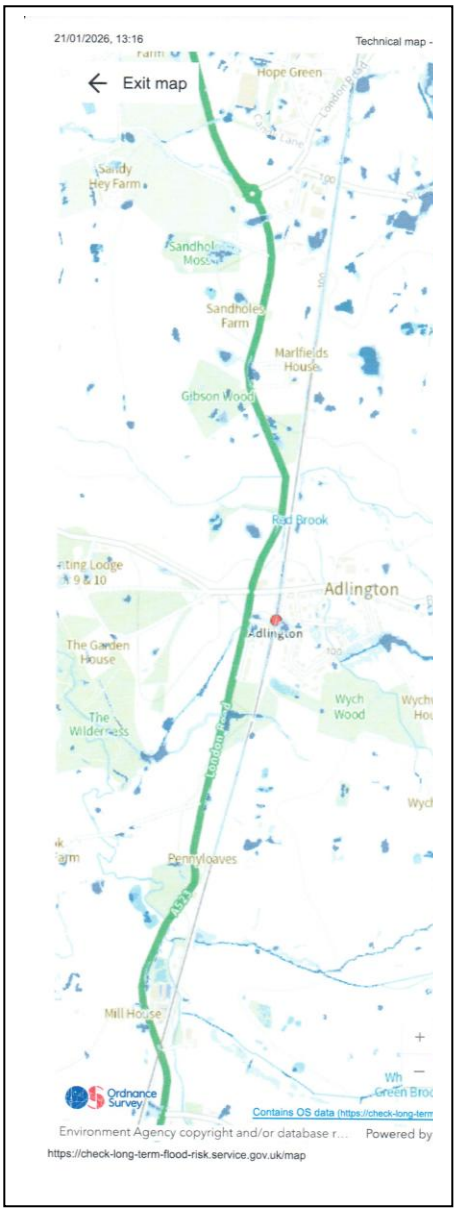
Image from getthedata.com/flood-map/adlington

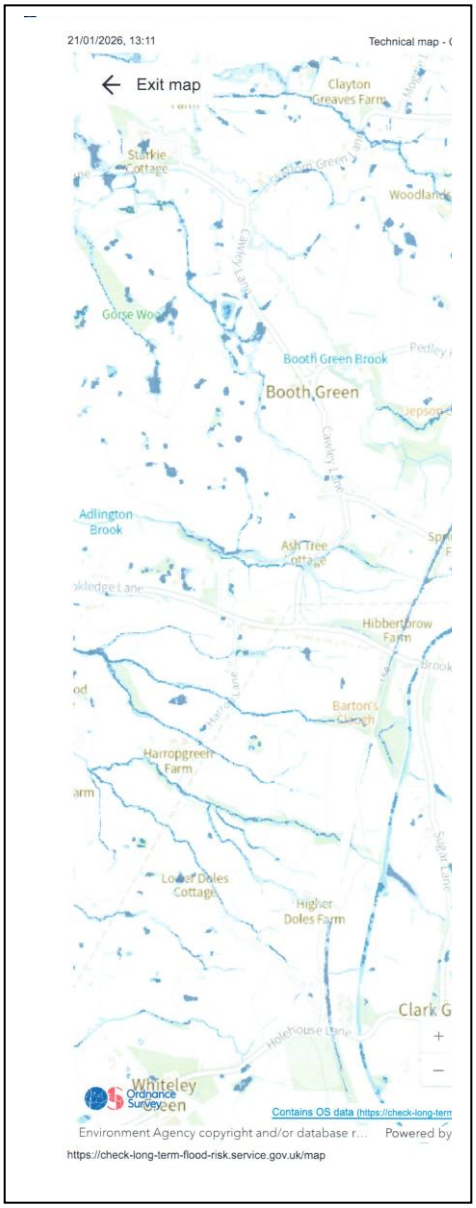
Dark orange – high flood risk
Lighter orange = medium flood risk
Yellow = low flood risk

Dark blue = high flood risk
Bright blue = medium flood risk
Light blue = low flood risk

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY SURFACE WATER MAPS FOR ADLINGTON AREA







EA surface water map - west Adlington EA surface water map - central Adlington EA surface water map east Adlington

Dark blue = high chance of flooding each year

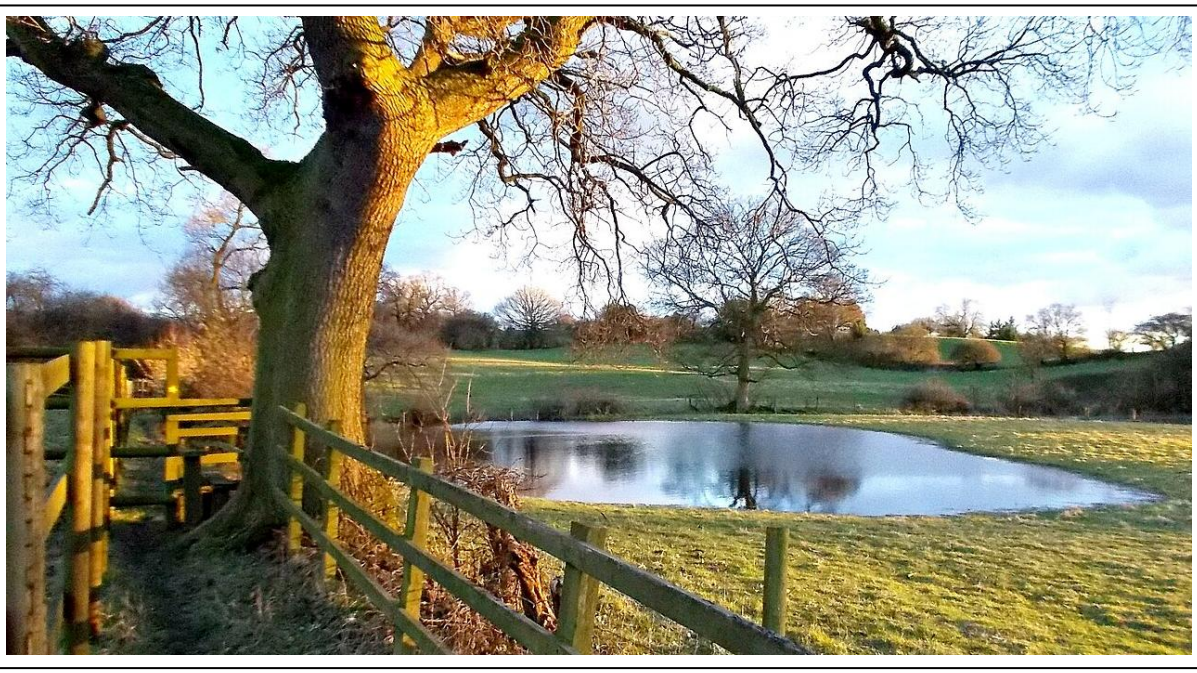
Images taken from: https://check-long-term-flood-risk-service.gov.uk/map

There would be a very substantial amount of surface water to be dealt with if the Adlington area were to ever be built up to any serious extent. It is essential that flood risk tests are conducted in the area.

TYPICAL IMAGES OF THE HIGH WATER TABLE IN ADLINGTON

 N. Chadwick

Red Brook, Dean tributary, and puddles to the east of London Road, looking towards Pennine foothills



 Antony Dixon

Pond in field to east of Skellorn Green and the north of Booth Green, Adlington

THE MACCLESFIELD CANAL

The other waterway that makes a major contribution to Adlington's character is the Macclesfield Canal – which has conservation area status throughout its entire length. The canal and the Middlewood Way walking/ cycling corridor immediately to its west, lie north-south close to the parish's eastern border at a point where the land is beginning to gently rise to form the Peak District.

 Roger D Kidd

Barton's Bridge – bridge no. 22 – across the Macclesfield Canal at Adlington

Barton's Bridge serves two purposes. As well as carrying a footpath, it is used as an accommodation bridge by Clark Green Farm on the east side to provide access to pastures on the west of the canal.

The Macclesfield Canal, part of the 'Cheshire Ring' of canals, was one of the last narrow canals to be built. Designed to serve the mines, quarries and mills along its route, it opened in 1831. It is a little over 27 miles (44 kilometres) in length and has 13 locks, including the stop lock at its southern most point – Hall Green, near Kidsgrove. The other 12 stone locks are all within a distance of one and a quarter miles at Bosley, south of Macclesfield. There are impressive aqueducts which give narrow boat travellers views over the Cheshire plain. One carries the canal across the River Dean. Another spans the main road through Bollington. At Bollington, the Dean is diverted through a tunnel to avoid piercing the canal embankment. The northern most point of the Macclesfield Canal is Harding's Wood junction at Marple where it connects to the Trent and Mersey Canal.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL's DETERMINATION OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Cheshire East Council's determination of its landscape is expressed in Policy SE4 of the Local Plan Strategy: The landscape of the Local Plan Strategy and Policy ENV 3: Landscape Character of its Site Allocations and Development Policies Document.

ENV 3 begins with the requirement that:

> ***"****Development proposals should respect the qualities, features and characteristics that contribute to the distinctiveness of the local area as described in the Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment (2018) or subsequent update, taking into account any cumulative effects alongside any existing, planned or committed development****"****.*

The Landscape Character Assessment, prepared by LUC, designated 11 areas as Local Landscape Designations, explaining that they represented:

> ***"****the highest quality and most valued landscapes in the area of the Borough covered by the Cheshire East Local Plan****"*** and ***"****In line with the LPS, Policy SE4: The Landscape, development that is likely to have an adverse effect on their special qualities as described in the Cheshire East Local Landscape Designation Review (2018) should be avoided****"*** .

One of the areas so designated was the 'Peak Fringe' which cuts through the Adlington Parish from north to south on the eastern side (see map on next page).

The Landscape Character Assessment also divided up the whole borough into 14 different landscape character types, placing Adlington into the 'Higher Wooded Farmland' one, (ref. LCT 11). The description of areas in this category is:

> ***"****A well-managed rural landscape between the Peaks and the Plain valued for its rural character and qualities which are offered in close proximity to urban areas. It is characterised by a high density of wooded, historic field patterns and interspersed with semi-natural habitats including lowland grassland and small mosses, meres and ponds. Provision for recreation in the landscape is good and aligns with ecological and heritage conservation. The rural farmland has a low density settlement pattern with a distinct vernacular.*
>
> *The overall management strategy for this landscape should be to conserve the rural character and quality of this densely wooded farmland, conserve the valued semi-natural habitats and restore the traditional field pattern with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees where these have been lost****"****.*
> (Page 128)

Commentary

When the landscape character areas were defined, no-one envisaged anything more than the most modest level of development in North East Cheshire - and even that to be very low key.

The Peak District National Park Fringe as depicted in CEC's Local Plan

The map is from the Cheshire East Local Plan, page 163

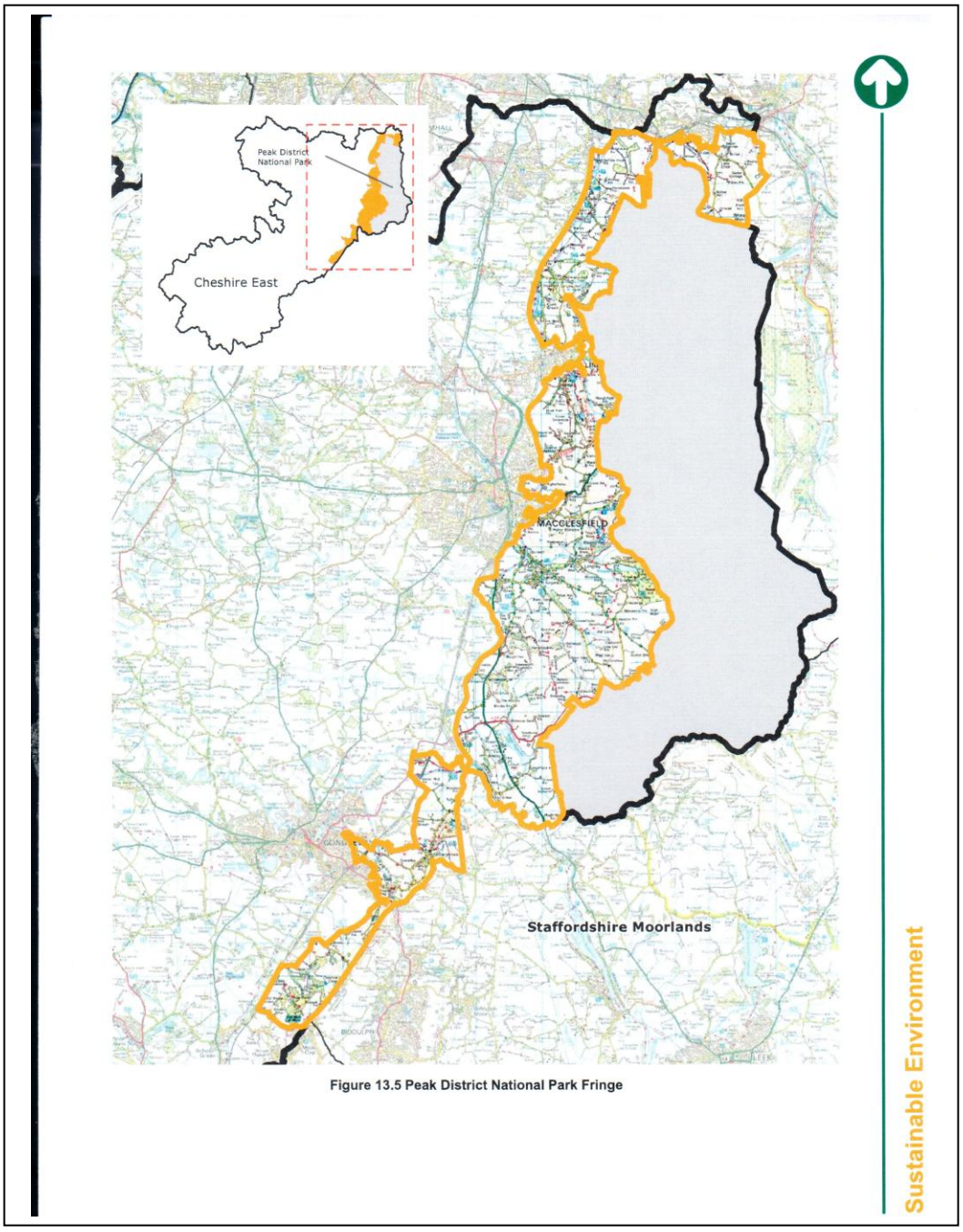
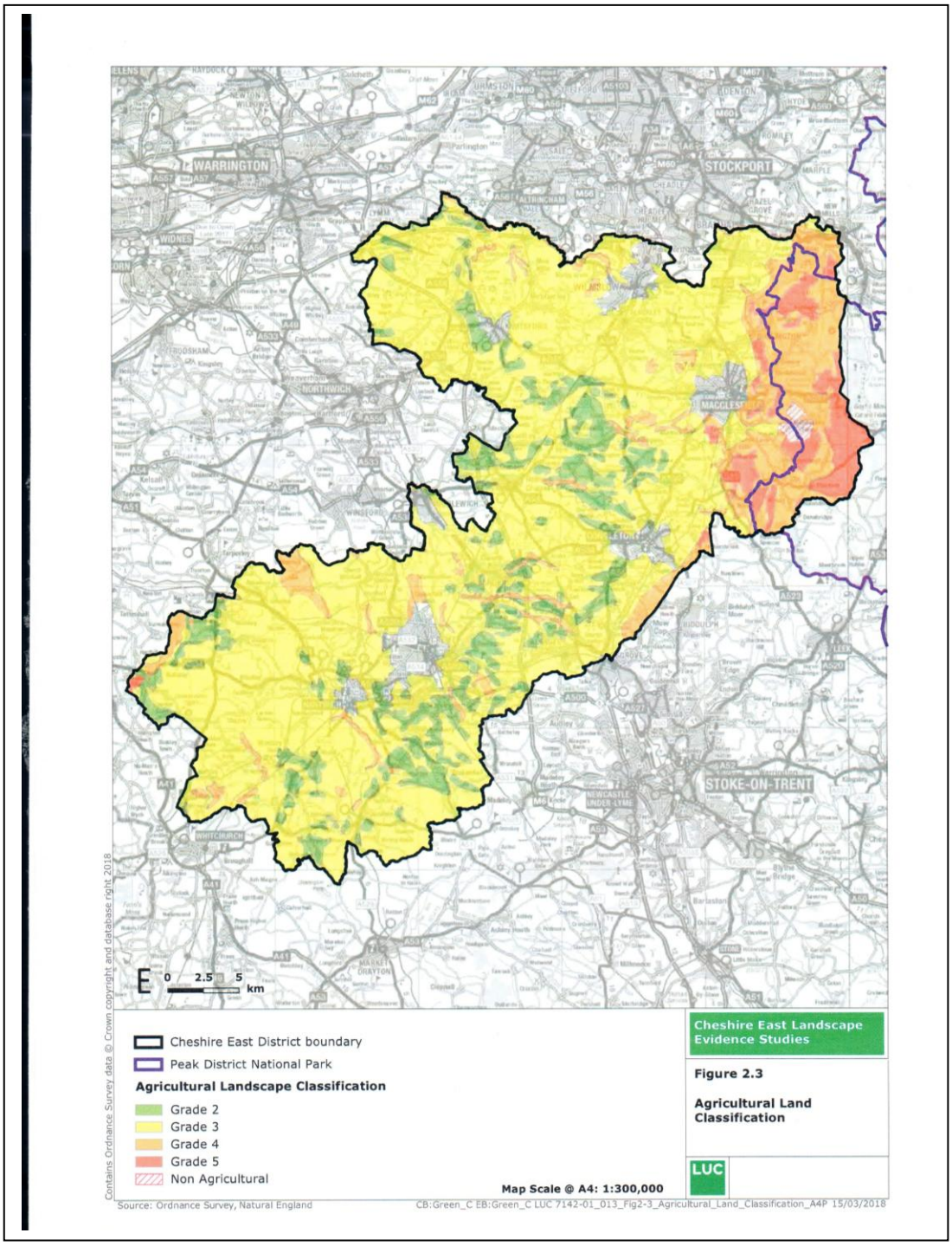


Figure 13.5 Peak District National Park Fringe

The eastern side of Adlington Parish, plus part of Disley Parish – to the east of Adlington beyond Pott Shrigley and Lyme Handley – and also various pockets of land to the east and south of Macclesfield are in the area designated in the Cheshire East Local Plan as the Peak District National Park Fringe. Part one of Policy SE 15 says: ***"****Within the Peak District National Park Fringe, development that would affect the setting of the Peak District National Park will be resisted where it compromises the statutory designation and purposes of the National Park****"***.

Agricultural land classification - from CEC's Landscape Character Assessment

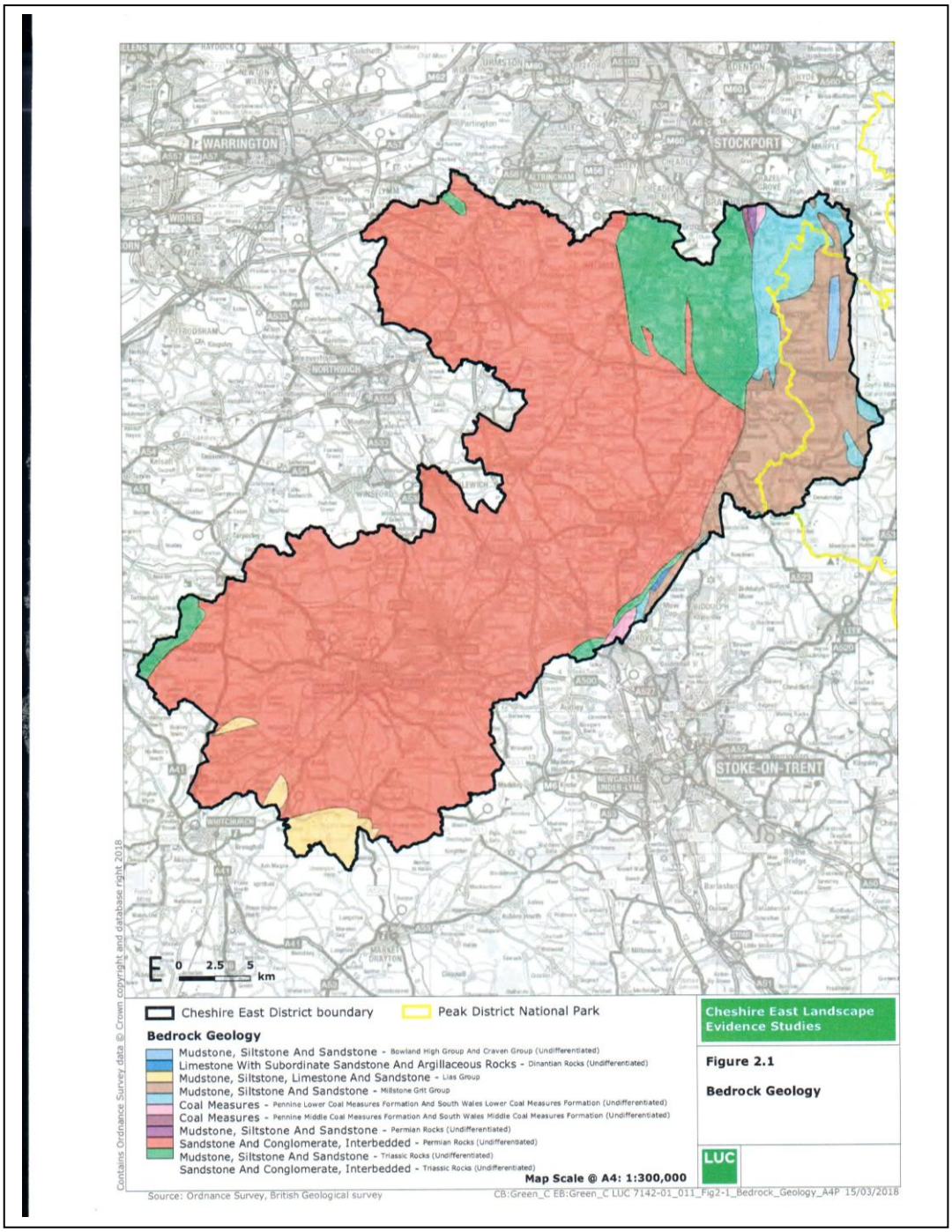
fig. 2.3



Land in the UK is divided into different classifications, with Grade 1 being the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land and grade 5 being 'very poor quality' land. Much of Adlington is Grade 3 (good to moderate quality) land, with most of the Peak Park Fringe area Grade 4. These grades are largely relevant for arable crops, whereas the land in Adlington is primarily used for grazing, producing substantial amounts of food each year (see page 8).

Bedrock Geology

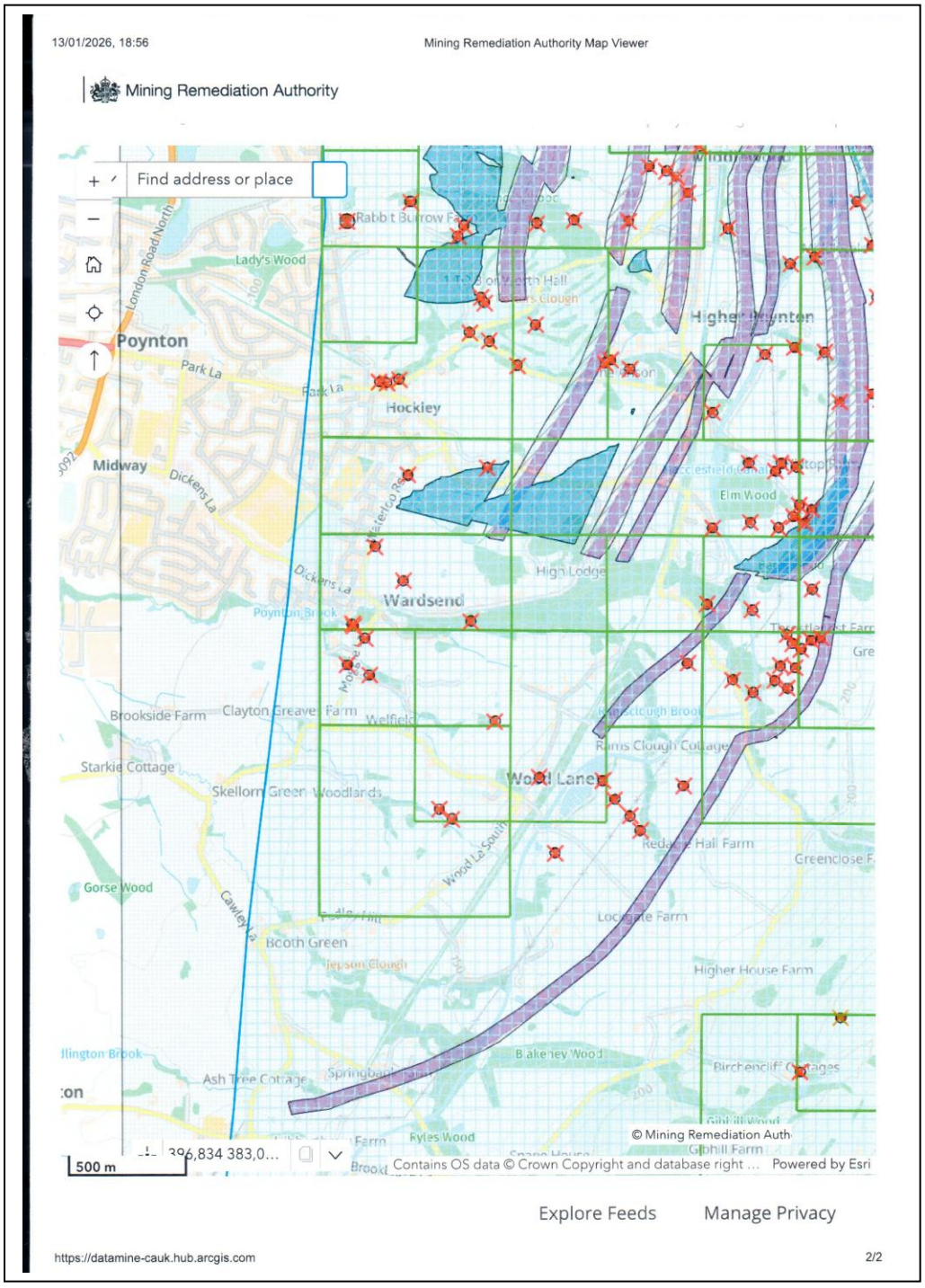
fig. 2.2



Landscape Character Assessment work also identified the bedrock geology of the Borough, clearly showing that a proportion of Adlington sits on coal deposits. Some of the known former coal workings are mapped in the Mining Remediation Authority records, but it is generally recognised that, many years ago, many workings were not logged.

COAL MINING RECORDS FOR THE ADLINGTON AREA

From the Mining Remediation Authority (https://datamine-cauk.hub.arcgis.com/)



Coal seams are In purple and past shallow coal mine workings and surface workings in blue. Red crosses are where previous shafts are known to have been.
It would be essential to carry out a detailed geological investigation before considering significant construction in this area.

ADLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: Spatial Character Assessment

Adlington Parish had embarked upon a Neighbourhood Plan when Covid hit in 2020. The process had got as far as the Neighbourhood Area being adopted and a spatial character assessment had been written by a professional planner but, due to a variety of factors, it was not resuscitated after the lockdowns. Nonetheless, it is apposite to quote from the still relevant spatial character work:

"National Landscape Context

The Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain National Character Area (NCA) comprises most of the County of Cheshire, the northern half of Shropshire and a large part of north west Staffordshire. This is an expanse of gently undulating, lush, pastoral farmland which is bounded by the Mersey Valley NCA in the north, with its urban and industrial development, and extending to the rural Shropshire Hills NCA in the south. To the West it is bounded by the hills of the Welsh borders and to the east and south east by the urban areas within the Potteries and Churnett Valley, Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands and Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCAs". (Para 3.1).

Local Landscape Policy

The document goes on to quote Policy SE4: The Landscape, from the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and also what was then the emerging Cheshire East Design Guide. The guide placed Adlington within the North Cheshire Fringe settlement character area and described it as ***"****largely rural in nature****"***, expanding with: ***"****Away from the main towns, settlement consists of dispersed farmsteads and dwellings with a number of nucleated villages and small hamlets****"***. (Para. 5.5).

History and evolution

"*Adlington is mentioned in the Domesday Book****"*** (para. 6.1) …. ***"****Until 1930 there were a considerable number of coalmines and, whilst long since closed, this is still evident in the landscape today****"*** (para. 6.2) …. ***"****Newer housing was built off Brookledge Lane near to the train station in 1956* [but] *there has been limited growth in recent years and development has largely been single dwellings, conversions and extensions****"*** (para. 6.3) and ***"****Greenbelt restrictions will have contributed to the way the Parish has evolved …. limiting development****"*** (para. 6.4).

Overview of the Parish

"*Woodland is extensive in the parish****"*** (para. 7.2), ***"****The underlying geology of this area is the sandstone with Cheshire Pebble Beds and Pennine lower coal measures****"*** (para. 7.3) and ***"****Outside of the main village* [the area around the railway station and extending along Brookledge Lane] *the Parish is made of five small communities of residential development dispersed across the Parish and a rural hinterland comprising large areas of agricultural, dispersed farmsteads and limited individual residences****"*** (para. 7.7).

The report went on to map listed buildings in the area. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to replicate the map.

There were recommendations about building and landscape design, construction materials and parking and the report closed with the following, headed 'Landscape Sensitivities':

"*In Adlington the landscape is sensitive to the following … development of inappropriate scale, design and density which is eroding the character****"***.

THE ADLINGTON LANDSCAPE

 Roger Kidd

Pasture field east of Sugar Lane, Adlington

 Anthony O'Neil

The Middlewood Way between Whiteley Green and Clark Green

PART TWO – KEY POINTS

SETTING THE POLITICAL SCENE

- The Labour Party's manifesto included pledges to take a brownfield first approach and to preserve green belt (though removing some 'low quality' areas via grey belt designation).
- The process for deciding how to prioritise New Town sites has been opaque. The taskforce chose locations from submitted bids (the vast majority from local authorities). There is no evidence to suggest they conducted independent research into which areas of the country would most benefit from a new town and bidders were not required to provide economic impact reports.
- Angela Rayner promised the taskforce would work with local communities – yet no consultation took place with Cheshire East residents. The local MP, the local authority, the local town and parish councils and local community all now oppose the New Town.
- The House of Lords Built Environment Committee has expressed concern about the certainty of government funding for New Towns. The promoters of Adlington New Town have stated that it is not their role as developers to correct public service inadequacies.

THE ARGUMENTS 'FOR' ADLINGTON NEW TOWN

- The case put forward by the taskforce and promoter Belport relies largely on aspirations, promises and assertions. No evidence has been shared with the public that validates a New Town in Adlington.
- The taskforce report says the site will deliver a town on greenfield land. It is in fact green belt and would adjoin neighbouring towns.
- The rural location, requiring 'minimal remediation', and 'consolidated land ownership' are given as key arguments in favour of the site.
- The task force and Belport admit substantial new infrastructure would be necessary to deliver a New Town. Belport say this is not for them to provide, but they could begin building without it.

SETTING THE POLITICAL SCENE

Launching the New Towns Programme

In May 2024, Angela Rayner, then Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, announced that Labour wanted to build 10 to 12 new towns – each of at least 10,000 homes. The sites, she said, would be unveiled by the end of a Labour government's first year in power (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c900pgjlvx8o) and, in an article written for the Independent, she promised ***"****the towns will have full amenities, transport links and parks****"*** (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/angela-rayner-new-towns-home-ownership-b2697525.html).

When the Labour Party subsequently won the general election a couple of months later, it was on a manifesto (https://labour.org.uk/change/manifesto-accessibility/) which committed to 'Get Britain building again' and, specifically, (on pages 36 - 38) to:

- Update the National Planning Policy Framework
- Take a brownfield first approach
- Preserve the green belt, although – without changing its purpose or general extent – to release lower quality 'grey belt' land
- Introduce effective new mechanisms for cross-boundary strategic planning
- Require Combined and Mayoral Authorities to strategically plan for housing growth in their areas
- Deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable housebuilding in a generation
- Take steps to ensure more high quality, well-designed and sustainable homes are built that increase climate resilience and promote nature recovery

Soon after the election of July 2024, as secretary of state at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Angela Rayner revealed she had appointed Sir Michael Lyons, Chairman of the English Cities Fund, to lead a New Towns Taskforce and Dame Kate Barker to act as deputy chair and a New Towns Unit was being established within the MHCLG to support their work and bring in public and private sector funding. She promised the taskforce ***"****will work with mayors, local leaders and communities to find the right places****"*** for the new towns. Other taskforce members were revealed in September 2024 when they met for the first time. Their principal task was to sift through the 100 plus bids (the vast majority from local authorities) that had come in through a call for sites and report to government their recommendations for 12 likely locations the following summer, which they did: (https://www.theplanner.co.uk/2024/09/18/new-towns-taskforce-meets-members-announced). Release of the report and the government's response to it (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-towns-taskforce-report-to-government) took place at the Labour Party conference in Liverpool on the weekend of Saturday September 27th and Sunday September 28th 2025.

New Towns Taskforce Final Report to Government

The New Towns Taskforce report (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-towns-taskforce-report-to-government) contains many generic statements supporting the principle of New Towns but relatively concise explanations as to why specific choices were made. No back-up evidence base or taskforce minutes have been made available and nor has there been an explanation of the modus operandi used for assessing the candidates. Subsequent Freedom of Information requests have been unsuccessful in shedding light on the process. It is understood there was no template for lodging bids but it is unknown whether there was a scoring mechanism or not.

In his foreword to the report, Sir Michael Lyons explains that the taskforce was asked to focus on ***"****unlocking economic growth as well as making a significant contribution to meeting housing demand****"***. He said they ***"****have used the last year to engage widely with landowners, residents, housing providers, the design community, investors as well as many others****"*** and he maintained that the chosen sites had ***"****a degree of local support and landowners, developers, councils and others ready to welcome a new town****"***.

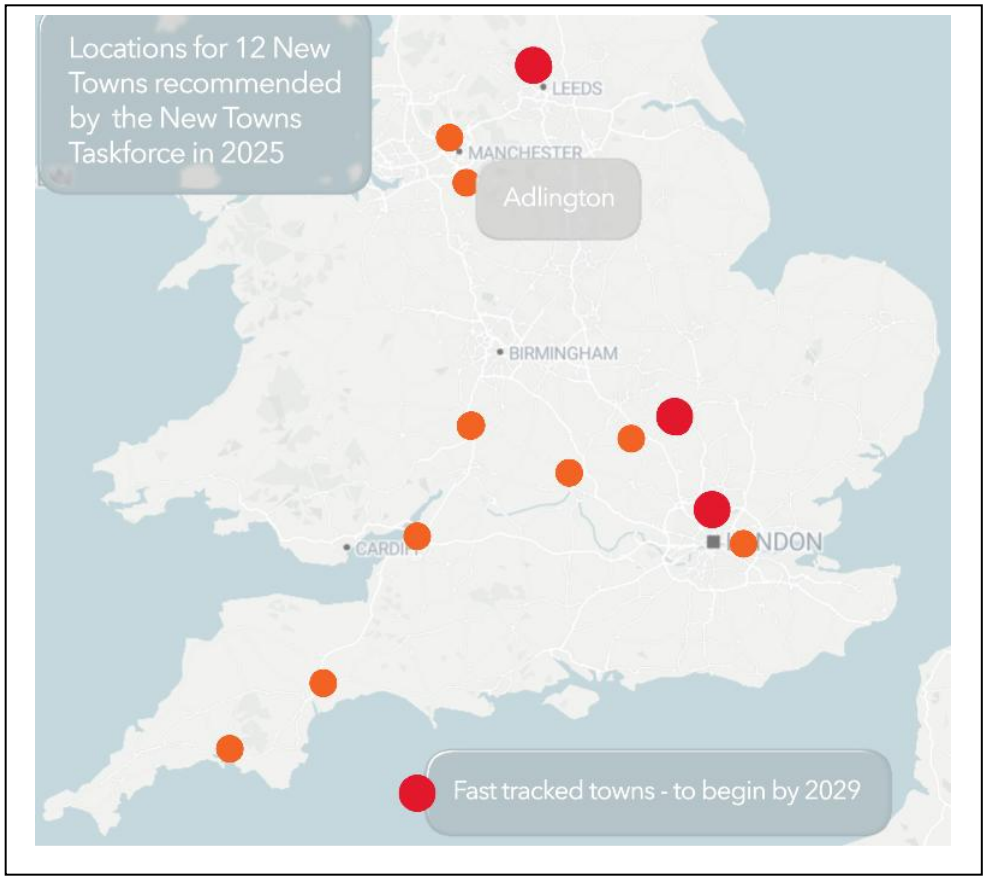
The recommended sites and some of the (varying) validations for them, were as follows:

a. **Adlington, Cheshire East:** a standalone settlement to serve the growing industries in Greater Manchester & Cheshire as identified in the Government's Industrial Strategy
b. **Brabazon and the West Innovation Arc**: A corridor of connected development north of Bristol in South Gloucestershire in one of the country's highest productivity areas ….
c. Bringing together **Chase Park and Crews Hill, Enfield**: An expanded development delivering green development and helping address London's acute housing need
d. **Heyford Park, Cherwell**: Redevelopment of the former airbase connecting to Oxford …
e. Urban development in **Leeds**; catalysing the city's existing economic prospects ……
f. **Manchester Victoria North:** Inner-city development/densification supporting continued growth, attracting high skilled workers to service the city's diverse industries
g. **Marlcombe, East Devon**: a standalone settlement strengthening the region's labour supply and supporting the Exeter and East Devon Enterprise Zone
h. A 'Renewed Town' in **Milton Keynes**; reinvigorating the city centre and expanding to the city periphery whilst reshaping the way people travel by delivering Mass Transit
i. **Plymouth**: Densified development of Britain's Ocean City/capitalising on the £4,4 bn. government investment in HMNB Devonport, Western Europe's largest naval base
j. **Tempsford, central Bedfordshire**: New settlement to maximise benefits of East West Rail by building well-connected town in heart of Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor
k. **Thamesford, Greenwich:** Creating a riverside settlement/ unlocking inaccessible land in the city and improving connectivity if the proposed extension of the Docklands Light Railway can be delivered to enable development
l. **Worcestershire Parkway, Wychavon:** Expanded development accelerating delivery around the existing train station to help meet regional housing need ….

Commentary

Sir Michael Lyons explains that the brief he was given was to unlock economic growth and make a significant contribution to meeting housing demand. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the taskforce independently set about establishing where the areas of greatest need were in respect of economic growth or housing need – as opposed to accepting what the New Town bidders had to say. Certainly, they did not ask for economic impact reports to be submitted with bids and nor did they commission any bespoke research on areas of most housing need. Also, it is important to flag up contrary views about delivery expressed by the taskforce and Belport. The former called for infrastructure to be provided first. The latter are saying they could begin delivery without new infrastructure in place. In effect, therefore, they would be treating the enterprise as just another housing development.

It is also important to set the record straight in respect of claims made by Sir Michael in his foreword with regards to community engagement in all the areas concerned. No consultation took place prior to the publication of his report with residents in Cheshire East and there was no *'degree of local support from councils'*. The concept of siting a New Town anywhere in Cheshire East was a well kept secret prior to September 27th 2025 when the report was launched and, once it was, it became subject to strong protests from local communities and unanimous opposition from Cheshire East Council.



OpenStreetMap

House of Lords New Towns Inquiry and report from first module

Shortly after the New Town Taskforce report was released, the House of Lords Built Environment Committee published the first of its reports into New Towns: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldbuiltenv/183/18305.htm.

As one of the first acts of the Labour government was to launch its New Towns programme, the Lords' Committee had resolved to examine the subject in some detail but, in view of the of vastness of the subject matter, they decided to do so in a modular manner in order to try and make it more manageable.

The first module, 'Practical Delivery', was launched with a call for evidence in March 2025. It investigated the fundamental elements necessary for the delivery of New Towns. It did not speculate about the locations that the Taskforce might select. It held 11 evidence sessions and received 88 pieces of written evidence, including one from CPRE setting out 10 principles for 'New Towns Done Well', (downloadable from its 'Resources' page on its website: https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/principles-for-new-towns-done-well/. The CPRE principles were:

1. Brownfield first, sustainable locations
2. Meaningful community engagement
3. Integrate and protect green space and nature
4. Housing diversity for inclusive communities
5. Encourage market disruption
6. Integrate transport planning
7. What goes where to create a sense of place
8. Carbon neutral development
9. Transparent accountability
10. Secure long-term success

Many of the contributors referred to the successes and failures of the post war New Towns programme which delivered 32 new towns across the country between 1947 and 1970. The committee was also advised that housing associations will find it difficult to take on affordable homes in new towns if the government sticks to its target of 40%.

The committee identified the following core attributes of the post war new towns:

- Having a clear purpose and vision, both for the individual towns and for the programme as a whole
- Being government-led and championed
- Providing social and physical infrastructure at the start of development
- Capturing the uplift in the value of land for the benefit of the community
- Having initial funding coming from the state with the government acting as a patient investor (funding was identified as one of the most critical issues)
- Being innovative and trialling new approaches, including the provision of transport infrastructure
- Treating a town holistically, including by delivering employment and recreation.

House of Lords New Town Inquiry, continued

The Lords' Committee called for a clear compelling national vision to be set and a dedicated government minister to be in charge of the programme. And it advised that those leading the New Towns programme must have a clear understanding of the history of similar initiatives (including eco towns and garden villages) and the different contexts within which they took place and be able to draw on the lessons of the past.

When the Lords Built Environment Committee later responded to the New Towns Taskforce report, it noted alignment with its own report on issues such as community involvement, stewardship and the opportunity to test new ways of funding infrastructure.

It expressed concern, however, about the certainty of central government funding. It said that the government's response to the Taskforce report made it clear it still had much work to do in establishing a roadmap for its programme and the committee chair, Lord Gasgoine, added a cautionary comment that building must be of the highest standard.

On October 31st, 2025 the Built Environment Committee launched the second module of its New Towns inquiry, 'Creating Communities'. It took evidence on this in November and December. On December 9th (the day before Cheshire East Council voted to object to Adlington New Town), Niall Bolger, non-executive director of Belport gave evidence.

In his opening response on progress since designation, Mr. Bolger said that the company had been able to engage more actively with stakeholders since the announcement was made, although it was still at an early stage of community involvement. He maintained that, prior to the New Towns announcement being made at the end of September, the company had been subject to a non-disclosure agreement.

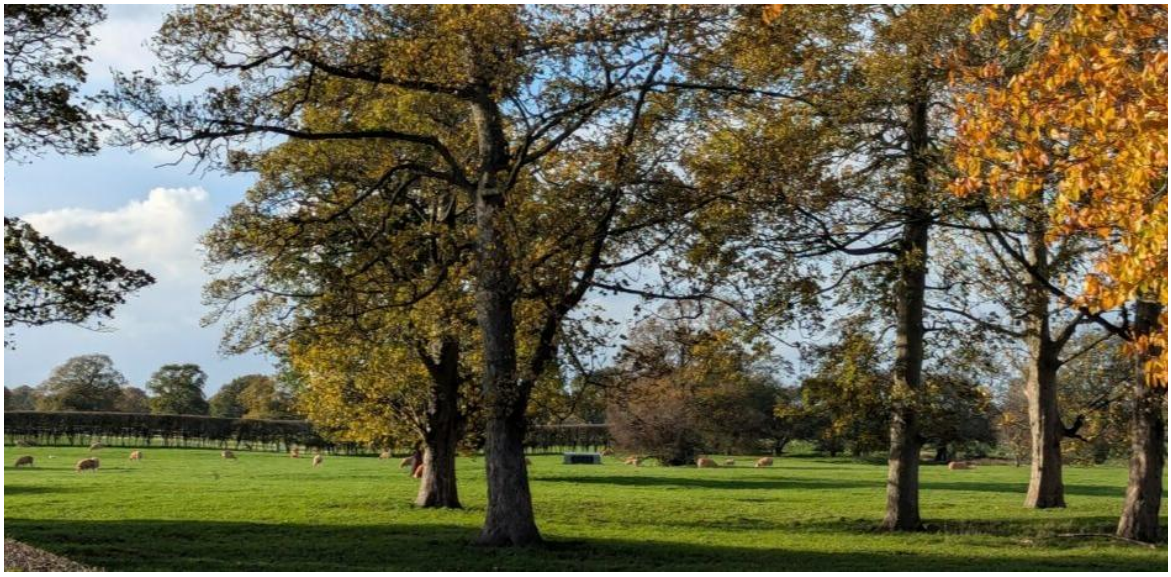
The company's objective was to win people over, he said, explaining that Belport were positioning the Adlington New Town in the context of many years of deterioration in public services. He acknowledged that residents had great concerns about healthcare – including waiting lists at Stepping Hill and Macclesfield hospitals – and about public transport and other public services, but made the point ***"that will not be corrected by us"***. For the new town to be a success, it would require those public services to be delivered (by others).

He called for decision-making to be speeded up in relation to transport infrastructure. It was not acceptable, he told the committee, to wait nine years for a decision in relation to heavy rail infrastructure. In addition, he called for the housing figures for new towns to be included in the local authority housing targets.

Mr. Bolger stated that Belport owned 82% of the land in Adlington and was progressing in earnest with detailed master plans to deliver no less than 15,000 dwellings in time. He revealed that, two weeks previously, the MHCLG deputy director had visited Adlington and that Belport were also actively engaged with Homes England. However, the bulk of Adlington New Town, he said, would be delivered by private sector investment.

The Built Environment Committee held another oral session on 'Creating Communities' on January 21st 2026 when Communities Secretary, Steve Reed, gave evidence. The report on this module will be published shortly and there will be further modules.

Typical Adlington vistas



Beverley Moore

Looking north from Mill Lane, Adlington

Beverley Moore

Looking south from Mill Lane Adlington

THE ARGUMENTS 'FOR' ADLINGTON NEW TOWN – by the Taskforce

The case for Adlington New Town is essentially short because, at the turn of years 2025 and 2026, so little information has been released and no supporting technical justification is available. The New Towns Taskforce report, on pages 32 and 33, describe it as:

- *Being able to "deliver a standalone new town of over 14,000 – 20,000 new homes on approximately 970 hectares of greenfield land"* [N.B. The land is in fact green belt].
- *"Benefitting from largely consolidated ownership"*
- *"… strategically located to benefit the economies of both Cheshire and Greater Manchester, with Manchester city centre directly accessible from Adlington station in under 30 minutes. Cheshire East has a knowledge rich economy, with 50% of its workforce in highly skilled jobs .. but growth is constrained by a shortage of housing"*

and maintains that:

- *"By expanding the housing supply and offering a more diverse mix of housing types and tenures, Adlington has the potential to make Cheshire's housing market both more accessible and more resilient"*
- *"As a primary greenfield site there will be minimal need for land remediation"* … *"once a delivery vehicle is mobilised site preparation can commence quickly"*
- *"Exemplar placemaking can be achieved with a commitment to environmental sustainability and minimum 40% affordable housing provision"*

Although it acknowledges *"a new town at Adlington would not be without its challenges"*:

> *"Whilst Adlington benefits from an existing mainline station, train services are infrequent and the site is not currently integrated into local bus networks. A comprehensive sustainable transport strategy will be required to mitigate the currently high risk that the site becomes car dependent"*

And it calls for government intervention to solve the problem:

> *"The government would need to ensure that necessary infrastructure is prioritised including significant upgrades to the local road networks, improvements to Adlington and Stoke-on-Trent train stations to address capacity issues on the whole line and increased rail service frequency"*

admitting that:

> *"These works will come at considerable cost and may impact the speed at which the new town is able to reach its full potential"*.

It concludes that new town designation/ the appointment of a Development Corporation *"would streamline planning processes, unlock green belt for development"* stating that without it, *"any development brought forward would likely be small scale and piecemeal"*.

THE ARGUMENTS 'FOR' ADLINGTON NEW TOWN by promoters Belport

Land and property investment partners Belport Adlington and Revcap together have the **'**largely consolidated ownership**"** of the land that would make up Adlington New Town.

They purchased the Adlington Hall Estate, amounting to 777 hectares of land in Adlington and Prestbury, in 2023 and since then have been acquiring or acquiring options on more land – which allowed them to put forward a bid to the Taskforce that amounted to circa 1,000 hectares. They did this with no prior public consultation. Since the government's announcement at the end of September, they have held a two-day engagement session at Adlington Hall. At it, the author of this report was told by a Belport director that the entire area was grey belt. Belport have also produced some promotional material:-

'What is a New Town?'

This e-document maintains that each New Town will:

- Provide a mix of homes, jobs, schools and services
- Be designed around sustainable transport and green spaces
- Use modern construction and technology
- Be locally led, with strong community engagement

It quotes figures relating to the national housing crisis and, for Cheshire East, it states:

- In 2024 Cheshire East had the third highest house prices in the North West (Cheshire East Housing Strategy 2025-2028) pushing younger people and those on lower incomes, including key workers, out of the area
- Many people in Cheshire East are paying up to eight times their income to purchase a home
- According to Council data, there are over 12,000 people registered for social housing on Cheshire Homechoice, of which just under 3,000 are high priority cases
- In Cheshire East, 21 households are currently living in temporary accommodation

Prospectus: 'Adlington, a new northern community surrounded by historic parkland'

There have been two versions of an e-document with this title.

The first one (now removed from the website) claimed:

"To ensure Adlington's long term success, the project would be managed in phases. Sensitivity and thought would be given to the environment, healthcare, the high street, schools and other services that improve the quality of life. Most of all, residents' needs will be carefully considered at each stage as the town matures. In addition to providing new homes, Adlington can also provide new economic opportunities". It goes on to claim *"Adlington is estimated to generate more than £3.9bn NPV of household expenditure and more than £350 GVA pa through 4,000 office jobs plus additional employment"*.

The first version also contained a set of design principles which promised:

- *"Homes of all shapes and tenures designed in clusters of welcoming neighbourhoods, each part of a cohesive collection of character areas"*
- *"The River Dean will be rewilded to form a corridor linking neighbourhoods with trails, ponds, wetlands"*
- *"design"* (which) *"draws inspiration from Cheshire's villages, towns parklands"* and *"each character area would be developed using local materials"* and
- *"the best of both worlds – rural life with easy access to Manchester"*

The second version does not repeat the economic forecasts but promises:

- *"Modern infrastructure – built first to create safe and inclusive communities; transport links, schools, shops and workplaces"*
- *"Quick connections to the North West and Manchester and its international airport and green commutes to local employment hubs"*
- *"Surrounded by nature & parklands with plans for over 40% of the new town to be green and blue spaces with walks, cycle paths and access to the River Dean"*
- *"Sustainable design that creates better homes and jobs whilst balancing the needs of existing communities, wildlife and societal challenges"*

'Woven from heritage, tailored for tomorrow'

This e-document states:

"Adlington is ideally placed for people working in Salford's Media City, Manchester City Centre, Airport City and for major regional employers like Astra Zeneca and the NHS. The mainline station has direct connections to Manchester and Middlewood Way provides a 15-minute cycle to Macclesfield and the Astra Zeneca campus, making Adlington a potential model for active and environmentally friendly travel" .....

- *"The land ownership is simple – most land available for housebuilding is in consolidated ownership"*
- *"The area is viable, meaning the new town can become self-financing"*
- *"There is infrastructure here already (especially the railway station) which can be upgraded rather than built from scratch"*

"It is also a strategic location for the North West- and a chance to invest in the region" :

- *"Adlington Is a gateway between Greater Manchester and Cheshire East"*
- *"Is close to major employment hubs in Life Sciences, Defence & Creative Industries"*
- *"Has excellent rail and road connections (mainline station, A523, M56, Manchester Airport – which we can upgrade)"*
- *"Has capacity to deliver growth with limited Government funding support"*

"What to expect: Our ambition is to create a self-contained, sustainable town"

- *"Bring Adlington Hall back into public use"*
- *"Space for businesses to grow"*
- *"Excellent transport links means locals can visit family and friends"*
- *"Build a town around Adlington Hall's historic landscape with no development on ancient woodland or demolition of listed buildings"*
- *"Deliver homes, jobs and community facilities together"*
- *"Ensure green space and biodiversity are integral"*

'Early Proposals' (This e-document includes an indicative map of development areas): https://www.adlingtonnewtown.com/earlyproposals/). The tentative masterplan map shows a series of 'mobility and active travel hubs', village greens and parklands and a new skills campus and the high density part of the New Town lying to the south east of the railway station. [See page .... for a mock-up of the masterplan map].

The claim made is that the masterplan can deliver:

- *"Between 14,000 and 20,000 tech-enabled new homes of various tenures/types"*
- *"A family adventure and leisure destination centred around Adlington Hall"*
- *"A growth campus for business"*
- *"New parklands where the Cheshire plain meets the Peak District foothills"*

Subject to government giving the go-ahead for the Adlington site in Spring 2026, it envisages speedy commissioning of a detailed masterplan and stakeholder engagement on it, the appointment of a development Corporation in the summer, first planning approvals from the Corporation in early 2027 and the commencement of on-site groundwork in Spring 2027. First housing completion is predicted for 2029.

'Next Steps'

Here, the commitment on Belport's dedicated website is 'Local decision making'. The promise is: *"If Adlington New Town goes ahead, it will be subject to scrutiny and a planning process to ensure high quality design and proper infrastructure delivery"*. However, it goes on to explain: *"To build a new town quickly and effectively, the Taskforce has recommended that a dedicated new body be put in charge of planning – known as a Development Corporation"*.

The benefits of this approach are listed as being:

- Single focus
- Quality at pace
- Infrastructure first
- Local voice

MORE OF THE ADLINGTON THAT WOULD BE LOST

 N. Chadwick

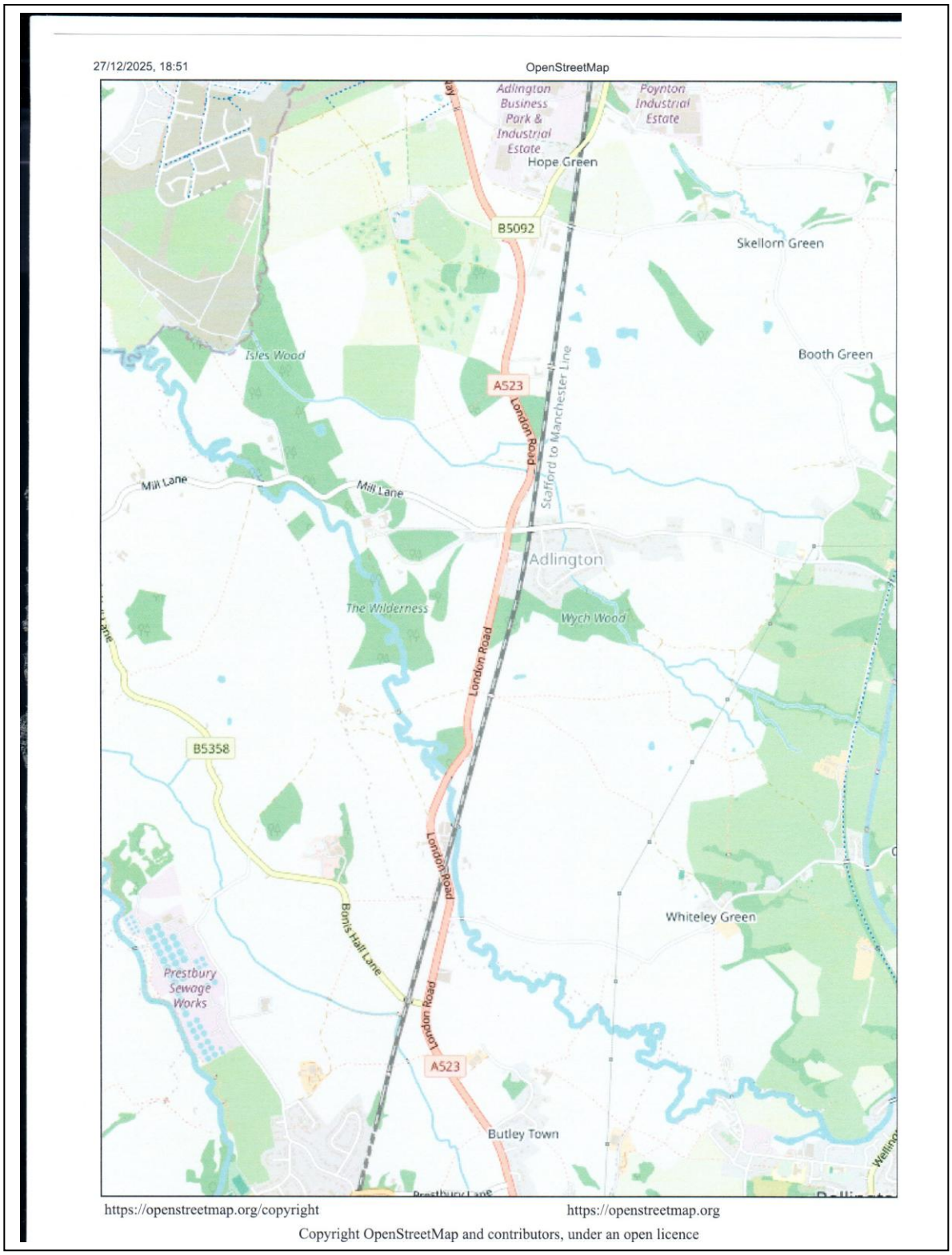
Holehouse Lane, Adlington

 L. J. Cunningham

Moggie Lane, Wards End, Adlington – looking northwards towards Lyme Park

OPEN STREET MAP SHOWING THE ADLINGTON AREA IN 2025/6 AND PART OF PRESTBURY PARISH (BOTTOM LEFT)

Excepting two small industrial areas on the Poynton border to the north, the area is very rural.



OPEN STREET MAP ROUGHLY MARKED TO INDICATE DEVELOPMENT AREAS (IN PINK) IN BELPORT'S 'EARLY PROPOSALS' E-DOCUMENT

(Green area is Adlington Hall & gardens. Red area is to be most densely developed)

PART THREE – KEY POINTS

QUESTIONING THE ARGUMENTS 'FOR' (3A)

- Freedom of Information requests to see the case tabled 'for' an Adlington New Town have been refused, making a rebuttal case difficult to mount. We can, however, point out inaccuracies and misleading claims in the publicly available information eg.
    - Any New Town here would not be 'surrounded by parkland'; it would surround the listed parkland of Adlington Hall.
    - Green gaps between developed areas shown on an 'Early proposals' map would not exist as such because of the need for inter-connecting roads and footways.
    - The New Town would not 'stand alone', it would effectively draw down the Greater Manchester conurbation into Cheshire.
    - It is claimed that the economy of the area is constrained by a lack of housing when the facts and figures do not support this.
    - Any land value capture gains would go to Belport and Revcap, not the government; other economic claims do not stand up and they are tackled in the Save Adlington New Town report.
- Freedom of Information requests were successful, however, in revealing a letter sent by the leader of Cheshire East Council and his deputy to the chairman of the New Towns Taskforce last June. It was written in such a way it implied the Council supported the concept of a New Town at Adlington. However, the leader and deputy leader have since said that they meant to express support purely for the principle of New Towns and they have apologised for the clumsy wording.
- Cheshire East Council has since unanimously rejected the proposition of a New Town at Adlington and asked the government to reject it.
- The opposition campaign to the proposition includes MPs, town and parish councils, community groups, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and CPRE at both national and local levels.

WHY ON EARTH ADLINGTON? QUESTIONING ARGUMENTS 'FOR'

What facts are known as at mid January 2026? What the contrary arguments are – and the unequivocal denunciations by Cheshire East Council, MPs, Council leaders

The aspirations. promises and assertions set out in the previous pages constitute the entire case for Adlington New Town as presented to the public, but no substantive case – with supporting evidence – has been made. Requests to obtain, from the MHCLG, the bid that was put to the Taskforce by the promoters Belport have been declined.

Consequently, in many instances, it is only possible to point out palpably inaccurate statements. For instance, the New Town would not be 'surrounded by parkland', it would surround the listed parkland of Adlington Hall; there would not be green gaps between development areas as indicated in the 'Early Proposals' diagram because there would have to be connecting roads and footways and the economic claims simply do not stand up (ref. pages 27 and 28 of the SANT report). Meanwhile, any land value capture gains would go to Belport rather than the government (ref SANT report, pages 30 and 31). The new town would not 'stand alone' as the adjoining Woodford airfield site is being built out with thousands of houses and Stockport's Draft Local Plan has opted for green belt sites near its border with Cheshire East, while any number of planning applications are in train for the green belt between the two. And the timeframe quoted is wholly unrealistic.

There has been some clarity, however, in establishing what contact there was between the New Towns Taskforce and Cheshire East Council prior to the surprise New Towns announcement being made.

What is now known is that, whilst there was no engagement with members of the public or with Councillors representing the affected areas, there was contact between a couple of the Council's most senior officers, along with the leader and deputy leader, and New Towns Taskforce representatives including the chair. Non-disclosure agreements were, apparently, in force. And, following those contacts, the leader and deputy leader of the Council, Councillors Nick Mannion and Michael Gorman, wrote a letter to the Taskforce chair that appeared to indicate their borough was in favour of a New Town. They have since apologised for what they have described as the 'clumsy' wording, explaining that what they intended to say was they were in favour of the principle of New Towns (https://www.magzter.com/stories/newspaper/Stockport-Express/LEADERS-APOLOGISE-OVER-TOWN-LETTER). Since this letter emerged, the Head of Place at CEC has resigned.

At a meeting of the Cheshire East Council on December 10th 2025, the 71 Councillors present voted unanimously to oppose Adlington New Town. See meeting minutes here: https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/g10827/Public%20minutes%2010th-Dec-2025%2011.00%20Council.pdf?T=11 and the letter to the Secretary of State: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/media_hub/media_releases/cheshire-east-council's-position-on-adlington-new-town-proposals.aspx.

The MP for Macclesfield, Tim Roca, made known his opposition to the New Town proposition from the outset and, on December 17th, 2025, he presented to parliament a petition signed by almost 19,000 people objecting to the plan https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-12-17/debates/2075929D-9D16-4D11-9378-DB06BFDFD160/ProposedNewTownInAdlingtonCheshire and also: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce8n4l2kdd8o). The petition asks the House of Commons to urge the government to abandon the proposal for a New Town at Adlington. A response from government is awaited.

Tim Roca addressed the House of Commons about Adlington during a debate on New Towns on January, 15th, 2026, during which he mentioned CPRE. This is what he said:

> *"In Macclesfield, one topic has dominated conversation for several months: the proposed new town at Adlington. It has been talked about on every street corner, in every coffee shop and at every parish meeting. Well, almost—for one glorious weekend, Adlington was briefly knocked off the top spot by the small matter of Macclesfield beating Crystal Palace in the FA cup. I am on dangerous ground, because I think the Minister was brought up in south London, so I will leave the football at that.*
>
> *Jokes aside, this is an important debate, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kirkintilloch (Katrina Murray) for securing it. I am not a nimby. I support house building and development and I support the principle of new towns, done well, in the right places, with proper planning, and in the right manner with proper infra-structure. This country needs homes, especially genuinely affordable ones, and new towns have a proud history of delivering them, when they are carefully planned and sensibly located. I do not oppose that ambition; I welcome it. But supporting the principle of new towns does not mean signing a blank cheque for every proposed site, and it certainly does not mean abandoning the basics of good planning—which brings me to Adlington.*
>
> *Adlington is not an empty space on the map. It is a small rural community of about 1,000 people, first recorded in the Domesday Book. It is a place shaped by continuity, with fields and farms; its working farmland is still producing food, supporting local jobs and sustaining wildlife. The proposal before Macclesfield would place up to 20,000 homes on 1,000 hectares of strategic green belt, wiping out 15 working farms, ancient hedgerows and bluebell woodlands, and fragmenting some of the most environmentally sensitive land in Cheshire. That matters, because the green belt is not an accident. It exists for a reason: to stop urban sprawl, protect countryside and make sure that we regenerate brownfield land. Once green belt on this scale is gone, it is gone forever.*

I want to make a broader point about the new towns taskforce and its shortlist, because it is quite telling.

Among all the sites recommended, Adlington stands out, not as the most suitable, but as the one that has faced the greatest opposition. That opposition has come not from one group, one parish or one campaign, but from across the community, across political lines and across civic society. I am grateful to the Minister for meeting me before Christmas to discuss those concerns. It is particularly striking that the Campaign to Protect Rural England, which has not opposed a number of the other new town sites recommended by the taskforce, has taken a clear and firm position against Adlington. When it singles out one site among many, it is because something genuinely does not stack up.

If that were not enough, Cheshire East council has voted unanimously against the proposal. That almost never happens in local government, and that alone should tell us that this is not a narrow ideological objection, but a considered judgment by the democratically elected planning authority for the area.

I want to talk a little more about Cheshire East, because it really matters. It is not a council that avoids building homes. It has met its housing targets consistently in the past, it has adopted a sound local plan, and it has delivered thousands of homes and continues to do so. It is not a planning authority that is dragging its feet or shirking its responsibilities. It is now preparing a new local plan, which will set out how housing need will be met in years ahead: transparently, democratically and with proper public engagement. That is how planning should work. The council has delivered before, and with its new plan it will deliver again—but without dropping 20,000 homes into the open countryside, against the opposition of local communities. Opposing the Adlington site does not mean opposing housing; it means respecting the plan-led system rather than bypassing it.

I mentioned brownfield land, and there are brownfield sites across Cheshire, Greater Manchester and the wider region that are crying out for regeneration, many of them close to jobs, transport, schools and services. Building there first is not anti-growth; it is sustainable planning. Indeed, there are alternative new town sites in the north-west that could be considered. Let us not jump straight into one of the most sensitive stretches of green belt in the region, next to a national park. Let us think again.

Powerful points have been made already this afternoon about infrastructure. Those concerns have not been convincingly addressed in the case of Adlington, which has limited rail services, constrained road capacity and utilities that were never designed to support a town 20 times its current size.

Fixing that would take decades, not years, and there remains no clear answer about who would pay, who would deliver or when any of it would realistically be in place. That has been compounded by the way that we have gone about this. We need engagement with residents, but there has been only one engagement session with local residents by the company Belport. Communities have been left scrambling for information about the proposal. That is not how to build confidence in a major national project.

Before I finish, I want to thank local campaigners and activists—people who never expected to become planning experts, transport analysts or ecology specialists, but who have given up their evenings, weekends, and indeed savings, to engage constructively, responsibly and in good faith. They have not shouted from the sidelines; they have done the hard work of evidence, scrutiny and civic engagement. That is democracy at its best. They deserve recognition.

Let me be absolutely clear once more that this is not about saying no to development; it is about saying, "Not like this, and not here." We should be building homes where infrastructure already exists, where growth can be absorbed sustainably, where local authorities are partners rather than bystanders, and where the environmental cost is justified by an overwhelming and proven need. Adlington does not meet that test.

I will end with a bit of history, because this House likes its history. In the Minister's office hangs a picture of Clement Attlee, who I think is a hero to both of us. It was Attlee's Government that created the green belt, precisely to protect landscapes like this from unchecked development. It was not anti-housing; it was pro-planning. It is about balance, foresight and stewardship. We owe it to that legacy and to future generations to show the same care now, so let us support new towns, let us build the homes our country needs, but let us also say calmly and clearly, in the Attlee spirit, that Adlington is the wrong place".

Also, Tom Morrison, the MP for Cheadle, (whose constituency covers the former Woodford Aerodrome site to the north of Adlington) has spoken strongly against the proposition of a New Town at Adlington, notably on BBC TV's Politics North West programme, and Esther McVey, MP for Tatton, has also made known her opposition to it. And Councillor Mark Roberts, Stockport Council's leader, has been very critical of the plan and its likely impacts (https://stockport.nub.news/news/local-news/adlington-new-town-disregards-legitimate-concerns-about-housebuilding-stockport-council-leader-says-282784).

As for the Town and Parish Councils that would be affected by the New Town, they united into one entity, working in opposition to it, alongside the action group Stop Adlington New Town which maintains a website: https://stopadlingtonnewtown.co.uk/.

The town councils of Poynton and Bollington have been involved in the opposition campaign from the outset as have the Parish Councils of Adlington, Prestbury, Pott Shrigley and Mottram St. Andrew and others around and about continue to offer their support. Drop-in sessions have been organised to ensure residents fully understand the implications, newsletters have been distributed and a joint letter from the town and parish councils has been sent to the Secretary of State. Public meetings have taken place and peaceful protests have been held on many weekends.

CPRE's contributions to the campaign have taken many forms. We heard the New Towns announcement as it was made at the Labour Party conference and immediately set about disseminating the news. We addressed a number of public meetings, issued facts sheets (https://www.cprecheshire.org.uk/resources/adlington-new-town-proposals-fact-sheet/), wrote articles for various publications, including Farmers Weekly, and wrote to every Cheshire East councillor prior to the December 10th Council meeting. We have been working with most of the different opposition parties, including Cheshire Wildlife Trust, who have produced an Adlington area 'Baseline Assessment of Ecological and Landscape Features' (https://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/adlington).

CPRE's chief executive officer, Roger Mortlock, has written to the Secretary of State supporting the proposed New Towns in the north Bristol/ South Gloucestershire area, in Leeds, Milton Keynes, Manchester Victoria, Oxfordshire, Plymouth and Marlcombe, Devon – all on brownfield sites – but urging him to reject Adlington as a location. His letter is here: (https://www.cprecheshire.org.uk/news/cpre-chair-adlington-nt-letter/). Now we have produced this report which it is sincerely hoped will influence government thinking.

Wintry fields around Whiteley Green, Adlington, 2025/6

Beverley Moore

Beverley Moore

PART THREE – KEY POINTS

QUESTIONING THE ARGUMENTS 'FOR' (3B)

Planning Policy context:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is currently under review. Both the current and the consultation version of the NPPF express the strongest support for brownfield first development.
- CPRE analysis of local authority brownfield registers shows there is space for 1.41 million homes on previously developed land, with over half already having planning permission.
- Many brownfield site bids put forward to the New Towns Taskforce were not shortlisted, despite offering substantial urban regeneration opportunities; no feedback has been provided as to why.
- The Adlington area is green belt, and continues to serve all five green belt purposes as specified in the NPPF.
- The proposed New Town falls outside categories of development allowed in green belt.
- The Cheshire East Local Plan has no provision for the release of any green belt land in Adlington other than 10 hectares at the small Adlington industrial site on the Poynton border. The remainder scored highly in the green belt assessment carried out for the Local Plan. No land in the area is safeguarded for future development.
- The case for defining any of the earmarked land as 'grey belt' on which development could be permitted is extremely weak; no argument has yet been made for any grey belt designations.
- The NPPF requires development to be sustainably located – this is far easier to achieve on brownfield sites than in rural backwaters such as Adlington.
- NPPF proposals include allowing house building around well-connected train stations – but none of the three stations within the orbit of the proposed Adlington New Town meet the criteria.

QUESTIONING THE CASE 'FOR' CONTD. – The Planning Policy Context

Deliberations about Adlington New Town are taking place as royal assent has just been granted to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, a re-write of the National Planning Policy Framework is being consulted on and Cheshire East Council prepares a new Local Plan.

PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE ACT

Aimed at speeding up the planning system, the **Planning and Infrastructure Act** introduces significant planning reforms in a series of measures affecting how development is planned, approved and challenged. These include:

- A provision that gives Development Corporations extra powers to accelerate large scale projects, including new towns, with the stated aim of delivering more affordable homes and public transport
- Less onerous statutory consultation requirements for major infrastructure in order to shorten the delivery timetable
- The establishment of a Nature Restoration Fund and accompanying Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) intended to enable developers to start work more quickly while financing habitat restoration and pollution reduction measures elsewhere
- Restrictions on legal challenges for certain government decisions on major infrastructure, eg on judicial reviews
- Compulsory purchase reforms intended to speed up land assembly and simplify land acquisition rules for housing, GP surgeries and schools
- Measures to make it easier to build reservoirs
- The introduction of Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs) for the new strategic authorities being established all over the country. These will be the mechanisms through which Growth Plans are enacted and green belts are established.

It is important to make the point, however, that while such measures will make it easier to deliver New Towns once they are given the go ahead, as at the start of the New Year, only three of the 12 recommended by the New Towns Taskforce have had government sanction. Adlington is not one of them. The MHCLG has said it will decide on the others after consultations on the Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) have taken place.

It is also relevant to point out that the parliamentary order to establish the Mayoral Combined/ Strategic Authority of Cheshire and Warrington was laid before parliament shortly before Christmas, paving the way for a mayoral election in May 2027. The shadow Cheshire and Warrington C.A. board has already approved a Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SIES) aimed at reducing carbon by 4.5 million tonnes by 2030.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – the rulebook for planning – is currently under review. A new version is out for consultation and CPRE will be responding to that before the consultation deadline in March.

The new version formally separates plan-making policies (which guide how local plans and spatial development strategies are prepared) from national decision-making policies (intended to apply directly to planning applications and appeals) and it strengthens the role of national policy in driving growth. It embeds a more permanent presumption in favour of development, reduces the weight that outdated local plan policies should carry where they conflict with national objectives, confirms that the standard method for assessing housing need remains mandatory and defines grey belt land more clearly. And it emphasises that, for major development, the 'golden rules' remain critical, ensuring that green belt releases deliver tangible public benefits, including affordable housing, infrastructure provision and accessible green space.

Probably the most substantive policy changes proposed are:

- A permanent presumption in favour of suitably located development, along with preferential treatment for development supporting local and regional economies
- Support for higher density developments in sustainable locations and for small and medium-sized sites, recognising their role in housing delivery
- Measures to improve the diverse mix of housing, including rural affordable homes, accessible homes for older and disabled people and different tenures and sizes
- The streamlining of local standards, aimed at reducing complexity and delay
- Measures to conserve and enhance the natural environment and to encourage new builds to have nature friendly features (eg. swift bricks) but to streamline Biodiversity Net Gain requirements
- Further measures to address climate change
- The embedding of a vision-led approach to transport planning and implementing a default 'Yes' to building homes around well connected train stations (even those in green belt) – subject to the provisos replicated in footnote no. 2 of this report.

Proposed changes to the NPPF will not come into being before the government decides which New Towns to progress, but they will no doubt influence government thinking. On the matter of building around stations with regular services, it should be noted that none of the three on the West Coast Main Line within the orbit of a proposed Adlington New Town - Adlington itself or Poynton (3.3 km to the north) or Prestbury (3.2 km to the south) – meet the criteria set down in the NPPF – or could without hugely expensive upgrades.

QUESTIONING THE CASE 'FOR' - NPPF, CONTINUED -

Manifesto promise and government support for the 'brownfield first' approach

Both the current NPPF and the re-written consultation version express the strongest support for the **'**brownfield first**'** approach to planning.

In Chapter 11, **'**Making Effective Use of land**'**, the December 2024 version says:

> ***"****Planning policies and decisions should .....*
>
> *Give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land****"***
>
> (Paragraph 125 c)

In Chapter 12, **'**Making effective use of land**'**, the December 2025 version says:

> ***"****To support the effective and efficient use of land the development plan should, at the most appropriate level:*
>
> *a. Identify ways of accommodating as much as possible of the development required in the area on previously developed land ....****"***
> (And it goes on to give four possible examples)
> (Policy L1 - Plan making policies, paragraph. 1, page 54)

And, later in the same policy it warns:

> ***"****The extent to which development plans are making as much use as possible of previously developed land and using minimum densities to accommodate their identified development need will be tested robustly when plans are examined****"****.***
>
> (Policy L1, paragraph. 3, page 55)

Paragraph 2 advises mayors and planning authorities to make use of brownfield registers and, later, in the same chapter, it says:

> ***"****Substantial weight should be given to the benefits where a development proposal would achieve one of the following:*
>
> *a. Remediating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land*
>
> *b. Making better use of vacant and under-utilised land and buildings ....*
>
> *c. Making effective use of previously developed land and buildings ....****"***
>
> (Policy L2 - National decision-making policies, paragraph 1, page 55).

NATIONAL BROWNFIELD FORUM (NBF)

In August 2025, a task and finish group appointed by the National Brownfield Forum (NBF) published advice to government on the interactions of policies affecting the planning and development of brownfield land. The NBF is an active group of over 30 public and private members, originally established by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and by the Department for Communities and Local Government – a forerunner to the MHCLG – in 2011.

Its 'Calls for Action' were:

- Create and maintain a living evidence base on policy interactions and impacts to support the successful delivery of brownfield planning and development. Evidence should be unbiased, expert, quantitative and focused on prioritised policy interaction
- Investigate the value of improved governance mechanisms, such as multi-agency teams, to address challenges raised around communication, co-ordination, policy interactions and – in the event of conflict – policy prioritisation
- Explore the feasibility and potential impact of setting up a new All-Party Parliamentary Group on how to achieve a proactive policy landscape to implement brownfield first
- Evaluate how easily the policy landscape is understood by all stakeholders and whether there is scope for better coordination and communication
- Consider extending the work of the National Brownfield Forum task and finish group to help support future government policy, review, development and implementation.

CPRE's BROWNFIELD RESEARCH

The Campaign to Protect Rural England regularly carries out research into the availability of brownfield land in England. In its September 2025 edition of the 'State of Brownfield', ((https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/state-of-brownfield-2025/) CPRE showed there is space for 1.41 million homes on previously developed land, based on data from local planning authorities' brownfield registers for 2024. More than half (55%) of these sites already have planning permission (either outline or better) meaning that 770,000 new homes could be built rapidly. The latest research also showed there are 23 local authorities holding enough brownfield land with planning permission to meet the targets set by the government's standard method for calculating housing need for at least the next five years. All of that said, CPRE's calculations are known to be conservative because a third of local authorities have incomplete/out-of-date brownfield registers.

Commentary

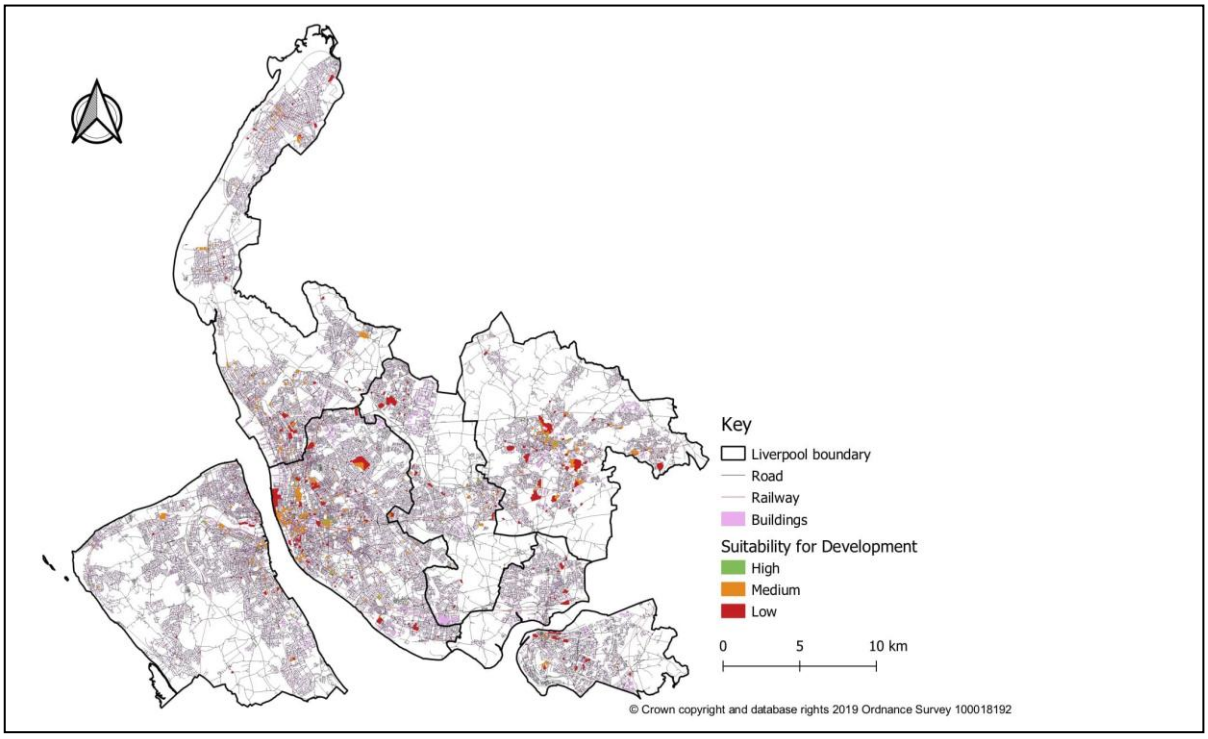
Regrettably, from CPRE's perspective, there is no target imposed on Councils for building on brownfields and the rewritten NPPF has still not introduced one. This is a missed opportunity as, when there were brownfield targets during the last Labour government under the auspices of the Regional Spatial Strategies, they proved to be very successful. The local authorities were meeting the targets they were set.

Brownfield site alternatives to Adlington

There were many more brownfield site 'bids' put forward to the New Towns Taskforce than managed to be short-listed. One such, also in the North West, was in the North of Liverpool City Region. The Mayor of the city region, Steve Rotheram, has been especially vocal about his disappointment that this one was not successful in being short-listed, describing it as ***"****one of the biggest regeneration opportunities in the country****"***. His 'Liverpool North' proposal covers the northern fringe of Liverpool and stretches across towards Bootle in Sefton, covering parts of Everton, Anfield and Kirkdale. All these areas were very much involved in promoting the bid and consulting with their communities.

This raises questions about what specific measuring/ validation processes did the New Towns Taskforce apply when considering the bids? It would have been helpful if feedback had been provided in the case of unsuccessful bids. CPRE would have been particularly interested in this case because, six years ago, it supported an initiative by two Liverpool University students that identified brownfield sites in the region. The result was the map below, which identified many sites in the north west area of Liverpool and south of Bootle that had potential for redevelopment: https://www.cprelancashire.org.uk/news/helping-to-make-the-best-use-of-land-in-the-liverpool-city-region/.

Image from 'Helping to make the best use of land in the Liverpool City Region' published by CPRE Lancashire, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester Branch, November 2019.



GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO GREEN BELT AND GREY BELT
Manifesto promise to preserve the green belt

Whilst the government's approach to brownfield land appears to be as strong as ever, its approach to green belt has altered – with the introduction of the grey belt designation.

That said, the December 2025 version of the NPPF repeats the five green belt purposes:

a. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas
b. To prevent the merging of neighbouring towns
c. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
d. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
e. To assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

The quality of the green belt in the Adlington area is unquestionable. It is a prime example of what the green belt was established for.

The key issues/questions to be addressed are posed in policies GB6, GB7 and GB8. These are set out below and, beneath each policy, there is a commentary.

Policy GB6 of the December 2025 NPPF document describes ***"****Inappropriate development in the green belt****"*** as:

> ***"****by definition, harmful to the green belt and therefore should not be approved except in very special circumstances****"***. It explains: ***"****Such circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the green belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposed development is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In making this assessment, substantial weight should be given to harm to the green belt which would be caused, including harm to its openness****"***.
>
> (Paragraph 2, Control of development in green belt, page 60).

Commentary

The green belt is 'the countryside next door' for 30 million people living in England's largest towns and cities (https://www.cprecheshire.org.uk/about-us/what-we-care-about/better-places-to-live/the-countryside-next-door/). It is a very valuable asset that needs to be protected for people to enjoy. But it has come increasingly under threat. CPRE contends that the proposed development of a New Town in Adlington is entirely inappropriate and the harm it would cause to the openness would be very substantial. Our view is reflective of the evidence presented in Cheshire East Council's green belt Assessment Update. See the chapter in this report with this heading and also the preceding one on grey belt.

Policy GB7 defines categories of development that are not inappropriate in green belt:- :

a. *Development which is for agriculture, horticulture or forestry*

b. *The re-use, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building* (with some named exceptions)

c. *Limited infilling in villages*

d. *Limited affordable housing for local community needs*

e. *The redevelopment of previously developed land*

f. *Certain other forms of development provided the impact on the openness of the green belt is minimised and there would not be a significant conflict with the green belt purposes*

g. *Development where all the following apply:*
   i. *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining green belt ..*
   ii. *There is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed*[1]
   iii. *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to policy TR3 of this Framework*
   iv. *In the case of major development involving the provision of housing, the development proposed complies with policy GB8*

h. *Development for housing and mixed use development which would:*
   i. *Be within reasonable walking distance of a railway station capable of providing a high level of connectivity to services and employment*[2]
   ii. *Be physically well-related to a railway station or a settlement within which the station is located*
   iii. *Be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure*
   iv. *Not prejudice any proposals for long term comprehensive development in the same location*
   v. *In the case of major development, comply with policy GB8.*

[1] Which, in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Test was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years. (Footnote 56, Draft NPPF).

[2] Well connected rail stations and underground tram and light rail stops are those in a top 60 Travel to Work Area located partially or fully within England by Gross Value Added (GVA) and which, in the normal weekday timetable, are served (or have a reasonable prospect of being served due to planned upgrades or through agreement with the rail operator) throughout the daytime by four trains or trams overall or two trains per hour in any one direction. (Policy L3, Achieving Appropriate Densities, Proposed Reforms to NPPF, page 71).

Commentary

Criteria a, b and c are not applicable. (A New Town does not constitute **'**limited**'** infilling).

d. The majority of the housing provided would be market sector (ie. not affordable).

e. The proposed New Town would not be located on previously developed land.

f. The openness of the green belt would be completely lost and, similarly, the other green belt purposes would be negated.

g. No case has yet been made for the existence of any grey belt land in Adlington and no substantive case has been published to support a New Town in this location. There have been many sweeping statements and promises made, various promotional material has been released and a tentative master plan published, but the actuality could be significantly different. If and until plans are formally lodged, nothing is certain – and, even then, some aspects could change. For instance, the percentage of affordable housing that is actually delivered.

   Policy TR3 of the NPPF requires that development is sustainably located. Turning a rural backwater into a sustainable, well designed town will be an enormous under-taking – and an unnecessary one when so many areas with existing infrastructure are crying out for renewal. Also, the proposed location has not been removed from the green belt and there is no proposal by the planning authority that it should be.

h. Within reasonable walking distance, there is no railway station capable of providing the level of services identified in the footnote. The stations of Poynton, Adlington and Prestbury lie on the West Coast Main Line which has to accommodate regular intercity trains between Manchester and London passing through at between 70 and 90 mph. There are only two tracks – one northbound and one southbound. It should also be noted that even the option of providing longer stopping trains to better service the existing timetable would not be straightforward because longer platforms would have to be constructed on several stations on the route, including the southern terminus at Stoke where the parking bay would have to be extended. The requirement is that a settlement is **'**well-related**'** to a railway station. It should be understood that there is no central **'**settlement**'**, merely a series of hamlets in Adlington, and the country lanes between them do not have paved footways.

   The entire area proposed for the New Town lacks the supporting infrastructure for any development of any scale and the promoters, Belport, have made it quite clear that they do not see it as part of their role to provide it. See director Niall Bolger**'**s evidence to the House of Lords Built Environment Committee on page 23 of this report. Also, as the New Town would occupy virtually the entirety of the parish of Adlington, there would be little scope for future **'**comprehensive development**'**. Compliance with Policy GB8 is an unknown. See the commentary on this policy.

Policy GB8 sets out 'The Golden Rules' that are designed to ensure development on land within or released from green belt delivers increased tangible benefits for communities. . Exceptions that are considered acceptable include:

a. Affordable housing
b. Necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure
c. The provision of new greenspace or improvements to existing green space which is accessible to the public

Commentary

a. The affordable housing figure in any area is arrived at by applying an 80% formula to the average house price. This means that homes so tagged in areas where the prices are high are still not 'affordable' to much of the population. According to House Price Watch, average prices in the Adlington area consistently run above the national average. In December 2025, the figure was £351,071 (https://housepricewatch.com/prices/England/Cheshire/CheshireEast/Adlington). Consequently, £280,857 would be considered to be an 'affordable' price in this part of Cheshire East.

b. As matters currently stand in Adlington, with its exceptionally modest level of development, there is little 'necessary' improvement required to local or national infrastructure. If, however, the New Town were to be sanctioned, the entire unbuilt area would have to be dug up in order to deliver the utilities – and that is assuming that an adequate fresh water supply can be sourced and sufficient sewerage facilities can be provided. Enquiries have revealed that recent upgrades to the water treatment works at Adlington have provided for an extra 5,500 homes to be connected to it – not 20,000.

   It is worth highlighting here what Policy W1 (Planning for Energy and Water) in Chapter 10 of the Proposed Reforms to the NPPF has to say in respect of utilities:

   "This policy requires development plans to reflect the capacity of, and future requirements for, energy and water infrastructure. It emphasises the need for early engagement between relevant plan-making authorities, utility providers, regulators and network operators to establish a clear understanding of energy supply, network capacity water supply, drainage and wastewater capacity. The aim is to make sure that potential constraints caused by current or future deficits in capacity are identified and addressed proactively at the plan-making stage". (Page 60)

c. At present, other than the odd, scattered, buildings, the entire area is 'green space'. However, obviously, if it became a New Town, then parts of it would need to be specifically dedicated to being open/green areas.

GREY BELT

The other criteria now that can release green belt is if it is redesignated as grey belt. Councils are required to carry out reviews of their green belt boundaries to support the identification of grey belt land. The proposal in the December 2025 consultation is to keep the definition in the December 2024 version but to drop footnote no. 7.

The current definition is:

> *"land in the green belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than green belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development"*

[By way of explanation, paragraph 143 of the present NPPF is the one which defines green belt and footnote 7 refers to Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Green Space, National Parks and heritage assets].

The government's position is that the December 2025 NPPF draft does not weaken green belt policy – it makes it more precise – and it clarifies which sites do not strongly serve green belt purposes, which are well related to settlements and which are not strongly related, and those which cannot deliver policy-compliant schemes.

Commentary

The effect that the introduction of a grey belt policy had on planning applications was immediate on all green belt areas around the country. Planning application after planning application was lodged with all green belt local authorities throughout 2025 with applicants claiming that the land in question was grey belt. In a number of cases, the applications were refused and the applicants appealed the decision with the Planning Inspectorate. There were also appeals lodged by developers who had been refused permission to build on green belt land shortly before the change in policy.

As a result, CPRE commissioned some initial research into the appeals in order to understand the early impacts of the new policy. The result is their report 'Grey Belt Planning Appeals Analysis' published in December 2025: www.cpre.org.uk/resources/grey-belt-planning-appeals-analysis/.

An in-depth analysis was carried out of 20 cases (the methodology is explained in the report). It found that almost all (13 out of 15) of the housing appeal cases that were deemed to qualify as grey belt have been approved (86%). The vast majority of the housing will be built on greenfield sites. The successful appeals will deliver 1,250 houses of which just 152 will be on previously developed land (12%). Five out of the 20 appeals analysed were deemed not to be grey gelt, of which two were allowed in any event.

The residential appeal cases promise to deliver an overall percentage of 47% in affordable tenures, but with eight out of the 13 allowed appeals being 'outline' permissions, there is a risk that not all the affordable units will ultimately be delivered. Most often the deliberations at appeals were around whether the definition of green belt is met, focusing on how strongly green belt purpose (a) – preventing the sprawl of large urban areas - is being fulfilled.

The NPPF definition of grey belt is open to interpretation. Inspectors appear to be finding that the word 'strongly' reduces the weight given to purposes (a), (b) and (d), whilst the weight given to purpose (c) remains unchanged. Therefore, a site that is contributing strongly to purpose (c) may still not be deemed to be grey belt, even if it does not contribute strongly to purposes (a), (b) or (d). The form of development was also relevant but, in the end, inspectors were being asked to make a difficult judgement about the amount of harm that was being caused.

What was evident as a result of this exercise was that the original definition of grey belt that was put forward by the government (ie. derelict land in green belt such as disused car parks and abandoned petrol stations) was not forming the basis of the planning deliberations that are taking place. Consequently, CPRE will be continuing to monitor how the grey belt policy is being applied nationally and the arguments being lodged.

The proposals for Adlington would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the Green Belt. Also, the New Town would not be in a sustainable location. Therefore, even if, subsequently, some of the land in Adlington were found to be grey belt, the proposal would be inappropriate under the terms of paragraph 155. But, we contend that the case for defining any of the land earmarked for the New Town as grey belt is weak and we point to the Green Belt Assessment Update, Final Consolidated Report, that was carried out as part of the evidence base for the current Local Plan.

This exercise was conducted by Ove Arup in 2015 but that does not render it out-dated because so very little development has taken place in Adlington in the interim. That which has occurred has been on an exceptionally small scale – some extensions, a few individual new properties, a few use changes, but no housing estates or other notable developments. This is in compliance with the Local Plan, which did not identify any development areas in Adlington or any land in the area for green belt release.

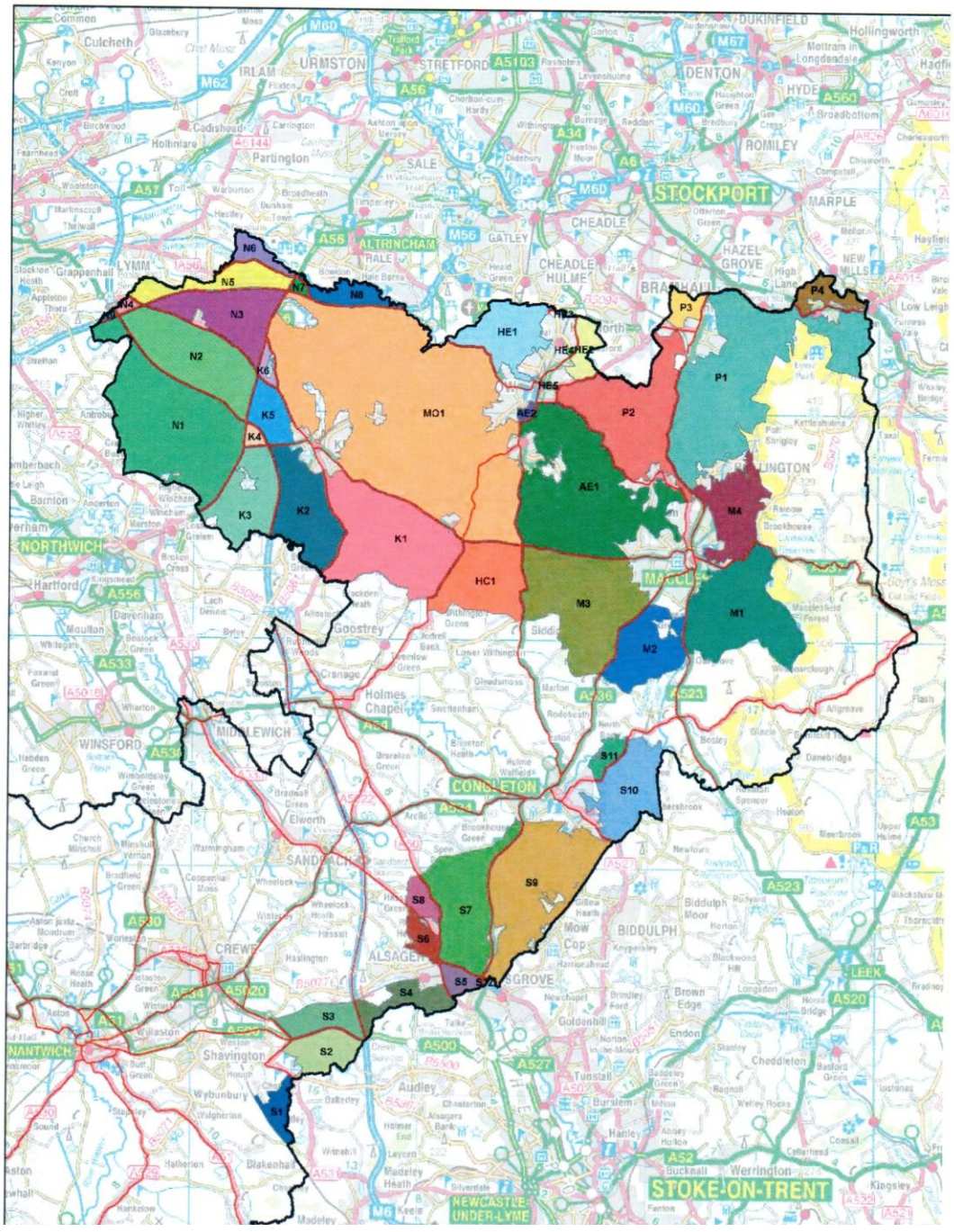
The entire Adlington area between the towns of Poynton and Bollington was designated as – and remains – 'washed over' by green belt. The periphery areas, close to the two towns, were subjected to detailed assessment on a parcel by parcel basis. Of the 13 parcels bordering Adlington, only one was given the overall (lower) rating of making 'a contribution' to green belt purposes. Even so, that one (PY24 - land bounded by Hope Lane and Skellorn Green Lane East of Adlington Manor) was judged to make a 'major contribution' in the sub category of 'assisting the countryside from encroachment'. The other 12 parcels had overall evaluations of either 'major' or 'significant contribution'.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO GREEN BELT & RURAL AREAS

Cheshire East Green Belt Assessment Update, Final Consolidated Report, 2015

Replicated here is the map of the general green belt areas taken from page 85 of Arup's Green Belt Assessment Update report (https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/research_and_evidence/research_and_evidence.aspx). [N.B. The yellow border on the east defines the western boundary of the Peak District National Park].

Figure 7-1: Map of General Areas for Green Belt in Cheshire East.



Replicated here are the relevant parts of the General Area Assessment Table as featured in Appendix 1 of the Green Belt Assessment which relate to the map on the previous page, ie. AE1 (east of Alderley Edge), P2 (south east of Poynton) and P1 (south of Poynton and north of Bollington).

General Area	Justification for Assessment	Overall Assessment
AE 1	The area is well contained with strong boundaries which has prevented sprawl to a large extent and has assisted in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The general area plays a significant role in preventing the merging of Prestbury and Macclesfield in addition to preserving the conservation areas of Alderley Edge and Prestbury. The area has a significant contribution to encouraging the recycling of urban derelict land.	Significant contribution
P 1	The general area has a significant contribution to preventing urban sprawl, preserving the setting of historic towns and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The area provides a significant degree of openness, however, there are weaker boundaries in some places which may lead to encroachment on the countryside. The general area provides a major contribution to preventing merging of settlements. There is a major contribution to assisting urban regeneration, particularly given the area's connection to Bollington and Disley.	Major contribution
P 2	The area plays a significant role in preserving the historic assets of the area and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The area provides a significant degree of openness and supports all beneficial uses of the green belt. Additionally, the area has a significant contribution to preventing the settlements of Prestbury, Bollington and Macclesfield from merging. The area also supports a limited amount of urban regeneration.	Significant contribution

Appendix C of the Green Belt Assessment features the more detailed Green Belt Table. The extracts below are descriptions of 12 parcels that surround Adlington.

Alderley Edge

Parcel	Overall Evaluation	Overall Assessment
AE 1: Land east of Alderley Edge Bypass & west of Alderley Road	The parcel makes a major contribution to green belt purposes …. The land has few urbanising influences and mainly consists of gently undulating fields.	Major contribution

Bollington

Parcel	Overall Evaluation	Overall Assessment
BT 22: Land to west of Albert Road	The parcel has significant contribution to the green belt …. The parcel has significant contribution to preventing urban sprawl as it has not allowed development to occur on that parcel. The parcel provides a significant degree of openness due to views across the countryside.	Significant contribution
BT 23: Land to north east of Albert Road	The parcel has a significant contribution to the green belt. The parcel has a major contribution to assisting urban regeneration. The parcel has a significant contribution to preventing urban sprawl as it has not allowed development to occur on the parcel. The parcel provides a limited degree of openness due to its size.	Significant contribution
BT 25: Land to the north of the River Dean and east of the recycling centre	The parcel has a major contribution to assisting urban regeneration. The parcel has a significant contribution to the green belt [and to] preventing urban sprawl and to safeguarding the country-side as the parcel consists of open farmland, creating a significant degree of openness.	Significant contribution
BT 27: Land to the west of the Middlewood Way	The parcel has significant contribution to the green belt [and to] preventing urban sprawl and to safeguarding the countryside as the parcel consists of open farmland creating a significant degree of openness.	Significant contribution
BT 30: Land to east of Lodge Brow & west of Macclesfield canal	.. the parcel has a major contribution to assisting urban regeneration [and a] significant contribution to preventing urban sprawl and safeguarding land. The parcel is densely wooded and provides a limited degree of openness [but] has a significant contribution to preserving the historic town.	Significant contribution
BT 31: Land north of Clarence Mill between Sugar Lane and Long Lane	The parcel has a major contribution to safe-guarding the countryside by providing a significant degree of openness despite some urbanising features within the parcel. The parcel significantly contributes to preventing urban sprawl, although there is some ribbon develop-ment, {and] contributes to preserving the historic settlement of Bollington.	Major contribution

Poynton

PY 05: Land south east of Adlington Industrial Estate	The parcel makes a significant contribution to green belt purposes given that it does not play a role in preventing nearby towns from merging and half of the parcel has already been developed - thus it has a limited role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It does, however, play a significant role in preventing further ribbon development along the A523 and in checking unrestricted sprawl of Poynton.	Significant contribution
PY 20: Land to the east of Waterloo Road, south of Coppice Road	The parcel makes a significant contribution to green belt purposes given its role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and in checking the unrestricted sprawl of Poynton. It plays a major role in preventing ribbon development along the northern side of The Coppice and to the south of Coppice Road. The parcel is well related to the countryside with open long line views from the settlement.	Significant contribution
PY 21: Land to the north and east of Poynton Coppice, south of Coppice Road	The parcel makes a major contribution to green belt purposes, given that it is detached from the settlement and adjoins the open countryside, thus playing a major role in safeguarding the country-side from encroachment. The eastern and southern boundary of the Poynton Coppice provides a strong boundary to prevent encroach-ment in the long term. The parcel makes a major contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl given its role in preventing further ribbon development along Coppice Rd and The Coppice.	Major contribution
PY 23: Land between Poynton Brook, Moggie Lane and Poynton Industrial Estate	The parcel makes a significant contribution to green belt purposes given that it is closely related to the open countryside with relatively open views and with very limited urbanising influences, thus making a significant contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The strong boundaries to the north and west adjoining Poynton have so far prevented any urban sprawl and the parcel makes a significant contribution to this purpose.	Significant contribution
PY 25: Land to the south of Poynton Industrial Estate and north of Street Lane	The parcel makes a significant contribution to green belt purposes given that it is only attached to Poynton along part of the northern boundary which lies adjacent to the Poynton Industrial Estate, with the remaining boundaries being adjacent to open countryside with limited urbanising influences, thus making a significant contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Given the parcel's role in preventing further ribbon development along Hope Lane, the parcel makes a significant contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl.	Significant contribution

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO GREEN BELT & RURAL AREAS

In the 'Background' to the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy that was adopted in 2017, the pre-eminent policy principle is:

> *"Develop brownfield sites where possible to minimise the use of greenfield, strategic green gap, open countryside or green belt sites"*
> (Paragraph 1.29, page 5)

And the following declaration is made:

> *"The focus remains on protecting green belt, open spaces and the best agricultural land to make sure that growth is sustainable"*.
> (Paragraph 1.37, page 6).

The Adlington Parish, because of its rurality, does not merit specific mention in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy. It is dealt with under 'Other Settlements and Rural Areas' and 'Open Countryside'.

Under 'Settlement Hierarchy and Visions'

the 'Vision' for 'Other Settlements and Rural Areas' is laid out as:

> *"By 2030 some small scale residential and employment development will have taken place in these settlements to help retain and sustain local services and to reduce the need to travel.*
>
> *The rural economy will have grown stronger and diversified, based primarily on agriculture but supplemented by appropriate small scale tourism and visitor facilities in appropriate locations, food related businesses, recreation and other knowledge-based rural businesses, making use of ICT connectivity. At the same time, our many areas of landscape value, sites of nature conservation importance and heritage assets and their settings will have been maintained and enhanced"*.
> (Page 58).

And the Settlement Hierarchy Policy for 'Other Settlements and Rural Areas' (Policy PG2) requires that:

> *"In the interests of sustainable development and the maintenance of local, services, growth and investment in the other settlements should be confined to proportionate development at a scale commensurate with the function and character of the settlement and confined to locations well related to the existing built-up extent of the settlement. It may be appropriate for local needs to be met within larger settlements, dependent on location"*.
> (Page 59)

No provision is made in the green belt policy (Policy PG3) for the release of any green belt in Adlington and no provision is made in the Safeguarded Land policy (Policy PG 4) for any land in Adlington to be safeguarded for development in a future Local Plan.

The 'Open Countryside' policy (Policy PG6) is introduced by the unequivocal statement:

> *"The protection of the open countryside from urbanising development is a principal objective of the Local Plan Strategy".*
> (Paragraph 8.65, page 70).

The policy is as follows:

1. *"The Open Countryside is defined as the area outside of any settlement with a defined settlement boundary*
2. *Within the Open Countryside only development that is essential for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, public infrastructure, essential works undertaken by public service authorities or statutory undertakers, or for other uses appropriate to a rural area will be permitted.*
3. *Exceptions may be made:*
    i. *Where there is the opportunity for limited infilling in villages; the infill of a small gap with one or two dwellings in an otherwise built up frontage elsewhere, affordable housing in accordance with the criteria contained in Policy SC6 'Rural Exceptions Housing for Local Needs' or where the dwelling is exceptional in design and sustainable development terms*
    ii. *For the re-use of existing rural buildings where building is permanent, substantial and would not require extensive alteration, rebuilding or extension*
    iii. *For the replacement of existing buildings (including dwellings) be new buildings not materially larger than the buildings they replace*
    iv. *For extensions to existing dwellings where the extension is not disproportionate to the original dwelling*
    v. *For development that is essential for the expansion or redevelopment of an existing business*
    vi. *For development that is essential for the conservation and enhancement of a heritage asset*
4. *The retention of gaps between settlements is important in order to maintain the definition and separation of existing communities and the individual characters of such settlements*
5. *The acceptability of such developments will be subject to compliance with all other relevant policies in the Local Plan. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to design and landscape character so the appearance and distinctiveness of the Cheshire East countryside is preserved and enhanced".*

The justification given in the following paragraph is:

> *"The Cheshire countryside is highly valued by residents, visitors and businesses alike. From the sandstone ridge, across the Cheshire plain and up to the Peak District Fringe, the borough's countryside is cherished for its scenic, recreational, aesthetic and productive qualities. Much of the land is fertile and Cheshire East is a vital area for food production. It is the preservation of the countryside that is the key objective of this policy".*
> (Paragraph 8.67, page 70).

CHESHIRE EAST LOCALPLAN: green belt release sites. fig. 8.1, page 64

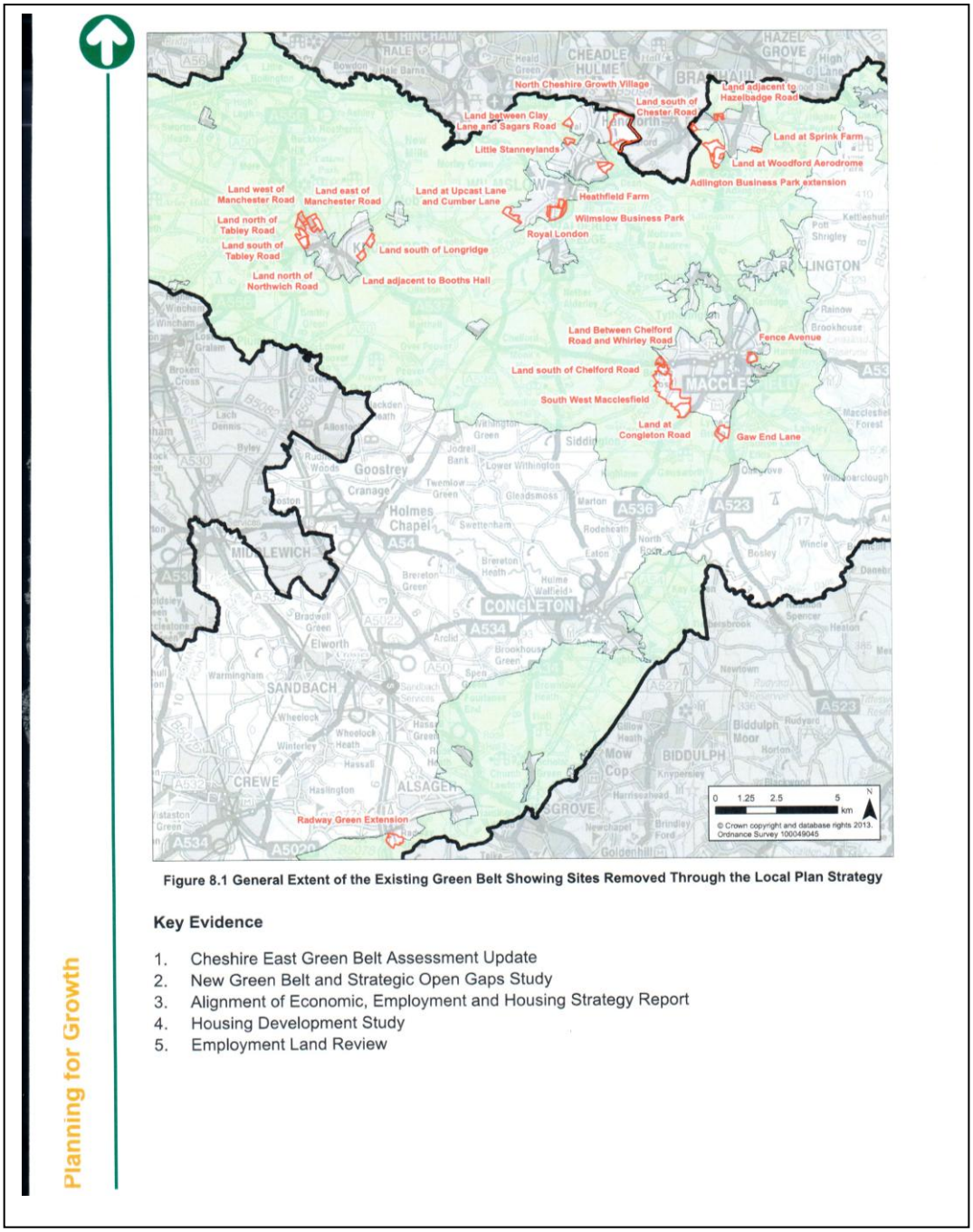


Figure 8.1 General Extent of the Existing Green Belt Showing Sites Removed Through the Local Plan Strategy

Key Evidence

1. Cheshire East Green Belt Assessment Update
2. New Green Belt and Strategic Open Gaps Study
3. Alignment of Economic, Employment and Housing Strategy Report
4. Housing Development Study
5. Employment Land Review

There were some releases of green belt in the Cheshire East Local Plan strategy in order to accommodate housing targets and the expansion of some business parks. These included a small extension to Adlington Business Park on the Poynton border (ref. LPS 51), listed under Policy PG3 as xix on page 62. However, this was the only incursion into Adlington Parish. (N.B. Neither Adlington nor Poynton Business Parks are regarded as key employment sites and they do not appear in the list of such sites in the Local Plan on page 99).

THE ADLINGTON BUSINESS PARK EXTENSION, TOTALLING 10 HECTARES – taken from the CEC Local Plan, page 339

Poynton

15.543 Poynton has been identified as one of the Key Service Centres for Cheshire East, and as such the vitality and growth of this town is key to the prosperity of the borough as a whole. Figure 15.57 (below) identifies a number of Local Plan Strategy Sites in and around Poynton for growth in the future.

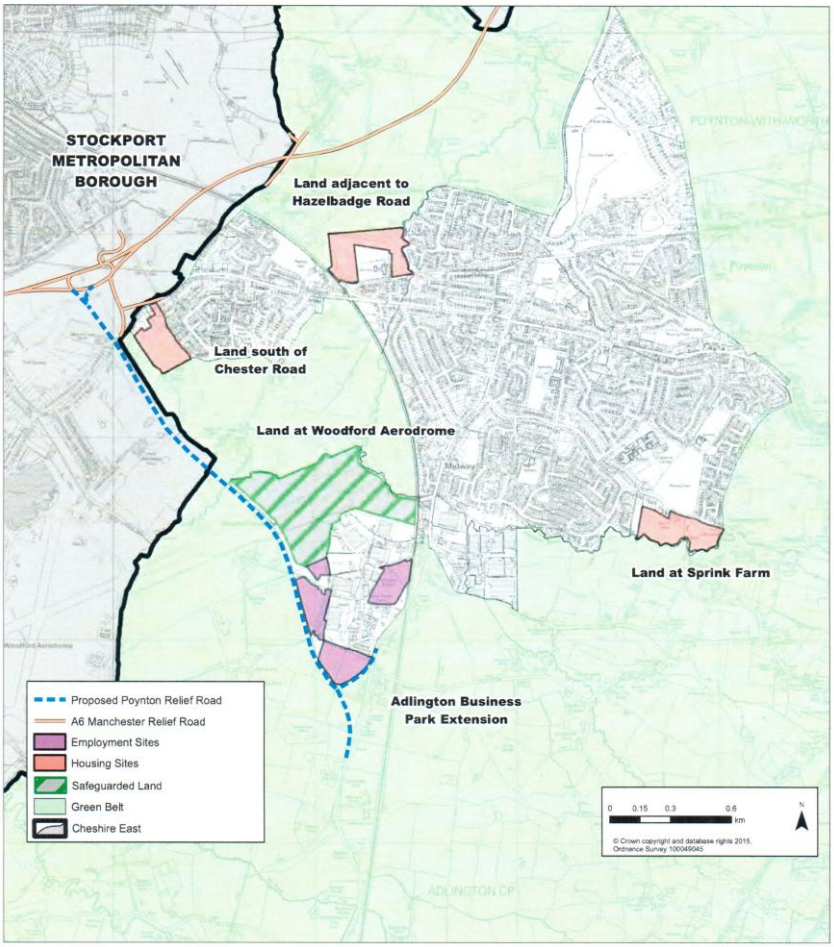


Figure 15.57 Poynton Town Map

15.544 Figure 15.57 also identifies safeguarded land. This land is not allocated for development at the present time, but is taken out of the Green Belt and will be reviewed in future Local Plans that consider needs beyond 2030.

15.545 The preferred route of the proposed Poynton Relief Road is shown on Figure 15.57. It is a proposed 1.9 mile highway, which will relieve congestion in and around Poynton and, together with

PART THREE – KEY POINTS

MEETING HOUSING NEED (3c)

- Cheshire East Council's Local Plan focuses new homes on the towns of Crewe and Macclesfield and the Handforth Garden Village.
- Adlington is one of 35 'infill villages' where limited infilling is allowed in small gaps between existing buildings.
- Under the Local Plan, new affordable housing in rural areas is subject to strict rural exception criteria and must meet demonstrated need.
- Cheshire East Housing Strategy priorities are to improve access to affordable housing, meet specialist housing needs, prevent homelessness, improve housing standards, enable independent living.
- The formula for any affordable housing built under NPPF 'Golden Rules' for green belt would give a price of over £280,000 – which would still be unaffordable to much of the population.
- The government has raised Cheshire East's housing target by 152%, causing the borough's housing land supply to drop from 11 years to under 4. The government has been indicating it is ready to do an about turn on housing targets. It is now saying that if an area will accept a New Town, there may be a reduction in housing targets.
- CPRE has identified that the method for calculating housing targets is however flawed; it should be based on objectively assessed local demographic trends.
- New homes are needed at scale, but we should be building in urban areas in need of regeneration, not taking ever-more countryside.
- Academic research shows that only 29% of new homes since 2010 have been built in areas suited to densification, with a growing share of new builds in areas with worse than average job access.
- The concept of New Towns to meet housing needs has merit, but detailed investigation must take place into proposed locations – including rigorous environmental assessments and the serious testing of claims about economic benefits.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL'S LOCAL PLAN APPROACH TO HOUSING NEED

Cheshire East Council's intention, as expressed in its Local Plan Strategy, was to focus 'significant development' on the two principal towns of Crewe and Macclesfield and other development according to their settlement hierarchy, ie. Key Service Centres next and then Local Service Centres (Policy PG2) . The only substantive exception being the new Handforth Garden Village. That said, it recognised that nearly 30% of its population live in either Local Service Centres or in 'Other settlements and rural areas', requiring some extra housing in order to maintain sustainable communities (para. 12.54, page 117). Policy SC 6: 'Rural Exceptions Housing for Local Needs' sets out strict criteria:-

"*Rural Exceptions affordable housing will be permitted as an exception to other policies concerning the countryside to meet locally identified affordable housing need, subject to:*

1. *Sites should adjoin Local Service Centres and Other Settlements and be close to existing employment and existing or proposed services and facilities, including public transport, educational and health facilities and retail services*
2. *Proposals must be for small schemes. Small schemes are …. those of 10 dwellings or fewer. Any such dwellings must be appropriate in scale, design, character to the locality*
3. *A thorough site options appraisal must be submitted to demonstrate why the site is the most suitable one. Such an appraisal must demonstrate why the need cannot be met within the settlement*
4. *In all cases, proposals for rural exceptions housing schemes must be supported by an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey that identifies the need within the parish*
5. *Occupation will, in perpetuity, be restricted to a person in housing need and resident or working in their relevant parish or who has other strong links with the relevant locality in line with the community connection criteria set out by Cheshire Homechoice…*
6. *The locality to which the occupancy criteria are to be applied is taken as the parish unless otherwise agreed by Cheshire East Council*
7. *To ensure that a property is let or sold to a person who either lives locally or has strong local connections in the future, the council will expect there to be a 'cascade' approach to the locality issue appropriate to the type of tenure. Thus, first priority is to be given to those satisfying the occupancy criteria in relation to the parish ….*
8. *Proposals must consist in their entirety of affordable housing that will be retained in perpetuity. In exceptional circumstances, proposals that intend to include an element of market housing, or plots for open market sale, may be acceptable, if they meet all the above criteria along with the criteria below:*
    i. *Such proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the site would not be viable as a rural exception site without cross subsidy*
    ii. *The Council will not accept aspirational land value as justification for allowing a higher proportion of market value units*
    iii. *The assessment must show that the scale of the market component is essential for the successful delivery of the rural exception affordable housing scheme and that it is based on reasonable land values*
    iv. *The majority of the development must be for rural exception affordable housing*
    v. *No additional subsidy is required for the scheme"*
    (Page 118)

CHESHIRE EAST's LOCAL PLAN APPROACH TO HOUSING NEED, CONTD.

The second part of the Local Plan, the Site Allocations & Development Policies Document (https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire east local plan/site-allocations-and-policies/site allocations and policies.aspx) adopted in Dec. 2022 listed Adlington, in Policy PG10, as one of 35 'Infill Villages'. The definition given for them is:

> *"Infill villages have a defined village infill boundary, as shown on the adopted policies map, but are within the open countryside and do not have a settlement boundary. Some of the infill villages are also within the green belt, as shown on the adopted policies map"*

Policy PG10 goes on:

> *"Limited infilling will be supported within the village infill boundaries. Limited infilling is defined as the development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings. Limited infilling will only be permitted where it:*
>
> *i. Is in keeping with the scale, character and appearance of its surroundings and the local area*
> *ii. Does not give rise to unacceptable impacts*
> *iii. Does not involve the loss of undeveloped land that makes a positive contribution to the character of the area*
>
> *Outside of the village infill boundaries shown on the adopted policies map, development proposals will not be considered to be 'limited infilling in villages' when applying LPS policies PG3 and PG6".*
> Page 8.

The interactive Adopted Policies Map can be found here: https://maps.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ce/localplan/adoptedpoliciesmap2022#. When studying the Adlington area on the map, the noticeable factor is that there is nothing more than the river catchment areas to see on it.

CHESHIRE EAST HOUSING STRATEGY 2025-2028

Cheshire East Council (CEC) developed an interim Housing Strategy in 2025, outlining its priorities over a three-year period (https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/housing/strategic-housing/housing-strategies-and-policies.aspx). These were:

1. Improving access to affordable housing
2. Meeting people's specialist housing needs
3. Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
4. Improving housing standards
5. Enabling independent living

CEC reported that 2,349 new affordable homes had been delivered between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2022 and that, in 2024, Cheshire East had the highest average house price in the north west. It also replicated some demographic facts revealed by the Office for National Statistics. These showed that the total population had grown to 406,527 in mid 2022 and consisted of 186,397 households and 188,720 residential properties.

GREATER MANCHESTER AND STOCKPORT'S APPROACH TO HOUSING

The Greater Manchester Spatial Plan, 'Places for Everyone', which covers the period up to 2039, was adopted by nine of Greater Manchester's Metropolitan Boroughs in 2024 after 10 years in the making (https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/strategic-planning/places-for-everyone/). Stockport MBC was originally involved with it, but dropped out of the process in December 2020. It has since been working on its own Local Plan which it has recently consulted upon (https://www.stockport.gov.uk/the-local-plan-documents). CPRE was very involved throughout the gestation of the Greater Manchester Plan and also CPRE Cheshire Branch has just responded to the Stockport Local Plan consultation (https://www.cprecheshire.org.uk/news/cpre-cheshire-response-to-2025-stockport-local-plan-consultation/).

It is important to note that neither Stockport's Plan, nor Greater Manchester's, require any neighbouring authorities to accept any of their housing allocations. But the scale of their housing plans will have impacts on Cheshire East. Greater Manchester's Plan provides for nearly 200,000 homes and Stockport's Draft Plan provides for just over 25,000 up to 2042.

Stockport had originally planned on using all brownfield sites for their housing allocation but when the government introduced the new standard method for calculating housing need it almost doubled their previous target and they were placed into a position where they felt they had to focus some development on green belt. Altogether, they have now identified sites in the green belt for just under 9,000 homes – and some of those are very close to the Cheshire East border. Some 1,000 homes are planned for High Lane, which adjoins Disley and Higher Poynton in Cheshire East – just a few miles from Adlington – and 500 are planned for Cow Lane in Hazel Grove and a further 400 on Hall Moss Fields in Bramhall, near the Manchester Airport Link Road. All of this is in addition to the continuing development of the Woodford Garden Village – the site of the former Woodford Aerodrome – where over 1,000 homes are in development and also planning applications coming in on a weekly basis for green belt plots of land around the Stockport-Cheshire East border, on both sides.

It remains to be seen how many of the planning applications will be granted and whether or not Stockport's green belt allocations will go ahead but, with the pressure on to build more homes, it is quite likely that many of them will progress. These will all place further stress on the SEMMMS roads – the A555 to Manchester Airport and the Poynton Bypass. (See page 76 of this report for further information on SEMMMS). And this is without the introduction of a New Town so close to the border.

It also remains to be seen what plans Cheshire East Council has to meet its increased housing allocation. It is currently working on a new Local Plan but has yet to publish a draft for consultation. However, it is quite likely that it will also feel the necessity to release some green belt. And all the extra homes demanded lead to increases in traffic and more pressure on roads.

THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO PROVIDING MORE HOMES

Boosting housing supply and especially the availability of affordable homes is a key government aim. Housing targets for almost all local authorities outside London have been increased with the introduction of the new standard method for calculating housing need. Cheshire East's target was raised by 152% from 997 dwellings per annum to 2,461 (which, with the 5% buffer applied, amounts to 2,583 homes p.a). This increase caused the Council's housing land supply to fall from over 11 years to under four, despite it delivering 2,045 additional new homes between April 1 2024 and March 31 2025 (https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/spatial-planning-update.aspx)

The housing land supply situation will present a challenge to Cheshire East Council as it prepares its new Local Plan but, even so, it was not prepared to endorse building a new town on prime agricultural land in its green belt – whether or not the housing figures for a new town would count towards its housing targets. (See Appendix 2).

The opinion of the government on the matter of New Town housing figures has been changing in the last few months from when the New Towns initiative was first unveiled. Late last year the communities secretary, Steve Reed, and housing minister, Matthew Pennycook, were indicating that they might take a case by case approach to housing targets vis a vis New Town housing figures. Then, on January 13th, appearing before the Housing, Communities & Local Government Committee, Matthew Pennycook revealed that targets could be reduced in local authority areas where new towns were placed.

Commentary

CPRE takes issue with the new standard method. We advocate basing housing targets on objectively assessed local and sub-regional demographic trends. But, we fully condone the focus in the draft revised NPPF on urban densification and the recognition in it of the need for rural affordable housing - and also the support it offers to try and encourage more SME builders. However, the NPPF is not helpful in addressing the rise of speculative development in the countryside. Already, every year since 2019, the UK has lost 3,800 acres of countryside on average – equivalent to a small city's footprint. New homes are needed at scale but the answer is not to keep taking ever more countryside when there are so many urban areas in need of regeneration. Land is a finite resource – and it is not just a question of losing recreational areas, it is the loss of carbon sinks and land that will feed the population and absorb excessive rainfall. And there needs to be much more emphasis on environmental capital and climate change.

The concept of providing New Towns as one of the ways to meet housing need has much merit, but detailed investigation needs to go into the siting of them, ie. rigorous environmental assessments and the serious testing of claims about economic benefits. It also needs to be understood that delivering a New Town on a virgin site such as Adlington would be a very slow process. CPRE published a report in December 2025 by Professor Gavin Parker of the University of Reading: 'Timelining the Pipeline: housing development end to end' (https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/timelining-the-pipeline-housing-development-end-to-end/). His report studied the causes of delays in delivery.

WHERE THERE IS DEMAND FOR NEW HOMES – and therefore where they should be built, according to the latest academic research

The 'standard method' for calculating housing targets is insufficiently sensitive to local demand pressures and the misallocation of where homes are built lies at the heart of the housing affordability issue. These are two of the key conclusions of a nationwide piece of research conducted by two assistant Warwick University professors from the Department of Economics – Doctors Nikhil Datta and Amrita Kilka – who criticise the 'level of geography' currently used, ie. the Local Authority level, as being 'too coarse'. They have produced hyper local level analysis in their report 'Solving Britain's Housing Crisis: Where and how to build 1.5 million homes, published in mid December 2025: (https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/research/centres/cage/wheretobuild/).

Using data from over 20 billion housing searches from Rightmove – the UK's most popular housing platform - they have studied location preferences and shown that what really matters is not the share of new building allocated to a local authority as a whole, but where those new homes are placed within the local boundaries.

The two academics have combined datasets of real property searches (including the full history of rental and sales listings from 2019-2024) with data on local housing availability. This allowed them to construct a new measure of excess housing demand: the housing gap. Crucially, the data reflects underlying demand independent of supply constraints. All of this information is available via a Warwick University interactive mapping tool which can bring up output level data and reports from every local authority: https://wheretobuild.warwick.ac.uk.

Calculations are made for a number of variables including housing targets and build classifications for every output level. (For Cheshire East, there are 1,298 output levels out of a total of 235,243 in total in Great Britain). For the purpose of this report, only some of the information is replicated. For each of the four sub-sections that cover the Adlington New Town area we replicate just a few of them. With definitions, they are:

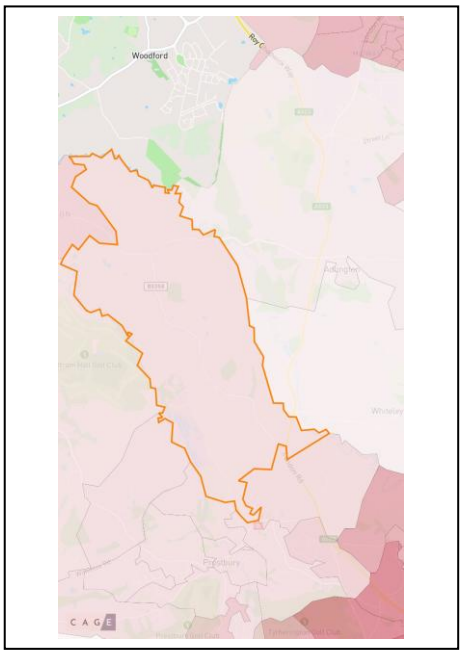
Housing gap: The difference between the number of people searching for homes in an and the number of available properties. It reflects how many home-seekers are affected by shortage. Each searcher is counted once and shared across all areas they searched, based on how many of their searches covered each area. Estimates are robust to using only serious searchers.

Tightness: The number of people searching for homes in an area divided by the number of available properties. It reflects how intensely home seekers compete for each available property and waiting times to find a suitable property. The higher the tightness, the harder it is to find a property. Each searcher is counted once and shared across all areas they searched, based on how many of their searches covered each area.

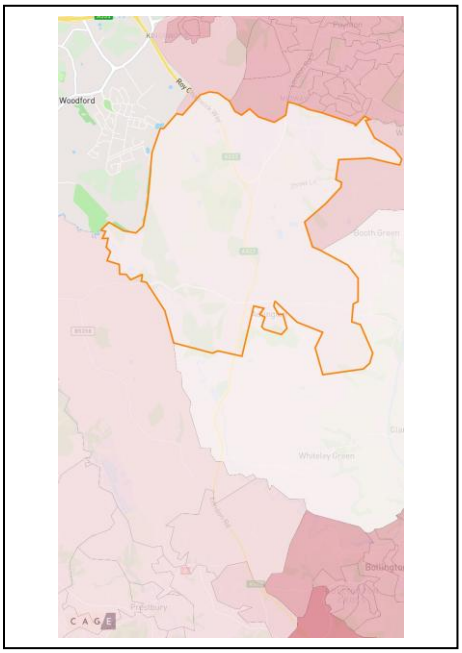
The **Gap-based Local Authority (L.A.) target**: What the Local Authority yearly housing target should be – based on the housing gap target. (As opposed to the Government L.A. annualised housing target, based on the standard method 2024 revision).

MAPS & ANALYSIS OF ADLINGTON – FROM 'WHERE TO BUILD' MAPPING TOOL

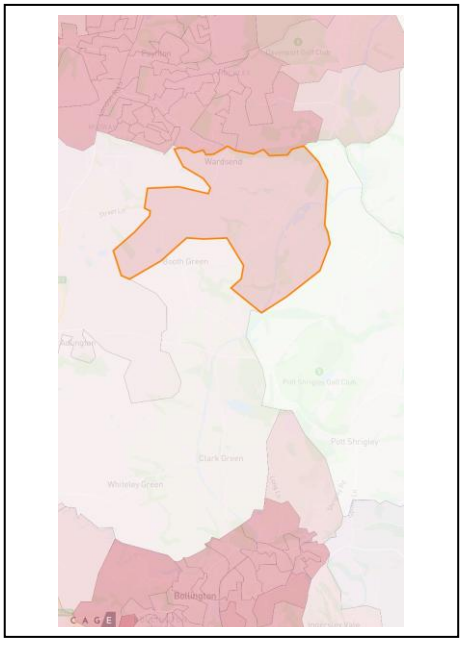
Western Area, Adlington (ref:E00094222)
(adjoining former Woodford aerodrome and inc. parts of Mottram St. Andrew & Prestbury)
Housing Gap: 385.9 homes. Tightness: 2.7
Gap-based Local Authority target: 19.2 homes



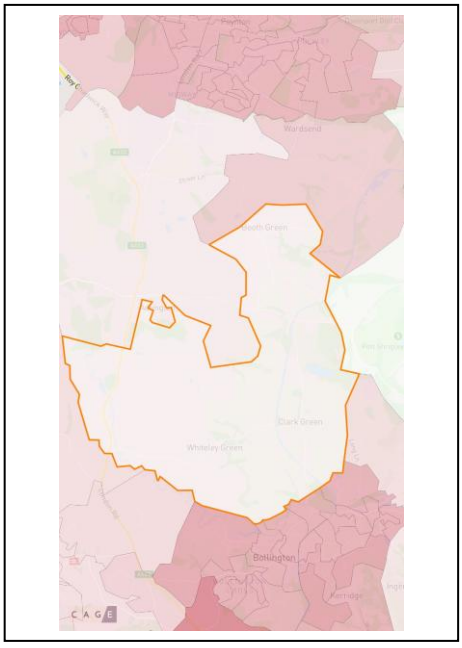
Northern Area (ref. E00094205)
(adjoining former Woodford aerodrome and Poynton)
Housing gap: 238.7 homes. Tightness: 1.8
Gap based L.A. target: 11.9 homes



North Eastern Area of Adlington (ref. E00094207)
(adjoining Higher Poynton and part of Pott Shrigley)
Housing Gap: 322.6 homes. Tightness: 3.7
Gap-based Local Authority target: 16.1 homes



South Eastern Area (ref. E00094206)
(adj. Bollington & inc. part of Pott Shrigley)
Housing Gap: 192.9 homes. Tightness: 1.7
Gap-based L.A. target: 9.6 homes



As the 'tightness' calculations show, the demand for new homes in the Adlington area is extremely low. Compare these (the highest in the Adlington area is 3.7) to the highest 'tightness' rankings for Stockport over the border from Cheshire East – which are in the Heatons, adjoining Manchester. In Heaton Mersey near Kingsway there is a tightness ranking of 13.5 and in Heaton Chapel there are tightness rankings of 13.2.

The findings are that half of Britain's housing gap lies in areas suited to densification, eg. within parts of London (such as Wandsworth, Islington and Camden) and parts of Manchester, Salford, Edinburgh and Portsmouth. Yet only 29% of new homes since 2010 have been built in such areas. Instead, according to the report, a growing share of new builds have been built in areas with worse than average job access and a lack of amenities.

The key recommendation from the report is that national and local policymakers should reallocate housing targets to reflect actual demand.

Commentary

This was an impressive piece of academic work and it has produced outcomes which are ready to use and easy to apply at a very local level. It is important to make the point, however, that the Warwick University exercise only considers people actively house hunting in a particular area – not those who are not house hunting because they know they can't afford to buy or rent. Nor does it impose a formula which discredits areas with special land designations and it takes no account of environmental issues. On its own admission, therefore, it does come up with a handful of green belt areas around the country – including south and west of Stretford in the Greater Manchester green belt. But, quick checks on the latter two points would throw up issues there.

It is worth local authorities giving consideration to the useful tool that the Warwick academics have developed when deciding where to locate their housing allocations. If local authority planners referred to the university database in the first instance when deciding where to allocate housing, it would give them a starting point as to where to look for brownfield sites and empty homes with a view to bringing them forward through the planning process. Currently, there is too much reliance on the results of the 'call for sites' exercise which every local authority carries out. This brings forward many unsustainable sites, not all of which are discounted through the sifting process.

CPRE evidence quoted earlier in this report demonstrates that the introduction of the Grey Belt land designation, due to its lack of specificity, is encouraging more unsuitable planning applications than ever to be lodged.

There needs to be a balance in the way that searches are conducted for potential housing land. The Warwick University database offers another option that the planners can utilise to bring forward alternative potential sites.

KEY POINTS – SECTION 4

CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

Transport:

- The latest version of the NPPF stresses the need to locate development where it can support sustainable patterns of movement.
- Although Adlington has a station on the West Coast Main Line, rail services and facilities are minimal. There are no bus services and no plans in the works for public transport infrastructure improvements.
- Rail improvements are constrained by capacity issues which it may not be possible to overcome. However, even if it were possible, this would require major rebuilding at various points on the line.
- Professional opinion has it that the major road network in the area is sparse with limited capacity, and that huge infrastructure improvements to the road network would be required. However, no traffic demand details have yet been released.

Potable water and waste water:

- United Utilities' 5-year business plan makes no allowances for a New Town in Cheshire.
- It is not known whether United Utilities has the capacity to supply water to up to 20,000 new homes in a new town location.
- Neither of the two local wastewater treatment facilities were designed to accommodate more than average increases in demand.

Health:

- The issue of hospital capacity has not been addressed. The area is served by two general hospitals, East Cheshire NHS Trust's Macclesfield Hospital and Stockport's Stepping Hill Hospital.
- In 2024, East Cheshire was the worst performing trust for seeing A&E patients within four hours, and Macclesfield Hospital was assessed by the Care Quality Commission as needing improvement.
- A 2024 report found Stepping Hill to be in need of major repairs, with £134m required just to maintain an acceptable standard.

CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT IN THE NPPF

The extant National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2024, and the draft re-written version published in December 2025, call for a 'Vision-led approach' to transport planning. As the latest, consultation version, explains, this is in order to ensure *"that transport considerations are taken fully into account in the preparation of development plans and the evolution and assessment of development proposals"* (Chapter 15, 'Promoting Sustainable Transport', paragraph 1, page 68).

The latest version emphasises, (more than the 2024 version does), how essential it is for sustainable transport to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and for *"extensive engagement so that proposals reflect local views"*. And it stresses the need for *"Locating proposed development where it can support sustainable patterns of movement and make effective use of existing or proposed transport infrastructure"* (Policy TR1, page 68). CPRE, in its response to the NPPF, will be calling for the validation of vision-led planning, collaboration between stakeholders and the setting of purposes and conditions for transport infrastructure to try and avoid unnecessary road-building.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT CAPACITY ISSUES

There are currently no plans in the works for public transport infrastructure upgrades in the Adlington area, there are no bus services, the rail service is minimal and there are no facilities at the physically constrained rail station other than a ticket machine.

The station, which sits on the West Coast Main Line (WCML), has two tracks and 10 parking spaces and is surrounded by houses. Franchisee Northern Trains Ltd. operates the stopping service southbound to Stoke-on-Trent, where there is a dedicated parking bay for the three-carriage trains to sit out of the way of through services, and north-bound to Manchester Piccadilly.

The option of using longer rolling stock would require major rebuilding at Stoke and at all the small stations en-route in order to accommodate the longer trains. Other constraints are the sub-standard junction at Cheadle Hulme and the two-track section from there to Stockport. And, Northern's timetable does not meet the minimum 'well connected' criteria in the NPPF. (See the footnote 2 on page 51 of this report and also: https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/timetables/timetable-change?station=ADC&day=weekday). The problem being that the line has to cope with regular London-Manchester intercity and Cross Country trains running through in both directions at speeds of 70 - 90 mph. And, it would appear the pressure is on for the London-Manchester services to be increased. Although, the likelihood is low due to the WCML being at capacity, according to 'Rail' magazine's Industry Editor, Richard Wilcock (https://www.railmagazine.com/features-landing/west-coast-main-line-capacity-crunch?).

THE WEST COAST MAIN LINE PASSING THROUGH ADLINGTON STATION

 David Kitching

 David Dixon

Southbound, three-carriage, Northern train pulling away from Adlington station, captured from the Northbound platform

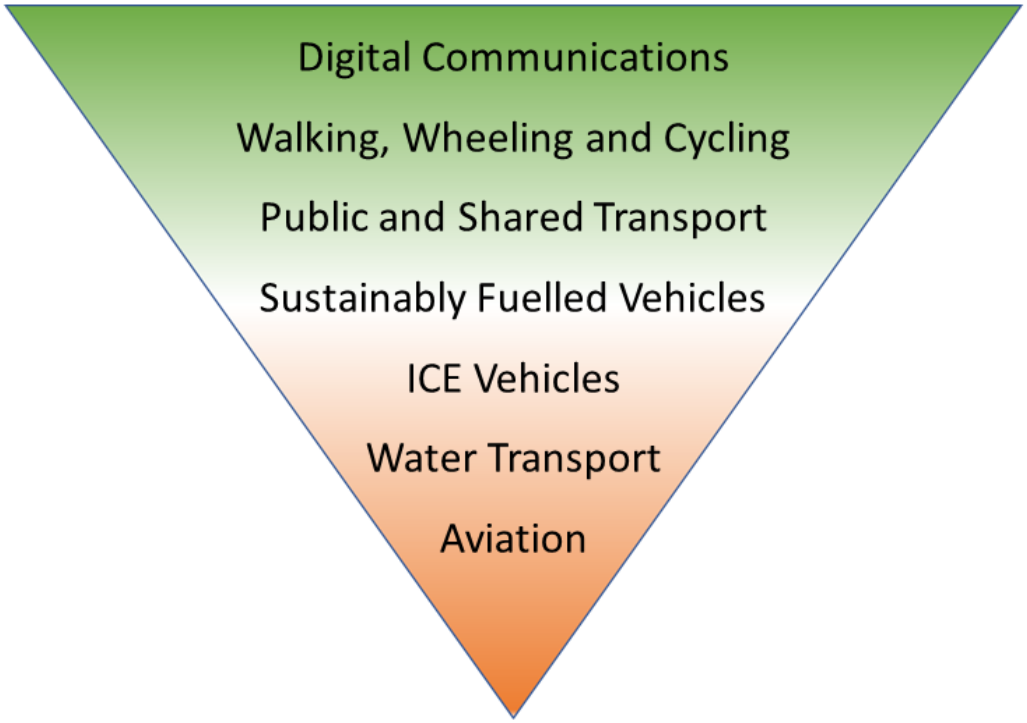
CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO TRANSPORT – AND CPRE's

Cheshire East Council launched a consultation into a draft revised version of its Local Transport Plan late last year, with a closing date of early December. CPRE Cheshire Branch responded to the consultation (https://www.cprecheshire.org.uk/news/2025-cec-transport-consultation-response/).

We took issue with the unspecific wording in some of the draft policies, eg. the fact that policies 1, 5 and 6 could be interpreted as finding it acceptable to build new roads (with resultant harm to the environment) and with the lack of detail provided, eg. correspondents were asked to state whether or not they agreed with investment framework packages for several corridors, but there was no explanation as to what was proposed.

We did, however, compliment Cheshire East Council for acknowledging that transport is a major contributor to carbon emissions and air pollution and for recognising that technology has a major role to play in reducing the need to travel. And we commended to the Council CPRE's transport hierarchy which is replicated below and which appears in CPRE's national transport strategy, available on its national website along with the background evidence to it:
https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/?keyword=&topic=Local+transport&res-type=

CPRE's SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT HIERARCHY



'ICE' vehicles are internal combustion vehicles

ROAD CAPACITY ISSUES

NB The major contributor for this section of the report was Dr. Alan Brett, Atkins project director for the South East Manchester Multi Modal Study (SEMMMS)

The last Labour government commissioned a number of multi-modal studies. One of the longest running was SEMMMS – the South East Manchester Multi-Modal Study – which extended out from central Manchester to North East Cheshire. Since the study reported in 2001, political support for different elements that were recommended has waxed and waned, as has financial backing. Plans were re-drawn several times and the roads that were delivered were eventually built to a lower standard than was originally envisaged.

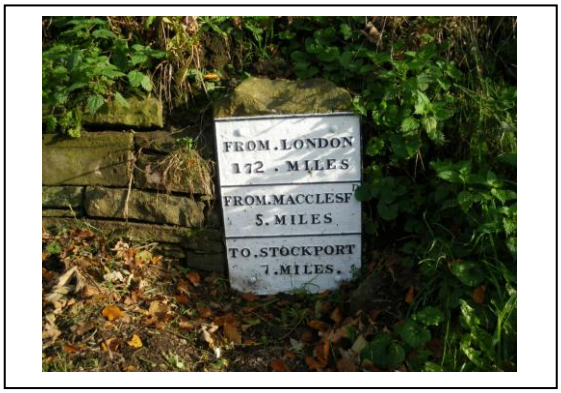
Initially, SEMMMS was under the control of Government Office North West but, when the regional government offices were disbanded by the coalition government, it came under the control of local highway authorities. The roads-based solution that was eventually arrived at, as far as Cheshire East was concerned, was the tying together of a Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road (MAELR), the A555, with a bypass for Poynton. The 10 kilometre (6.2 mile) long A555 MAELR dual carriageway, which runs from the M56 at Manchester Airport to a park and ride site at High Lane on the A6, was finally completed in late 2018. The connecting three kilometre long single carriageway Poynton Relief Road scheme, which ends by the Adlington industrial estate at a junction with the A523 (London Road), opened in Spring 2023. These have provided some improvement for traffic travelling between North East Cheshire and the strategic road network (the M56) at Manchester Airport, but they are already exhibiting some signs of strain.

The SEMMMS outcomes were designed to address what was regarded by highway engineers as a poor transport network in the north eastern corner of Cheshire – in particular the links between the Stockport-Macclesfield corridor and the A34 and the M60. They did not take into account a population increase of 47,000 people in one area.

Commentary

Professional opinion, according to Dr. Brett, has it that the major road network in the area is sparse with limited capacity. No details have yet been divulged of traffic demand associated with a new town at Adlington but, even if the New Town consisted of no more than 14,000 homes, it is estimated these would generate 6,600 outbound trips in the morning peak and attract 6,150 trips in the evening peak. (Figures based on trip generation model used for Handforth Garden Village). It is assumed the majority of the traffic would use the single carriageway Poynton bypass to access the strategic road network. Highways engineers estimate that huge infrastructure improvements to the road network in North East Cheshire would be necessary in order to handle the increase in traffic. Their opinion is that Adlington would be a very poor location for a New Town. (N.B. There are only three crossing points of the West Coast Main Line in Adlington – two via single carriageway roads passing beneath it and a single carriageway over the line between the station and the Legh Arms public house).

Winding lanes, footpaths, towpaths, styles and rural signposts define Adlington more than major roads



Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 - Jan Scrine

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0
Junction Sugar/Brookledge Lanes - Peter Turner

Sign on footpath near Whiteley Green

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0
C. Marcus

Towpath along Macclesfield Canal

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0
Part of the Middlewood Way David Martin

WATER AND WASTE WATER CAPACITY ISSUES

Less than a year ago – at the end of May 2025 – an official drought was declared across the North West of England. It is unknown as to whether or not the capacity exists to supply potable water to up to 20,000 new homes, plus any businesses and other new facilities that might be located in a new town located in North East Cheshire. It has been confirmed that there was an initial meeting between United Utilities (UU), the water company for the Adlington area, a team from DEFRA and the taskforce last May but an FOI response to a query stated that ***"no detailed information was shared"***.

According to Water UK, the average household uses 323 litres of water a day (https://www.water.org.uk/news-views-publications/news/water-you-thinking-brits-way-daily-usage). This figure is arrived at by multiplying the average person usage of 137 litres of water per day by 2.36 – the average household size. Consequently, if 14,000 homes were delivered in Adlington, they would require four and a half million litres of water a day. If 20,000 homes were delivered, they would require six and a half million litres a day – and that precludes demand from all other types of development.

On the matter of wastewater/ sewage, the local situation in the Adlington area is that there is a wastewater treatment plant in Adlington itself and another in Prestbury. It is understood there is spare capacity for 5,000-10,000 homes. But neither facility was designed to accommodate more than average increases in demand. Also, UU's five-year business plan to 2030 makes no allowances for a New Town. UU were ranked as **'**average**'** by Ofwat, the regulator. However, in their final determination price review report dated April 2025, Ofwat said of the company: ***"****We recognise that United Utilities current performance overall across customer service metrics is not as good as it should be****"*** and ***"****Under our final decision, we require United Utilities to deliver a significantly improved level of service for customers and the environment****"***.

In July 2025, following a review of the whole water sector, DEFRA announced that Ofwat was to be abolished and a single, powerful regulator would be established to cut water pollution and have governance over water bills. The new regulator, they said, would take over water functions not only from Ofwat but also from the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Drinking Water Inspectorate. They then published a White Paper setting out their plans for a new water regulatory system on January 19th. This followed the December launch of the Environment Improvement Plan which promised cleaner air and water, but which was much criticised for the timespan of its goals.

Commentary

With so many challenges and changes afoot and the lack of an investment plan to fund the needs of a new town, there have to be questions over the ability of a water utility which is **"**not as good as it should be**"** to cope with the demands it would encounter. (hese subjects are also covered, in some detail, in the SANT report, pages 48-50).

HEALTH CAPACITY ISSUES

Belport, the promoters of Adlington New Town, have mentioned health centres in their promotional material – but they have not addressed the burning issue of hospitals. Currently, National Health Service hospital provision for people who live in the North East corner of Cheshire is provided either by Macclesfield District General Hospital, which comes under the East Cheshire NHS Trust, or by Stepping Hill Hospital in Stockport, which comes under Stockport NHS Foundation Trust.

According to NHS England's Acute Trust league table, published in September 2025, Stockport ranked 62nd out of 134 ratings and the East Cheshire NHS Trust ranked 119th (https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/acute-trust-league-table/). This follows a 2024 'overall assessment' by the Care Quality Commission which found that Macclesfield Hospital "requires improvement". (There is no 2025 report on the CQC's website).

A particularly damning critique of the performance of the East Cheshire Trust was carried in the 'Daily Mail' in May 2025 when it reported on the findings of an analysis conducted by the Taxpayers Alliance. The over-arching headline was *"Scandal of the fat cats in first ever NHS rich list – nearly 300 health bosses are handed packages over £200,000"*. The article picked out East Cheshire for particular criticism thus:

"East Cheshire NHS Trust paid eight managers £100,000 or more despite being the worst performing trust in percentage terms for seeing A and E patients within four hours. It saw just 50.6% within the target time, well below the 78% expected". (See: https://taxpayersalliance.com/taxpayers-alliance-reveals-1-694-nhs-senior-managers-on-six-figure-pay-packets/ and https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14748631/Scandal-fat-cats-NHS-rich-list-nearly-300-health-bosses-handed-packages-worth-200-000.html).

Meanwhile, Stepping Hill Hospital in Hazel Grove, not far from the Cheshire East border, is crumbling according to Cheadle MP, Tom Morrison. He told the Manchester Evening News this month that nurses were having to move patients because of water coming through the ceiling (https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/nurses-move-patients-because-water-33222569?utm_source=mynewsassistant.com&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=embedded_search_item_mobile). There have been improvements to part of the hospital campus with a new emergency and care building opening in May last year and some new government money has been awarded, but the scale of the problems is monumental. The hospital, which opened in 1905, has suffered from collapsing ceilings and flooded corridors in recent years. A report in 2024 found that 70% of the site's facilities were in need of major repairs and £134m was required just to keep the buildings to an "acceptable standard" (https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/they-operating-conditions-frankly-no-30065949). This all begs the obvious question – how is the NHS going to cope with 46,000 extra people in the area? (N.B. The SANT report attempts to cost the extra hospital capacity needed, pages 46/ 47).

CONCLUSION

Several of the New Towns recommended by the New Towns Taskforce are focused on what appear to be logical and sustainable, previously developed, sites - as indeed are some of those on brownfield sites which were not shortlisted.

Adlington, on the other hand, has no credentials to commend it – other than it being able to offer already agglomerated land under one ownership. Claims around economic benefits are questionable and unsubstantiated. Environmental and social negatives outweigh speculative claims about benefits. And as far as land ownership is concerned, any New Town delivery vehicle would be empowered to acquire the land it needed. Those points made, it has to be highlighted that the way the Adlington submission has reached the stage it has is due to the most extraordinary set of circumstances.

There were top secret contacts between the New Towns Taskforce and just a very few leading figures at the principal authority – Cheshire East Council. The taskforce asked for written confirmation that the Council supported a New Town in Adlington and a letter giving the impression that it did was sent to them by the Council leader and his deputy who did not consult with any other members of their Council. With the reassurance it believed it had received, the taskforce went ahead and shortlisted it.

It was only when the taskforce's report was released that it became apparent to them that there was no support for the Adlington proposition – from the Council or from any other source. The chairman of the taskforce, Sir Micael Lyons, told a parliamentary select committee in mid January that Adlington would not have been shortlisted if the opposition of the Council had been evident. This is where matters currently stand.

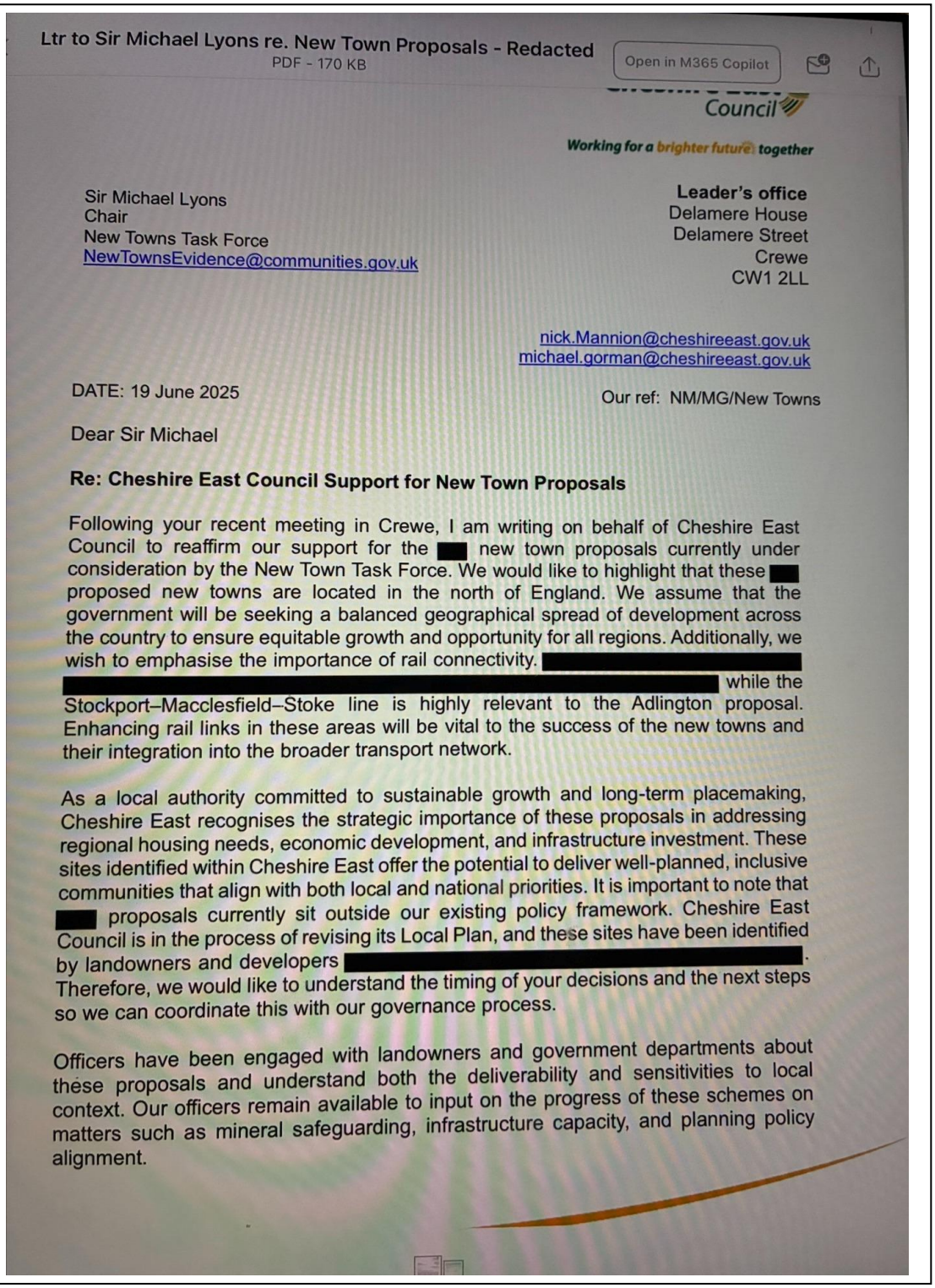
This report outlines the known arguments in favour of an Adlington New Town as stated publicly by the promoters (and by the taskforce). It then sets out planning and other arguments which need to be considered before this proposition is taken any further.

This report has not included most of the environmental arguments because they have been well covered by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Nor has it taken on the economic arguments against because these are the subject of a separate report. It has ventured into some of the transport problem areas but not exhaustively because these again have been tackled in a separate report. It has, however, raised some capacity issues.

The opposition to the planting of a New Town in Cheshire is total. That opposition has a sound basis for existing as this report proves. The government is urged to reject this completely unsustainable proposition which would, in effect, extend the Greater Manchester conurbation well into Cheshire. There are other far more sustainable, brownfield, bids that have been put forward and some of those are areas in desperate need of regeneration. They should be re-appraised and Adlington, which appears to be in the shortlist by accident/ mishandling/ misunderstanding in any event, ought to be discounted as Cheshire East Council have requested.

APPENDIX 1

Letter sent to Sir Michael Lyons by the leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council without the knowledge of their colleagues on Cheshire East Council:



Ltr to Sir Michael Lyons re. New Town Proposals - Redacted
PDF - 170 KB

Open in M365 Copilot

Council

Working for a brighter future together

Sir Michael Lyons
Chair
New Towns Task Force
NewTownsEvidence@communities.gov.uk

Leader's office
Delamere House
Delamere Street
Crewe
CW1 2LL

nick.Mannion@cheshireeast.gov.uk
michael.gorman@cheshireeast.gov.uk

DATE: 19 June 2025

Our ref: NM/MG/New Towns

Dear Sir Michael

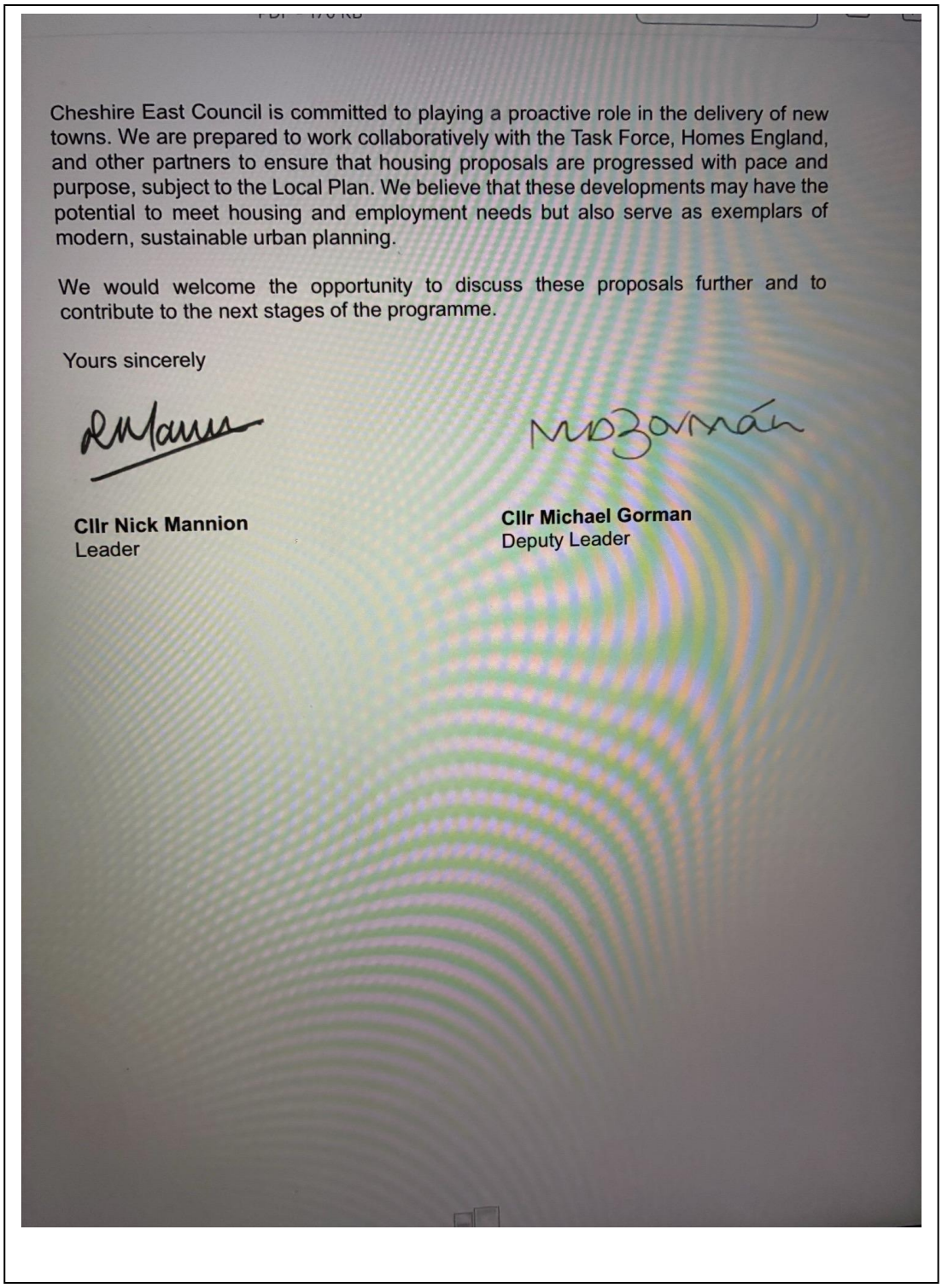
Re: Cheshire East Council Support for New Town Proposals

Following your recent meeting in Crewe, I am writing on behalf of Cheshire East Council to reaffirm our support for the [redacted] new town proposals currently under consideration by the New Town Task Force. We would like to highlight that these [redacted] proposed new towns are located in the north of England. We assume that the government will be seeking a balanced geographical spread of development across the country to ensure equitable growth and opportunity for all regions. Additionally, we wish to emphasise the importance of rail connectivity. [redacted] while the Stockport–Macclesfield–Stoke line is highly relevant to the Adlington proposal. Enhancing rail links in these areas will be vital to the success of the new towns and their integration into the broader transport network.

As a local authority committed to sustainable growth and long-term placemaking, Cheshire East recognises the strategic importance of these proposals in addressing regional housing needs, economic development, and infrastructure investment. These sites identified within Cheshire East offer the potential to deliver well-planned, inclusive communities that align with both local and national priorities. It is important to note that [redacted] proposals currently sit outside our existing policy framework. Cheshire East Council is in the process of revising its Local Plan, and these sites have been identified by landowners and developers [redacted]. Therefore, we would like to understand the timing of your decisions and the next steps so we can coordinate this with our governance process.

Officers have been engaged with landowners and government departments about these proposals and understand both the deliverability and sensitivities to local context. Our officers remain available to input on the progress of these schemes on matters such as mineral safeguarding, infrastructure capacity, and planning policy alignment.

Letter sent to Sir Michael Lyons by the leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council without the knowledge of their colleagues on Cheshire East Council (continued):



Cheshire East Council is committed to playing a proactive role in the delivery of new towns. We are prepared to work collaboratively with the Task Force, Homes England, and other partners to ensure that housing proposals are progressed with pace and purpose, subject to the Local Plan. We believe that these developments may have the potential to meet housing and employment needs but also serve as exemplars of modern, sustainable urban planning.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these proposals further and to contribute to the next stages of the programme.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Nick Mannion
Leader

Cllr Michael Gorman
Deputy Leader

APPENDIX 2

Letter written to the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council with the full knowledge and support of their colleagues on Cheshire East Council

Cheshire East Council

Rt Hon Steve Reed MBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing,
Communities and Local Government

BY EMAIL

steve.reed.mp@parliament.uk

Leader's Office
c/o Delamere House
Delamere Street
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 2LL

Nick.mannion@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Michael.gorman@cheshireeast.gov.uk

DATE: 22/12/2025
OUR REF: NM/MG

Dear Steve Reed

Re: Adlington New Town – objection from Cheshire East Council

We are formally writing to register Cheshire East Council's objection to the proposed New Town at Adlington

On the 10th December 2025, Cheshire East's Full Council considered a notice of motion relating to the government proposed New Town at Adlington, Cheshire. The Council meeting was attended by 71 councillors and over 100 members of the public representing Town & Parish Councils, interest groups and local residents.

The strength of feeling was clear – there are significant concerns about the impact of the New Towns proposal on Adlington and the surrounding areas. Public speakers and councillors alike spoke passionately and articulately during the debate.

The Notice of Motion was brought forward in response to the independent New Towns Task Force's proposition to establish a New Settlement of up to 20,000 homes on land at Adlington. A copy of the notice of motion is enclosed for your reference.

It is important to emphasise that Cheshire East Council is neither the proposer nor the decision-maker for the Adlington New Town proposal. The decision on the proposal rests solely with you as the Secretary of State.

Letter written to the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council with the full knowledge and support of their colleagues on Cheshire East Council (continued)

However, we cannot ignore the fundamental flaws in the proposal nor the considerable opposition from the people of Adlington, its surrounding parishes and neighbouring towns.

Following a vote, all 71 councillors present at Full Council unanimously supported the motion.

The Notice of Motion contained two key recommendations:

1. That this Council formally objects to the proposal for a New Town on land at Adlington.

2. This Council requests and authorises the Leader and Deputy Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government (the decision maker) asserting the Council's opposition to the proposed New Town at Adlington and setting out the reasons for its opposition.

Cheshire East Council is committed to a plan-led approach to development, as set out in the council's adopted Local Plan Strategy, which includes appropriate consultation with local communities.

The Council recognises that to meet all identified needs and to support local communities and businesses, and enable a thriving economy, there is a need for additional housing and a diverse mix of sizes and tenures – including affordable and social homes, specialist housing, homes for older and vulnerable adults, starter homes and properties for rent.

However, the proposal to establish a New Town at Adlington is unacceptable to Cheshire East Council for several reasons, and in some respects, inconsistent with the Government's own planning policies. Our Principal concerns and objections are as follows:

1. Planned Development: New Housing sites should be brought forward through the Local Plan process with meaningful community involvement.

2. Brownfield First: Brownfield sites and the regeneration of older urban areas should be prioritised, supporting the revitalisation of towns such as Crewe and Macclesfield and our Market Towns. Inner town development generates footfall driving vitality and viability. The Government should focus on and make it easier to bring brownfield sites back into use, including providing funding to address viability gaps for both small and large sites.

3. Protection of Greenfield and Ecological Assets: The Adlington site comprises extensive high-quality grazing land, several long-established farms and significant woodlands. The Parish of Adlington contains more trees than any other parish in Cheshire East. The site also includes other areas of ecological significance. The loss of these assets needs to be carefully weighed against the

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Letter written to the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council with the full knowledge and support of their colleagues on Cheshire East Council (continued)

need for new housing. Vulnerability to flooding is also a concern and drainage / flood protection should be installed to reflect the current environmental experience.

4. Support for Rural Communities: The Council is committed to supporting rural communities. Rurality is also a priority for the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority Shadow Board as our sub region moves forward as part of the Devolution Priority Programme process.

5. Green Belt Protection: Adlington and its neighbouring parishes have been within the North Cheshire Green Belt for many years. The primary purpose of the Green Belt is to prevent the coalescence of larger settlements and to preserve the identity of the towns, villages, and hamlets. The proposed New Town would create a continuous built form from Macclesfield to Stockport, contrary to the established purposes of the Green Belt.

6. Road & Rail Capacity: This is a significant concern. A comprehensive sustainable transport strategy will be required to mitigate the currently high risk that the site becomes car dependent. The government would need to ensure that necessary infrastructure is prioritised, fully in place before development is commenced, with improvements to address capacity issues on the whole rail line, including the West Coast Main line.

7. Health Facilities/ Healthcare – concern exists on the provision of health facilities and capacity of healthcare, with the impact on existing Hospitals in Macclesfield and in Stockport, and therefore a new hospital would be essential but this doesn't appear to have been considered.

8. Education – The proposal needs to provide infrastructure and facilities for both primary and secondary education to a timeline that does not place pressure on adjoining schools and towns. The proposals do not identify that this will be put in place before significant houses are built.

9. Lack of Engagement: This proposal has been brought forward without any formal involvement of Cheshire East's elected representatives or local town and parish councils or engagement with residents and other key stakeholders, despite the Task Force report suggesting that the recommended sites enjoyed a degree of local support. Local voices must be heard before any decisions are made.

Finally, at the Lords Built Environment Committee last week, the landowner, Belport, advised the committee that they believed all the infrastructure costs should be shared by both the government and landowner. Clarity on the government position on investment in infrastructure is essential at the earliest opportunity. It is a concern that this government investment in infrastructure would be to the detriment and a deflection of

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Letter written to the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the leader and deputy leader of Cheshire East Council with the full knowledge and support of their colleagues on Cheshire East Council (continued)

much needed investment into the built environment of existing town centres nearby, particularly Macclesfield.

For all the above reasons and as a result of the Full Council decision, we urge you as Secretary of State and the key decision maker, to remove Adlington from the New Town Taskforce's list of suggested New Towns.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Nick Mannion
Leader of Cheshire East Council

Cllr Michael Gorman
Deputy Leader of
Cheshire East Council

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FROM 'ENGLAND AND THE OCTOPUS' by CLOUGH WILLIAMS-ELLIS

First published 1928

In his polemic book, Clough Williams-Ellis railed against creeping development into the countryside and poor design. He called it 'disfigurement'. The 'octopus' was London, but it could have been any city with tentacles extending into the countryside. He wrote:

"There being no official guardian of our country's beauty, its guardianship is by default in commission amongst the few who care for it; and it is generally and rightly held that in such matters those who care the most therefore are those in the know. That, at any rate, is all the claim that can be made for the authority of the Amenity Protectionists; they have no formal charter, no credentials of infallibility and they have no legal or executive power or say whatsoever. They are small though passionate voices crying in the wilderness and no-one need heed them or pay them the slightest attention.

Nor, to be sure, do they – as yet. Being an almost (but not quite) negligible minority, they are prudently regarded as cranks – cranks too detached from the driving shaft of the modern world to grip it effectively or to promote or retard its revolutions.

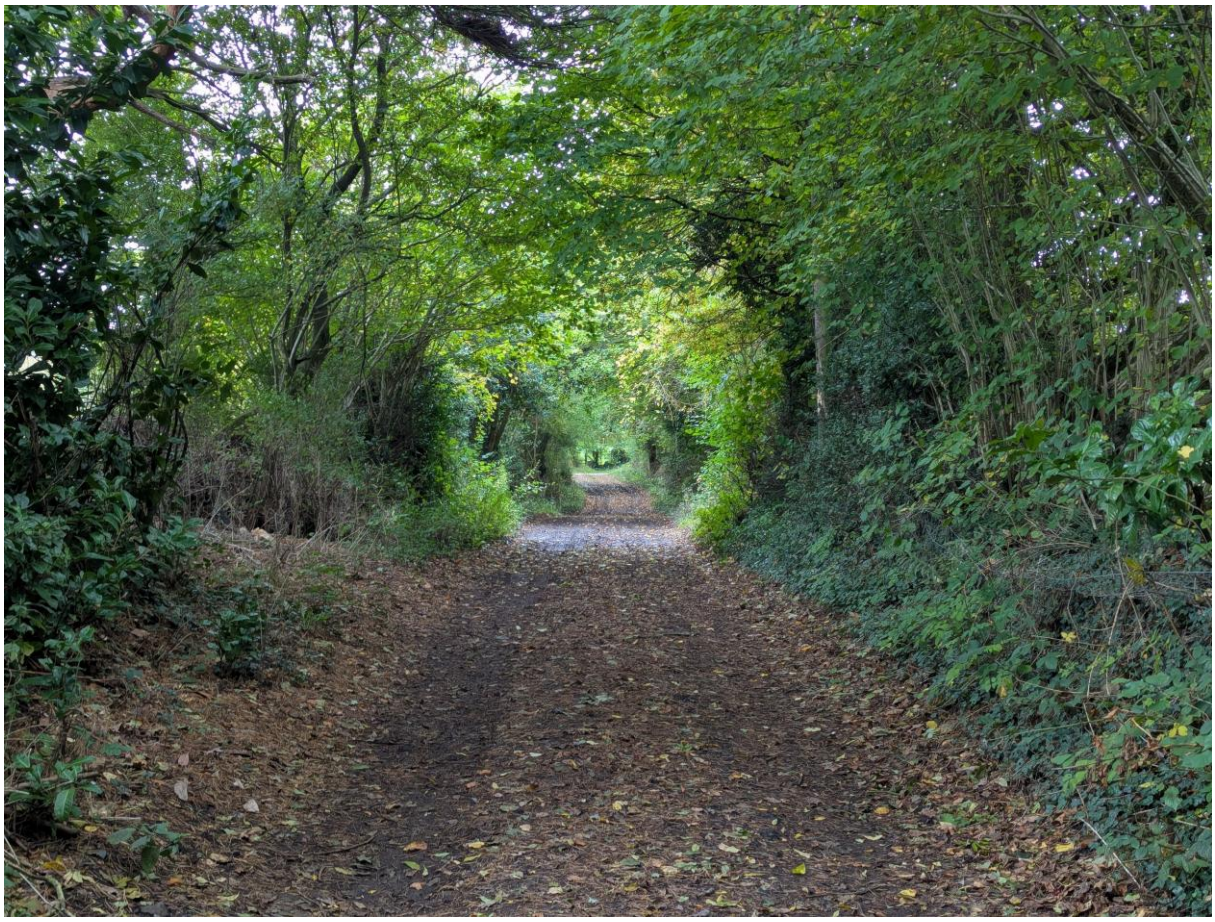
That, unfortunately, has some truth in it – or has had; but various organisations of which the Council for the Preservation of Rural England is typical, have recently been tightening things up, and it seems that power may yet be transmitted through these cranks - combined and ordered so as to deliver a synchronised and quite appreciable thrust, not only on public opinion, but upon parliament, and so ultimately altering the very law of the land.

The horse having been well and truly stolen, we are about to stage the great national ceremony of locking the stable door – not quite fruitlessly, as we are fallen so low that even the remaining straw and the halter have become precious to us as emblems of our former wealth.

Having already had the larger part of the South Downs filched from us, together with the margins of the New Forest and most of our accessible seaboard (to say nothing of the Home Counties and, at an earlier date, our commons throughout the land), our proposed door-locking comes none too soon. But can we lock the door effectively even on what is left us- are there would-be janitors strong enough and numerous enough to prevail against the horse-thieves? That is a very urgent question and one that only the event will answer".

(Taken from Chapter 2 of England and the Octopus: 'Watchmen and Thieves')

At the time this was written, CPRE (which then stood for the Council for the Preservation of Rural England) was in its infancy – but the passion of those who work for it and who give their time on a voluntary basis to its cause has not dimmed over time. Nor have our efforts waned in trying to protect the countryside for its own sake.



Wych Lane, Adlington

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