

**KIRKLEES LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION**  
**STAGE FOUR HEARINGS**

**HEARING STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY**  
**SPEN VALLEY CIVIC SOCIETY**



**Re: MATTER 37: BATLEY AND SPEN HOUSING ALLOCATIONS**  
**- GREEN BELT RELEASES**

**Site reference H442**  
**Land between Richmond Park and Sunnyside Avenue**  
**Roberttown**

Date of Submission: 21<sup>st</sup> January 2018

**Issue:** *Are the proposed Green Belt release housing allocations in the Batley and Spen sub-area justified; effective; developable; deliverable; and consistent with national policy?*

**Response:**

1. In general, Spen Valley Civic Society (SVCS) does not consider the proposed allocation of site H442 for housing to be justified.
2. His site was rejected as a housing allocation in the draft Local Plan with an assessment that it performed an important green belt function, consistent with NPPF policy, and therefore exceptional circumstances did not exist to warrant its removal from the green belt. It is not clear to SVCS why the decision was reversed, as no new evidence has been submitted, except for lobbying from the site's developers, which is only to be expected. Roberttown is a well-defined medium-sized village with a clear local identity. The green belt around it prevents the merger with other nearby villages of Hightown and Liversedge to the north, Norristhorpe to the east, Mirfield to the south and Hartshead to the west. H442 provides the green belt protection against a merger with Norristhorpe. There is some merging along main roads, but overall the green belt serves its purpose in this area.
3. The pressure on green belt for development in the Spen Valley is at a critical level. Sixteen sites are proposed for housing development (in addition to the massive allocation proposals for employment), with a proposed total of 1,533 houses. The number of dwellings on each site varies from 15 to 413. Given the relatively compact area of the Spen Valley, this level of development places a massive burden on the infrastructure. The Local Plan fails to identify how key infrastructure requirements (eg. transport, health and education) are to be met. The introduction of marginal sites such as H442 at the end of the consultation period has added to the problem.
4. With reference to the specific questions posed by the Inspector, Spen Valley Civic Society considers that the heritage assessment is comprehensive and accurate. We feel it inappropriate to comment on the mitigation measures because we do not think the land should be developed at all. It does have value as an open space, and provides structure and landscape benefits, as identified in the heritage assessment. A PROW (148) crosses the middle of the site, providing opportunity for informal recreation, and it links to a network of PROWs in the area.
5. In conclusion, SVCS considers that H442 should be removed from the housing allocation.