

KIRKLEES LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
STAGE FOUR HEARINGS

HEARING STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY
SPEN VALLEY CIVIC SOCIETY



**Re: MATTER 29: URBAN GREEN SPACES AND OTHER OPEN
SPACES**

**GENERAL (g): With specific reference to sites
UGS 973
UGS 1068**

Date of Submission: 21st January 2018

Issue: Where extensive tracts of open countryside have been designated as UGS (natural/ semi-natural green space), how were sites assessed and boundaries determined (with reference to sites UGS 973 and UGS 1068)?

Response:

1. Spen Valley Civic Society (SVCS) offers the following comments, which relate specifically to sites UGS1068 (wholly within Spen Valley) and UGS973 (partially so).
2. Within the last 12 months both of these allocations have been subject to planning applications for housing on some part of their site. Both applications were rejected by Kirklees Council and in both cases the applicants appealed the decision. In the first case to be heard (UGS1068) the appeal was upheld; in the second case (UGS973) the appeal was dismissed. These are significant cases and documents have been submitted to the Hearing in respect of both (ref ID14 & ID15).
3. These cases illustrate the vulnerability of large tracts of land designated as UGS to piecemeal applications for housing. For example, during the Local Plan process, UGS1068 has been subject to six separate applications for parcels of land, which between them cover the entire site UGS1068. All were rejected as housing options during the consultation phase.
4. The purpose and function of these two sites is virtually identical to green belt land. SVCS does not fully understand how these designations were originally determined: they have been in place since the adoption of the UDP. Essentially these two allocations serve the green belt function of preventing the merger of towns and checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. In the Spen Valley and surrounding areas, these open spaces are typically on the upper slopes, whilst settlements are in the bottom of the valleys and hill tops. Some are designated as green belt and some as urban green space, but all achieve the important role of preserving the character of this part of Kirklees and separating small settlements. Vitally, they all provide community access to open spaces: there are PROWs crossing all of them, including UGS1068 (3 footpaths) and UGS973 (1 footpath).
5. Spen Valley Civic Society considers that these two sites UGS1068 and UGS973 should be allocated as green belt, which would ensure consistency of purpose and function in relation to the other remaining green belt land in the Spen Valley.