

Dear Spatial Planning Team, Cheshire East Council,

Subject: Formal Representation: Objection to SHELAA Submission for Land at Ashley (12 Contiguous Parcels, Totalling 291.03 Hectares)

I am writing to register a firm formal objection to allocating or considering the 291.03-hectare site (comprising 12 interconnected parcels) around Ashley within the SHELAA or wider Local Plan review. Promoting large-scale strategic development in this isolated rural location is functionally unviable, unsustainable, and contrary to statutory planning policy.

1. Incompatibility with Green Belt Policy and "Grey Belt" Standards

- **Washed-Over Green Belt Protection:** The entire parish of Ashley is protected under "washed-over" Green Belt status (CELPS Policy PG 3) specifically to safeguard its sensitive rural character.
- **Prevention of Settlement Coalescence:** Ashley represents the narrowest remaining countryside gap separating Cheshire East (Knutsford, Mobberley) from Greater Manchester (Trafford, Hale, Altrincham). Building on this land would drive urban sprawl and cause distinct communities to merge, breaching core national Green Belt objectives.
- **Disqualification from "Grey Belt" Exceptions:** Under NPPF Policy GB7, "Grey Belt" reclassification requires land to make a negligible contribution to Green Belt purposes. This active, productive farmland fulfils essential Green Belt roles and carries severe ecological, heritage, and flood constraints that disqualify it under national rules.

2. Breach of Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy

- **Lowest Tier Settlement:** Under CELPS Policy PG 2, Ashley is designated at the bottom tier of the local settlement hierarchy. It lacks fundamental everyday infrastructure, including primary schools, medical services, and commercial employment hubs.
- **Failure of Sustainable Location Principles:** Directing major housing growth to an isolated rural village violates CELPS Policies SD 1 and SD 2, alongside national plan-making mandates to concentrate strategic growth within Tier 1 Principal Towns and Tier 2 Key Service Centres.

3. Environmental, Heritage, and Landscape Degradation

- **Ecological Severance & Red-Listed Wildlife:** Covering this contiguous open land in housing would fragment critical habitat corridors and harm protected environmental sites, including the adjacent Cotterill Clough SSSI / Nature Reserve (breaching CELPS Policy SE 3). The land also provides crucial year-round habitat for three UK Red-Listed bird species: grey partridge, tree sparrow, and greenfinch.
- **Heritage Asset Damage:** The open agricultural setting frames 19 Grade II listed buildings, including Ashley Hall. Development contravenes CELPS Policy SE 7 and national heritage policy requiring great weight to be placed on protecting listed assets and their rural settings.

- **Landscape Deterioration:** Allocation would permanently destroy the visual integrity and settings of two separate designated areas: the Bollin Valley and Parklands Local Landscape Designation (LLD) and the Rostherne/Tatton Park LLD, violating CELPS Policy SE 4.

4. Transport Deficits, Highway Safety Hazards, and Aviation Constraints

- **Substandard Rail Provision:** Ashley station currently operates at a low frequency of one train per hour per direction with very limited commuter parking. In March 2026, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport Keir Mather MP confirmed that the Rail North Partnership Board is cutting services at Ashley and Plumley to just one train every two hours to facilitate hourly stops at the funded Cheadle station. This service reduction removes public transit as a viable option for prospective residents and fails national "well-connected station" standards.
- **Severe Highway Bottlenecks:** Local narrow lanes cannot absorb high traffic volumes. Single-lane bridge choke points over the railway line, River Bollin, and Birkin Brook would create extreme cumulative congestion and severe road safety hazards, violating CELPS Policies CO 1 and CO 4.
- **Aerodrome Safeguarding Risks:** Located directly beneath active flight paths for Manchester Airport, the land falls within noise restriction and bird-strike management zones, conflicting with CELPS Policy SE 12 and statutory aviation rules.

5. Destruction of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Farmland

- **High-Grade Soil Protection:** Ground testing (including HS2 Phase 2b survey data) confirms that the 291.03-hectare site consists predominantly of Grade 2 and Subgrade 3a BMV soil.
- **Threat to Regional Food Security:** Converting this contiguous, highly productive agricultural area into housing threatens regional food production, violating CELPS Policy SE 2 and national mandates to safeguard high-quality agricultural land over brownfield options.

6. Drainage Deficits, Flood Risks, and Infrastructure Shortfalls

- **Heightened Flood Risks:** Portions of the site near the M56 motorway already suffer from regular flooding. Replacing open fields with impermeable hardstanding would dramatically increase runoff into the River Bollin catchment, compounding downstream flood risks in breach of CELPS Policy SE 13.
- **Utility Infrastructure Inadequacies:** The area lacks the grid capacity, public sewer connections, and utility network needed for major housing developments, failing the deliverability criteria of CELPS Policy IN 1.

Requested Action

The proposed submission across all 12 contiguous parcels (totalling 291.03 hectares) fails every applicable local and national planning policy. I formally request that Cheshire East Council record all 12 parcels as **Unsuitable, Unavailable, and**

Undeliverable in the SHELAA assessment and exclude them entirely from future Local Plan allocations.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H Ahmed', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr. Haris Ahmed
Ashley,
Cheshire