

The Rt Hon Steve Reed MP
Secretary of State
Department for Housing Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Sent by email

26 January 2026

Re: New town proposal at Adlington in Cheshire

Dear Secretary of State,

In November 2025, the Government announced that Adlington in Cheshire had been shortlisted as a possible location for a new town. The Wildlife Trusts are looking in detail at the full set of new town proposals and look forward to engaging constructively with your department on how nature-recovery can be delivered alongside new development through the programme. However, as the proposed Adlington site is in an extremely environmentally sensitive location, we wish to highlight from the off that this particular proposal should be dropped.

The site contains seven Local Wildlife Sites within or directly adjacent to boundary area, two Local Landscape Designations, and irreplaceable ancient woodland habitats. This array of habitats makes the site a hotspot for endangered species including 31 red-listed species and 40 amber-listed species. Populations on the site include iconic and rapidly declining species such as the spotted flycatcher, tree sparrow, wood warbler, yellowhammer, mistle thrush, cuckoo and linnet. These wild spaces and species all face destruction by the proposed development.

Adlington is important not just for protecting the nature we have left, but for recovering it, in line with the Government's commitment to halt the decline of nature by 2030. The majority of the proposed new town location is mapped in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, either as a 'Core Local Nature Site' or an 'Opportunity Area for Nature Recovery'. It is pivotal to hopes of building a connected network of nature recovery sites across Cheshire.

The loss of this potential for nature recovery to the new town development would undermine the achievement of legally binding nature recovery targets set under the Environment Act 2021.

Locating a new town within an area of rich habitats, threatened species, and critical nature recovery potential would run contrary to the high environmental standards as set out by the New Towns Taskforce recommendations. As the recommendations state: new towns should be *"designed and delivered to embrace environmental principles, with buildings and neighbourhoods that are low-carbon, climate-resilient, and which help to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity"*.

For these reasons, we call on the Government to reject Adlington as a potential site. This, alongside a high level of nature ambition for all sites that proceed to the next step, would allow the new towns programme to proceed with environmental credibility, and keep the aspiration of a 'win-win for development and nature' viable.

Thank you for consideration of the above, and the enclosed report setting out the damage the Adlington new town would inflict on nature. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you and your team.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Edwards OBE
Director of Policy and Public Affairs
The Wildlife Trusts

Replies can be sent to mbrowne@wildlifetrusts.org