

**Future Rutland Conversation: Normanton Ward 2**  
**18 May 2021**

This conversation was managed by Cllrs Bool and Waller. The residents attending were mainly from Edith Weston though there were representatives from Normanton parish.

1. RCC's Rutland Conversation web page is not user friendly. People are put off by having to register. A resident said the conversation they wanted to join was cancelled due to lack of interest so overall there is scepticism as to the reach of the Conversation and whether it reflects all communities within Rutland.
2. A resident who moved to Rutland only 3½ years ago said she moved here because of the rurality. She described Rutland as a small county with a big heart. She recognised that, because of our size, and thus budget, RCC finds it hard to attract and retain talent. However, she and others on the call felt that our rurality is what should be preserved. There was consensus that a new "town" in an unsustainable location was not what Rutland wanted or needed. An example was given of a housing development on the edge of Nottingham of 3,000 homes that was in a sustainable location because of its proximity to Nottingham and, more importantly, that the tram line ran from the site to the City centre before any houses were built. There was consensus that infrastructure (shops, schools, entertainment venues, jobs etc.) needed to be in place and/or easily accessible before any significant housing was planned.
3. A resident who had spent her whole life in Rutland commented that she loved the sense of space in the County but recognised the County can't be preserved in aspic. She felt we need to retain what is good but equally need to retain good people. She felt there wasn't enough to make people stay. She argued for better transport links to bigger towns, hubs for people to work in remote from their offices (not their homes where there were often too many distractions to work well) and improved sports and leisure facilities. She also argued that RCC could do more to support, and attract, SMEs as these were already a significant part of our economy.
4. Employment featured significantly in this conversation. Residents felt SMEs could be helped to grow through the introduction of business clubs and that RCC needed to have a clear economic policy. It was suggested that the County could partner with an area of excellence (Cambridge Science Park was given as an example) to attract high tech companies to Rutland.
5. Residents felt what Rutland needed wasn't a new town, especially one in an unsustainable location, but organic growth in existing towns and villages with larger development focussed where there was employment. Building a new town at St George's is not sustainable unless employment, shops, schools etc. are in place before any homes are built. Building homes first will inevitably lead to commuting and the roads surrounding St George's are not suitable for significant additional traffic (as the closing of Manton Bridge has

demonstrated). Further, those living at St George's will inevitably see Stamford as their nearest town and shopping/entertainment destination (as current residents of EW do) and this will have a detrimental effect on the viability of Oakham and Uppingham centres. It was pointed out that everywhere to the East of a line running from Exton to Morcott already sees Stamford, rather than Oakham, as the natural destination and St George's residents would be no different. RCC needs to have a clear policy for our market towns and all aspects of our activity should be geared to supporting their vibrancy. Development primarily needs to be at Oakham and Uppingham to ensure their continued viability. There was also a suggestion that RCC should promote a healthy competition between Oakham and Uppingham to boost both towns.

6. Some felt it was important our young people moved away to experience life and so our policy shouldn't be geared to keeping young people here but should be to attracting them back when they are ready to settle down. The key, therefore, is jobs and housing supply. However as the Council's housing target is Government determined it is up to Rutland to determine where these houses go and what proportion are "affordable". The group did discuss affordability and the issue is more to do with the nature of employment (a nurse couldn't afford to buy anywhere in the south east, not just Rutland for example) rather than the price of houses in Rutland.
7. A resident reflected on the changes in Grantham. Once it had character and, like Rutland, had a strong community identity. As it has grown it has lost its character and sense of identity and is no longer a pleasant place to live. She urged Rutland not to go the way of Grantham. Rutland's strong community identity is rooted in the rural nature of the place. This needs to be small with development on a small scale, not soulless housing estates.
8. Residents reflected on environment and climate change and felt we should have a Rutland Forest this would also compliment Rutland Water and would help shape Rutland's identity as a rural tourist destination. Residents do not want Rutland to look like everywhere else. It was suggested that St George's would be the ideal site and that the MoD could contribute to the Government's climate change targets by facilitating this as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee project. They felt this was something our MP could get behind and save the Government c£30m into the bargain! In any case, residents want to be involved in discussion about the use of the site rather than have a Master Plan forced on them.
9. Residents are happy to pay more council tax if it is spent on the facilities they want. They felt we should have set our Council tax at the level Government recommended (Cllr Bool and I simply asked the question).
10. Residents feel Rutland needs balanced development –the right development in the right place at the right time. Rutland is well placed (geographically) and our rurality makes us a popular place for people to live who might have to travel to work (albeit not on a daily basis). We are rural but accessible (for employment and leisure facilities) so perhaps rather than re-creating facilities

in Rutland we should focus on communication links to existing facilities elsewhere, and focus development where the communication routes exist (e.g. Oakham for the train or next to the A1). We need to put far more thought into future development. However, residents did recognise that more people would mean more facilities.

11. There are concerns from residents that our local GPs are not responding to the breadth of needs in the County. Specifically, if a resident rings a surgery they are asked if the call is an emergency or for routine care; there is no in-between option. However, an individual might have been self-treating with over the counter medication for a few days (using the type of medication where users are advised to seek medical assistance if after 3 days there is no improvement) and as there has been no improvement the individual contacts their GP. This isn't an emergency but equally isn't routine (where the average wait for an appointment, even by 'phone, is 7-14 days).
12. Residents also feel we need more out of hours' health provision and more routine outpatient services locally so patients do not have to go to Kettering, Leicester or Peterborough.
13. There were concerns regarding the numbers of patients transferring from Stamford to Empingham medical practice. Cllr Bool and I advised residents of the planning application for a temporary practice room at EMP and that another GP has been appointed.
14. Residents want to know what feedback there is from GPs concerning the remote/IT consultations that have been in place for the past year. Residents are concerned that some people are not receiving the treatment they need. Has there been any analysis of the impact of covid on general health?
15. Residents commented that OMH has a good reputation but its future (or, rather, the future of services provided there) should be part of RCC's planning for the future and part of the need to have infrastructure before houses. Residents were a little concerned OMH might move because they felt its proximity to the railway station was an advantage.
16. Residents were keen to see RCC rationalise its property portfolio. They were particularly keen to see the Council offices disposed of (suggestion was conversion to affordable flats). Cllr Bool and I advised that RCC had explored selling the building twice before but there was no interest –probably because it is listed.
17. Residents suggested RCC join with another Council, particularly asking whether it was likely in respect of South Kesteven. Cllr Bool and I pointed out the differences between a unitary and a district council. We also talked about the Welland Partnership and the Government's steer on combined authorities. Residents were interested in what we had to say.