Site MB08: Land Between Ryecroft Lane and Pavement Lane / Land off Ryecroft Lane, Mobberley

Overall Position

A strong objection is raised to the inclusion of Site MB08 within the Cheshire East Local Plan. The site represents a significant area of open countryside and Green Belt land which performs an important strategic, environmental and community function. Development of the site would result in the loss of rural landscape, increased pressure on already constrained infrastructure, harm to biodiversity, increased flood risk, and further erosion of the separation between Mobberley and Knutsford. The site is considered unsuitable for residential allocation and brownfield alternatives should be prioritised.

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1. Green Belt Purpose and Settlement Separation

One of the most significant concerns is the vital contribution the site makes to the Green Belt and the maintenance of a clear separation between Mobberley and Knutsford.

The site forms part of a narrowing corridor of open countryside between the two settlements. Cheshire East Council's own evidence within the Mobberley Settlement Report identified this land as making a major contribution to maintaining the strategic gap between settlements. Development would reduce both the physical and perceived distinction between Mobberley and Knutsford, contrary to one of the fundamental purposes of Green Belt designation. The respondent notes that the separation has already been substantially reduced through recent housing approvals and commercial expansion in the surrounding area. Further encroachment into this remaining gap would bring the settlements closer together and contribute to the gradual coalescence of communities that have historically maintained separate identities. The cumulative effect of successive developments is considered particularly important when assessing this site.

Development would therefore not simply affect a single parcel of land but would fundamentally alter the settlement pattern and spatial character of this part of Cheshire.

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2. Loss of Openness and Countryside

The site currently consists of open agricultural countryside which contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape.

Housing development would permanently replace green fields with built form, roads, parking areas, street lighting, drainage infrastructure and associated urban features. Once developed, the openness of the landscape could not be restored. The introduction of housing estates into this presently undeveloped location would create a substantial urban presence that would be visible from surrounding roads, public viewpoints and neighbouring properties.

The loss of openness is not solely a visual issue. Open countryside provides a sense of space and tranquillity which is highly valued by residents. The proposal would erode these qualities and change the way the countryside is experienced by both residents and visitors.

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3. Rural Character, Village Identity and Landscape Quality

Mobberley derives much of its special character from its agricultural heritage, rural setting and distinctive village environment.

The land between Ryecroft Lane and Pavement Lane forms part of the countryside setting which helps define the village's character. The surrounding area contains narrow country lanes, mature hedgerows, open fields and relatively limited built development. These characteristics create a strong sense of place which residents consider integral to Mobberley's identity.

Development on this scale would introduce suburban characteristics into a predominantly rural environment. Housing, roads, footways, street lighting, parked vehicles and associated infrastructure would urbanise the landscape and fundamentally alter its appearance. The proposal would diminish the village charm, countryside setting and local distinctiveness that residents value and seek to preserve.

Residents also highlight the importance of the views across open fields which contribute to the area's visual amenity and reinforce the perception of Mobberley as a rural village rather than an extension of nearby urban areas.

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4. Flood Risk, Surface Water and Drainage

Flooding is one of the most frequently raised concerns regarding this site.

Residents report that the land regularly becomes heavily waterlogged during periods of prolonged rainfall and has historically been regarded as functioning as floodplain. Existing drainage issues are already experienced by nearby properties, particularly those around Mayfield Road, where gardens are understood to suffer flooding during winter months.

The site currently acts as a natural area for rainfall absorption and water storage. Development would inevitably replace permeable ground with impermeable surfaces such as roofs, roads, drives and pavements. Even where modern drainage systems are proposed, there remains concern that the site's natural drainage role would be significantly diminished.

Residents fear that increased runoff would place further pressure on surrounding drainage networks and watercourses, increasing the likelihood of flooding both on and off site. Particular concern is expressed regarding the cumulative effect of development when considered alongside other recent housing schemes in the area.

The loss of a large undeveloped field which currently absorbs rainfall could exacerbate existing flooding problems affecting neighbouring residential properties and gardens.

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5. Biodiversity, Wildlife and Natural Habitats

The site is regarded as an important ecological resource within the local area.

Residents identify the site as supporting a range of wildlife species including pipistrelle bats, owls, foxes, hedgehogs and numerous bird species. The field network, mature hedgerows and surrounding countryside provide feeding, nesting and commuting habitats which are increasingly important as development continues elsewhere in the locality.

The area is also recognised as one of the few remaining dark corridors between Mobberley and Knutsford. Such dark areas are particularly valuable for nocturnal species, especially bats that rely on low light conditions for movement and foraging.

Development would result in:

- Direct habitat loss.
- Increased disturbance from human activity.
- Additional lighting.
- Fragmentation of wildlife corridors.
- Pressure on protected species.
- Potential impacts on mature hedgerows and biodiversity networks.

The cumulative impact of losing yet another area of undeveloped land is considered significant when viewed alongside other development taking place within the wider area.

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6. Highway Capacity, Traffic and Road Safety

The road network surrounding the site is considered fundamentally unsuitable for accommodating a major housing allocation.

Ryecroft Lane, Pavement Lane and other local routes are relatively narrow rural roads that were not designed to accommodate substantial increases in traffic volumes. Residents already experience congestion at peak periods and believe that additional development would worsen existing problems.

Additional housing would result in:

- Increased commuter traffic.
- More vehicle movements throughout the day.
- Additional delivery and servicing vehicles.
- Greater pressure at local junctions.
- Increased conflict between vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

Particular concern is raised regarding road safety. Many surrounding roads have limited footpath provision and some sections lack footpaths entirely. As a result, pedestrians frequently share road space with vehicles. Increased traffic volumes would therefore present greater risks, particularly for children, older residents and those walking to schools, bus stops and local facilities.

The respondent believes that the local highway network lacks the capacity necessary to support substantial additional growth.

7. Community Infrastructure and Public Services

Residents consider that local services are already under significant pressure.

The proposed housing allocation would generate additional demand for:

- GP surgeries.
- Primary healthcare services.
- Dental services.
- School places.
- Community facilities.
- Public services generally.

There is concern that infrastructure improvements often fail to keep pace with housing growth, resulting in increasing pressure on existing facilities and reduced service accessibility for current residents.

The cumulative effect of recent and proposed developments across Mobberley heightens concerns that local services will become overstretched unless substantial infrastructure investment is secured in advance.

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8. Aircraft Noise and Residential Amenity

A further major concern relates to aircraft noise associated with Manchester Airport.

The site lies within the airport's 60dB noise contour, a level of exposure which residents argue already has a noticeable impact on quality of life. Aircraft activity is experienced throughout the day and is considered intrusive by many local residents.

The respondent notes that airport activity has increased significantly in recent years and that Manchester Airport has publicly stated ambitions for continued long-term growth. Consequently, future residents of any housing development on Site MB08 could be subject to increasing levels of aircraft noise over time.

This raises both amenity and health concerns and is considered an additional reason why the site is unsuitable for sensitive residential development. The potential conflict between new housing and existing noise sources should be carefully considered.

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9. Environmental Sustainability

The site is considered an unsustainable location for development due to the combination of environmental constraints.

Development would:

- Remove greenfield land.
- Increase dependence on private vehicles.
- Increase carbon emissions.

- Reduce opportunities for natural flood management.
- Increase noise and air pollution.
- Result in habitat fragmentation.
- Reduce landscape quality.
- Cause permanent countryside loss.

Residents believe these impacts are inconsistent with wider objectives relating to environmental protection, sustainability and climate resilience.

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10. Cumulative Impact of Development

An overarching concern is the cumulative effect of development that has already occurred, is under construction, or has been granted permission in and around Mobberley.

While individual schemes may appear manageable in isolation, the respondent argues that the total impact of multiple developments has already begun to alter the character of the area and place increasing pressures on roads, infrastructure, services and the environment.

Site MB08 should therefore not be considered in isolation, but alongside:

- Recent large-scale housing developments.
- Commercial expansion.
- Approved housing schemes in surrounding locations.
- Future growth pressures associated with Manchester Airport.

When viewed cumulatively, the respondent believes the adverse impacts become substantially more significant.

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11. Brownfield First Approach

The respondent strongly supports a planning approach which prioritises previously developed land before considering Green Belt release.

Suitable brownfield sites can often accommodate development with less impact upon:

- Countryside.
- Biodiversity.
- Landscape character.
- Flood risk.
- Green Belt openness.

Given the range of significant constraints affecting MB08, the respondent considers that housing need should instead be met through more sustainable brownfield opportunities where possible.

Conclusion

The allocation of Site MB08 would result in substantial and irreversible harm to the Green Belt, countryside character, biodiversity, flood resilience and community infrastructure of Mobberley. The site plays a critical role in preserving separation between Mobberley and Knutsford, maintaining village identity and supporting wildlife habitats. Development would increase traffic, place additional demands on public services, exacerbate flooding concerns and expose future residents to significant aircraft noise. Taking all factors together, the respondent considers that Site MB08 is fundamentally unsuitable for housing development and should be removed from further consideration within the Local Plan.