I am writing to formally object to the inclusion of the 291.03-hectare land submission around Ashley (12 adjoining sites totalling 291.03 hectares) in the Cheshire East Local Plan / SHELAA.

1. Conflict with Green Belt Policy (North Cheshire Green Belt & 'Wash-Over' Status):

- Wash-Over Green Belt: The parish of Ashley is designated as "wash-over" Green Belt—the most protective form of rural Green Belt classification.
- Regional Strategic Buffer: Established in the 1950s specifically to prevent urban sprawl, Ashley forms the crucial narrow green buffer separating South Manchester and Trafford (Hale, Hale Barns, Altrincham) from villages and towns in Cheshire East (Mobberley, Knutsford).
- Failure of the National "Grey Belt" Test: Under national policy, Green Belt land can only be considered for release if it meets the definition of "Grey Belt" (previously developed brownfield land or land that makes a negligible contribution to Green Belt purposes). Open, working farmland across Ashley fails this test.
- Direct Conflict with Core Green Belt Purposes (NPPF):
    - *Purpose A (Check Unrestricted Sprawl):* Serves as the primary barrier preventing the Manchester conurbation from expanding southwards.
    - *Purpose B (Prevent Towns Merging):* Building across these 291.03 hectares would physically merge Greater Manchester settlements with Cheshire villages and towns.
    - *Purpose C (Safeguard the Countryside):* Protects active, open agricultural land from suburban encroachment. Protecting this land aligns with national policy to preserve prime agricultural resources.

2. Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy: Ashley is a small, rural parish with very little public transport, primary infrastructure, medical facilities, or local employment. Allocating large-scale development here violates sustainable development principles, which require growth to be focused on Tier 1 and Tier 2 urban centres.

3. Highways & Safety: The surrounding rural road network, constrained by narrow railway bridges and single-lane pinch points, cannot safely accommodate thousands of additional vehicle movements toward the A538 and M56.

4. Inadequate Rail Connections: Ashley train station lacks the service capacity needed for sustainable transit. It operates on a maximum frequency of just one train per hour in each direction. Furthermore, with the planned new station at Cheadle progressing (it has planning permission and is fully funded), prospective service reallocations would reduce Ashley's service frequency to a single train every two hours, rendering rail commuting unfeasible for new residents. In March 2026 Keir Mather MP, parliamentary under-secretary of state in the Department for Transport, stated, in Parliament, "The Rail North partnership board is the **decision-making** board for service considerations for Northern Trains Ltd and TransPennine trains, and is one part of the process that needs to take place to enable the service change. It is now evident that service change, including reducing the frequency of services that stop at Ashley and Plumley, is the only way that an hourly stop at a new station at Cheadle could be accommodated."

5. The land falls directly within flight path operational noise contours and bird-strike hazard safety zones, making high-density housing unsuitable.

6. Drainage & Utilities: The area lacks deep sewer, grid, and surface water drainage capacity, presenting high surface-water flood risks to the River **Bollin** catchment.

7. Loss of High-Grade Agricultural Land (BMV): Independent soil surveys (including HS2 Phase 2b data) confirm the land contains Grade 2 and Subgrade 3a Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, which national policy protects for food security.

8. Environmental Heritage Harm: Development would cause irreparable harm to the Bollin Valley and Parklands LLD, Rostherne/Tatton Park LLD, Cotterill Clough Nature Reserve, ancient woodlands, protected species corridors, and the setting of 19 Grade II listed buildings (including Ashley Hall).

I request that Cheshire East Council formally classify this 291.03-hectare area (12 adjoining sites totalling 291.03 hectares) as Unsuitable and Undeliverable in the SHELAA assessment.

