FAO: Cheshire East Council – Spatial Planning Team

I am writing as a resident of Ashley,and a parent of young children, and someone who is genuinely frightened about what the 291-hectare land submission would mean for our village. We chose Ashley because it is small, safe, rural and protected by the strongest Green Belt designation available. What is being proposed would destroy the very things that make this place liveable for families like mine.

Ashley is designated as wash-over Green Belt, which is the most protective form of Green Belt classification. This is not a technicality, it is a legal safeguard that exists because Ashley forms the narrow green gap between Greater Manchester and Cheshire. If this land is built on, Hale, Bowdon, Altrincham, Mobberley and Knutsford will effectively merge. That directly conflicts with **NPPF Green Belt Purpose A (preventing sprawl) and Purpose B (preventing towns merging). The land is open, working farmland, and certainly does not meet the national definition of "Grey Belt". It is not brownfield, not degraded, and not land that makes a negligible contribution to Green Belt purposes. It is performing its Green Belt role exactly as intended.

Ashley is also completely unsuitable for large-scale development under the Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy. We have no shops, no medical facilities, no primary school capacity, no employment base and almost no public transport. The National Planning Policy Framework requires growth to be directed to sustainable Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements. Ashley is neither. It is a rural parish with minimal infrastructure.

The transport situation alone makes this proposal a farce. Our roads are already dangerous, with accidents every week. Every parent here knows the fear of walking a pram or cycling with a child over the narrow railway bridges and single-lane pinch points. Adding thousands of daily vehicle movements would be reckless. The A538 and M56 are already congested; funnelling more traffic through Ashley would put residents at risk.

Rail is not a solution. Ashley Station currently has one train per hour. With the new Cheadle station approved and funded, the Department for Transport has already stated in Parliament that Ashley's service would likely fall to one train every two hours to accommodate Cheadle.

Drainage and utilities are another major concern. We have no deep sewer network, no modern surface-water system, and the River Bollin catchment already struggles after heavy rain. The Cheshire East Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identifies this area as sensitive. Building here would increase flood risk for both existing and future residents.

Independent soil surveys confirms the land contains the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land, which national policy protects for food security. Once BMV land is lost, it is lost forever.

Finally, the environmental and heritage harm would be devastating. The Bollin Valley and Parklands Landscape Character Area, Cotterill Clough Nature Reserve, ancient woodlands, protected species corridors and the settings of 19 Grade II listed structures would all be affected. These are places our children grow up exploring. They are part of our identity as a village.

For all these reasons and because this proposal would fundamentally damage the safety, character and wellbeing of our community I ask Cheshire East Council to reject the 291-hectare submission in the SHELAA assessment.

Ashley is not a blank space on a map. It is our home, and it deserves to be protected.

Your faithfully

Allan Prince