

# The Future Rutland Conversation

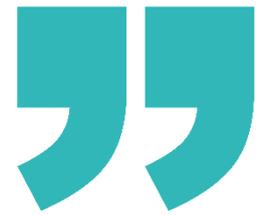
**Narrative summary report:**  
Visitors Survey

**June 2021**

A summary report outlining the key findings and themes identified as part of  
the Future Rutland Conversation with visitors

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*We asked and this is what you told us.  
Is there anything we've missed?*

# 1. Introduction

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The Future Rutland Conversation is just that: a conversation with everyone who lives and works in Rutland, to find out what's most important to local people – both now and in the future.

Using a series of specially designed surveys, open forums and live discussion events held over a period of two months in the spring of 2021, people of all ages and backgrounds from across Rutland were invited to share their views on wide range of important issues. They were:

- Your Life in Rutland
- Climate change and the environment
- Getting around
- Leisure and recreation
- Health and well-being
- Living in the county
- Learning, skills and employment
- Local services and public spending

There were dedicated surveys and discussions for young people, businesses and visitors to the county. Local stakeholders, schools and new digital channels, like Instagram, helped to reach the widest possible audience. People without internet access were also supported to take part in Future Rutland Conversation by phone, making sure that everyone had an opportunity to share their views.

In total, 2022 people took part in the Future Rutland Conversation. This comprised 1,557 adults who registered online, plus 465 children and young people who were not required to register their details. Together, these participants provided more than 4,500 responses across multiple themed surveys. Alongside these surveys, more than 1,000 contributions were made across nine online forums and some 250 people took part in live discussion events.

The aim of all this is to develop a new shared vision of Rutland – a set of common goals and aspirations based on the things that matter to local people, and which can help to shape a bright and prosperous future for our county.

The following report summarises the comments and feedback received as part of Future Rutland's conversation with visitors to the county.



## 2. Method statement

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The Future Rutland Conversation ran for a period of eight weeks, from April to June 2021. During this time, 15 online surveys were launched, asking participants more than 100 questions. This was supported by eight two-hour engagement events led by independent facilitator Michael Maynard, plus a further seven two-hour face-to-face video calls with the Leader and Chief Executive of Rutland County Council. Feedback was also gathered in the form of submissions from Rutland County Councillors and Parish Councils, who provided responses from local meetings and other forms of engagement. A significant awareness-raising campaign took place online and through traditional local media outlets, such as newspapers and radio stations. This helped to support engagement with children and young people, visitors to the county and local businesses, as well as those who live, work and were educated here in Rutland.

The many thousands of pieces of raw data and information resulting from the eight-week conversation were sent for analysis by Rutland Community Ventures (RCV), a community-based company in Oakham and operating independently of Rutland County Council. RCV's analysis involved watching and transcribing verbatim comments from hours of video-recorded Zoom conversations; listening to audio files; analysing and summarising survey data; reading and annotating event notes and reports; and reviewing the highly detailed statistics derived from the online surveys. This intensive independent analysis was undertaken over a three-week period without influence from Rutland County Council. The results of the analysis were then submitted by RCV to the Council, who have published this material in a series of theme-based reports. These reports summarise while fully representing participants' original uninterpreted views, opinions and experiences.

**If you would like to view all of the original data and information behind these summary reports, this can be read in full online at:**  
**[future.rutland.gov.uk](https://future.rutland.gov.uk)**

### 3. Thoughts and feelings about key issues

A total of 293 people responded to Future Rutland's 'Visitors' survey but were not required to register their details or provide information such as their age or gender.

Following analysis of all survey responses, respondents' thoughts and feelings about visiting Rutland have been separated into two areas:

- Why they visited
- Things to improve and preserve

In this section of the report, people's thoughts and feelings have been summarised as short statements, which are accompanied by direct quotes from individuals who took part.

#### Why they visited

##### Summary statement

Visitors told us they enjoy coming to Rutland because of its beautiful countryside, as well as its lovely towns and villages. Described as 'Cotswolds without the crowds', many visitors commented on the wide variety of things to do, places to eat and drink, and countryside to explore. The major attraction for visitors is Rutland Water, with its birdwatching, fishing and water sports. The majority of visitors do online research to plan their visit before coming, highlighting the importance of online information for local businesses that rely on tourism. Many respondents mentioned that Rutland is easy to get to, with many large population centres being within a couple of hours drive. Events such as the Bird Fair also draw people into the county. Rutland is seen as a place where people can come to relax, find peace and be with friends and family.

-  *"We have a holiday home here but, as we don't live there all the time, it feels as though we are visitors - each trip is a little holiday."*
-  *"We have always thought Rutland a lovely county but much under rated."*
-  *"We live in Nottingham which is not too far away and there are public transport links, if needed."*
-  *"We've been many times, but there's always something new to discover. For a small county, it's big on attractions."*
-  *"We won't be having an overseas holiday this year, so are looking for self-catering holidays in attractive areas."*
-  *"Love visiting for the bird fair and for nature."*

-  *"It's a beautiful region – relatively undiscovered, quiet and peaceful with some wonderful countryside and tucked-away market towns."*
-  *"Excellent caravan sites."*
-  *"Love caravanning overlooking Rutland Water. Good cycling, very pleasant towns and much more."*
-  *"So much more to see than we have seen already and it's not too far to travel."*
-  *"We like coming to Rutland because of Rutland Water, the pretty countryside and plenty of things to do for adults and children alike."*
-  *"Enjoyed our stay last time, despite the earthquake."*
-  *"My husband also travels up for the day sometimes just for the trout fishing."*
-  *"I love visiting Barnsdale and Rutland Water. The BirdFair is something we try to attend."*
-  *"It's a lovely place to visit open spaces peace and quiet wonderful scenery and you can get a drink and food."*
-  *"Lovely place to visit. Lots of good pubs, pleasant towns and Rutland Water."*
-  *"It takes you to be one with nature and beautiful stone houses etc. Feel refreshed after having visited. It's an escape for me."*
-  *"A lovely day out for us, as we live within a few miles of the area."*
-  *"Loved it - we had not visited before. Towns were lovely and we were so surprised by Rutland Water. We will visit again."*
-  *"Good range of leisure activities, enjoying Rutland Water and the associated area but also being within reach of some interesting small shops and markets. Also good range of accommodation available."*
-  *"I shall be staying nearby and want to show members of my family how lovely Rutland water is, as well as the towns nearby."*
-  *"Even though we are only from Lincolnshire, we have fallen in love with this amazing county. We sometimes visit just for the day on our motorbikes."*
-  *"The development of the area has been sympathetically grown to appeal to all age groups and we can even forgive the addition of McDonalds!"*
-  *"Good shopping, good accommodation, good places to eat and outdoor activities; places to visit - perfect for a break away."*
-  *"Plenty of outside spaces to enjoy bike riding and the museum and castle are a great place to visit with family and friends. It is ideal as these places are free. The added bonus is the number of amazing cafes in the area and good pubs."*
-  *"Beautiful countryside, lovely towns & villages. 'Cotswolds' without the crowds."*
-  *"It is our happy place and has been for many years. We visit for relaxation, recharging batteries, celebrations and to help with our worries and grief. It never fails us."*

## Things to improve and preserve

### Summary statement

Perhaps unsurprisingly, visitors come to Rutland for the same reasons that the majority of our residents say they love to live here. Visitors have a strong appreciation for Rutland's characterful towns and villages, and would like the county's rural environment to be protected and preserved. Many of the things that visitors would like to see improved also echo comments made by people who live in the county. Visitors would welcome better public transport in the county, as well as improvements to footpaths and cycle ways. A number of visitors said how much they enjoy visiting Uppingham and Oakham because of the independent shops and eateries. Some felt that our towns would benefit from more events and attractions, as well as giving over more space to pedestrians and outdoor dining. Parking and the availability of charging points for electric vehicles were also mentioned as things to consider. Rutland Water was again mentioned as one of Rutland's main attractions.

-  *"I would say that Rutland's strong points are its lovely rural nature, villages, market towns, farmland, walking trails and of course Rutland Water. Anything that would spoil this idyllic setting e.g. badly placed wind turbines and phone masts, huge and visible areas of solar panels and urban development on a large scale would be detrimental to such a lovely area."*
-  *"The fact that it doesn't feel like anywhere else. The countryside is lovely and the towns are still individual - it would be tragic if they turned into indentikit towns like so many others."*
-  *"Walking paths need protecting. Car parking could be improved to prevent potentially dangerous parking on roadsides."*
-  *"(We need to protect) All the lovely independent shops and cafes in Uppingham and Oakham as well as the little village shops."*
-  *"Make Oakham and Uppingham town centres worth visiting with a variety of shops and a market and events."*
-  *"Wedding venues need improvement. Especially lack of wedding barns."*
-  *"Public transport is awful."*
-  *"I think it should be protected against commercialism and development."*
-  *"It would be good to have poo/litter bins spaced regularly. There are virtually none. A lot of dog owners end up being restricted to going to dog friendly beaches for holidays/breaks, but we would love to be able to come to Rutland more and have our dog with us."*

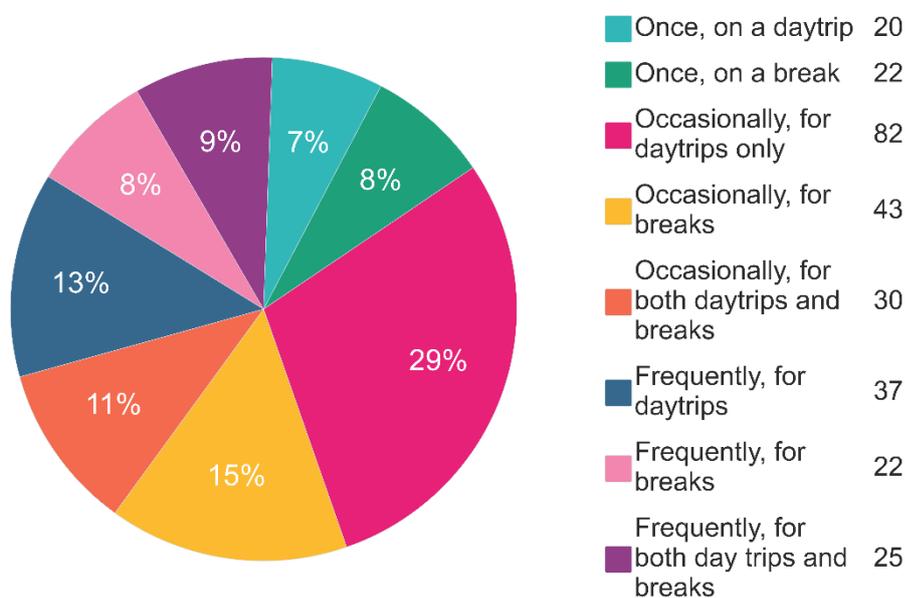
-  *"Cycle tracks could do with improvement."*
-  *"A separate cycle only route at Rutland water. Can be dangerous, especially for children, when busy."*
-  *"Parking in Oakham and protecting the town centre. I think it should be pedestrianised so can have more outdoor eating venues in the town centre."*
-  *"Just wish Oakham and Uppingham had more of a pavement culture around outdoor eating, especially at the moment where we can't eat inside. Maybe Mill Street could be made more of a feature with widening of pavements and tables outside?"*
-  *"The museum is now in need of a revamp. It is a lovely place to visit, especially if you want to get away from technology. However, there is a fine line between being quaint and outdated. Oakham Castle is a stunning building. It is quite well hidden and probably needs some pushing to let people know it is there. "*
-  *"The vernacular architecture is very attractive and delightful and should be preserved."*
-  *"Lack of public car charging. Should be available in all car parks or in next few years visitors will decline."*
-  *"Rutland Water needs to be run as the wildlife centre not as a purely commercial enterprise."*
-  *"The last time we visited there was green algae in Rutland Water, which was disappointing as the weather was lovely. I don't know what causes it but keeping it away would be great."*

## 4. Previous visits

As well as giving visitors and tourists the opportunity to talk openly about why they enjoy visiting Rutland, Future Rutland's 'Visitors' survey asked some specific questions about people's previous visits to the county and how they plan their trips.

When asked how many times they had visited Rutland almost half of respondents said that they visited Rutland occasionally, either for day trips or for short breaks. Around 20% of respondents described themselves as 'frequent' visitors.

**Figure 1 - How many times have you visited Rutland?**

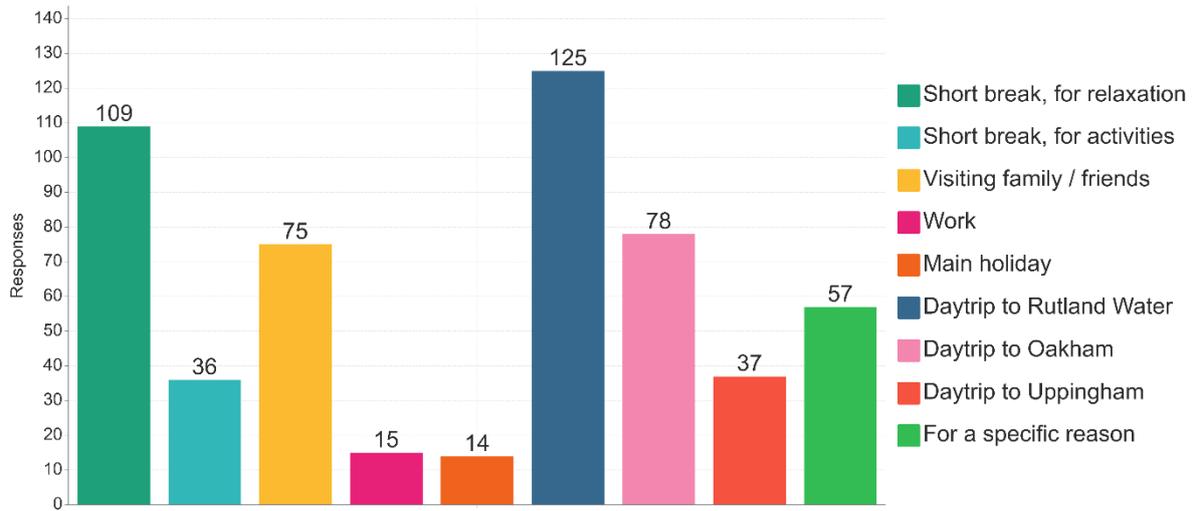


People who took part in Future Rutland's 'Visitors' survey were also asked about why they visited the county. The top answers to this question (in rank order) were:

1. Daytrip to Rutland Water
2. Short break, for relaxation
3. Daytrip to Oakham
4. Visiting family / friends
5. For a specific reason

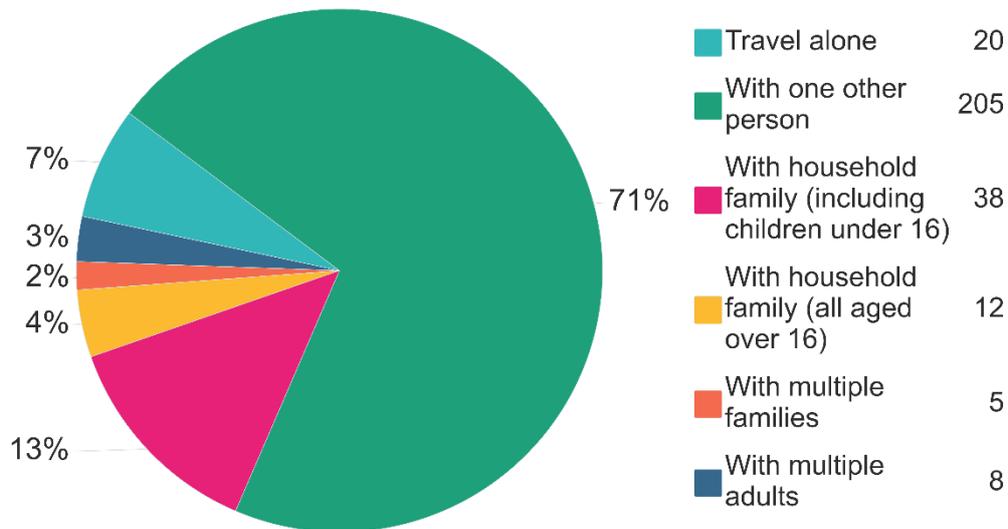
The answers chosen by the fewest people were 'Work' and 'Main holiday'.

**Figure 2 - What was the nature of your visit(s)?**



The majority of respondents (71%) said that they visited Rutland with just one other person. The next largest group were those who visited with their household family (including children aged under 16), which accounted for 13% of respondents.

**Figure 3 – How many people do you tend to visit Rutland with?**



## 5. Choosing Rutland

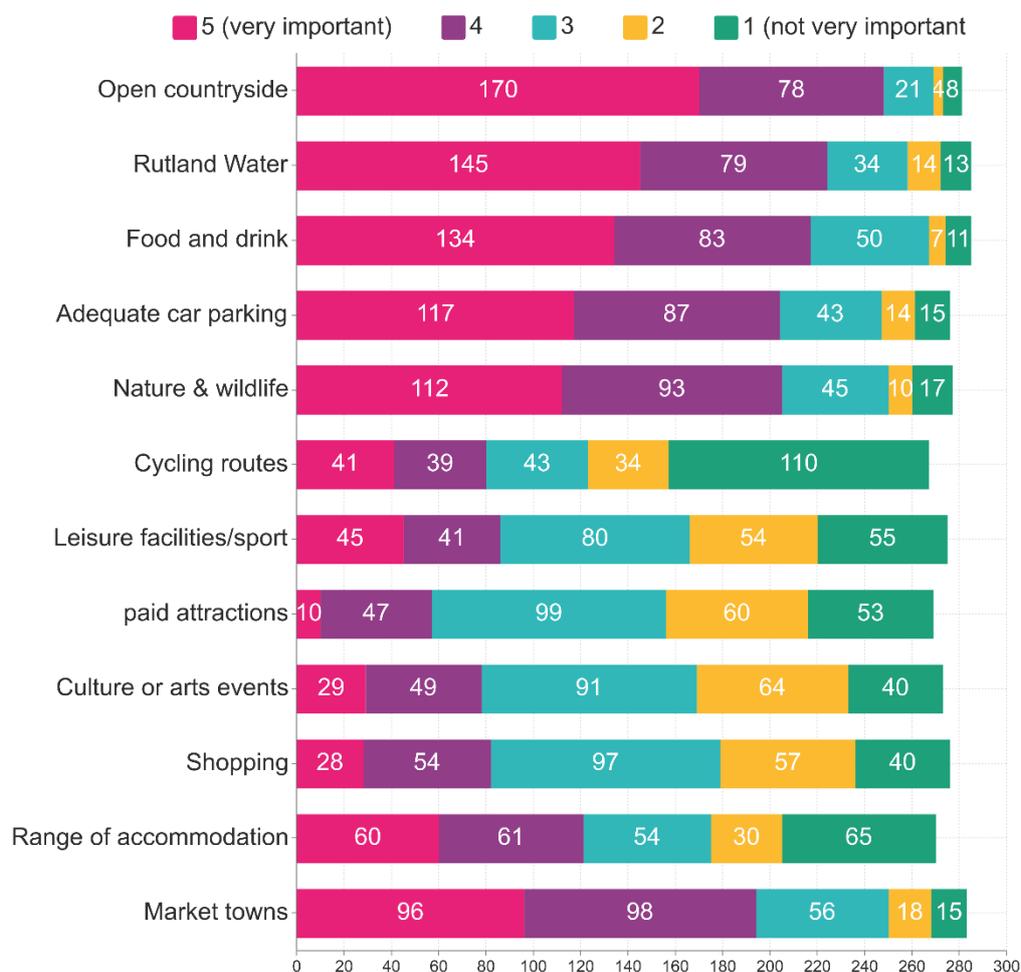
People who took part in Future Rutland’s ‘Visitors’ survey were asked to indicate which factors were most important when deciding to visit the county. This was presented as a series of sliding scale questions, with the option to give a score from 1 to 5 (5 being ‘very important’ and 1 being ‘not very important’).

The most important factors (in rank order) were:

1. Open countryside
2. Rutland Water
3. Food and drink
4. Adequate car parking
5. Nature & wildlife

Listed among the least important factors were cycling routes, leisure facilities/sporting pursuits, range of paid attractions, culture or arts events, shopping and range of accommodation.

**Figure 4 – How important were these factors when deciding to visit Rutland? (1 = not very important, 5 = very important)**



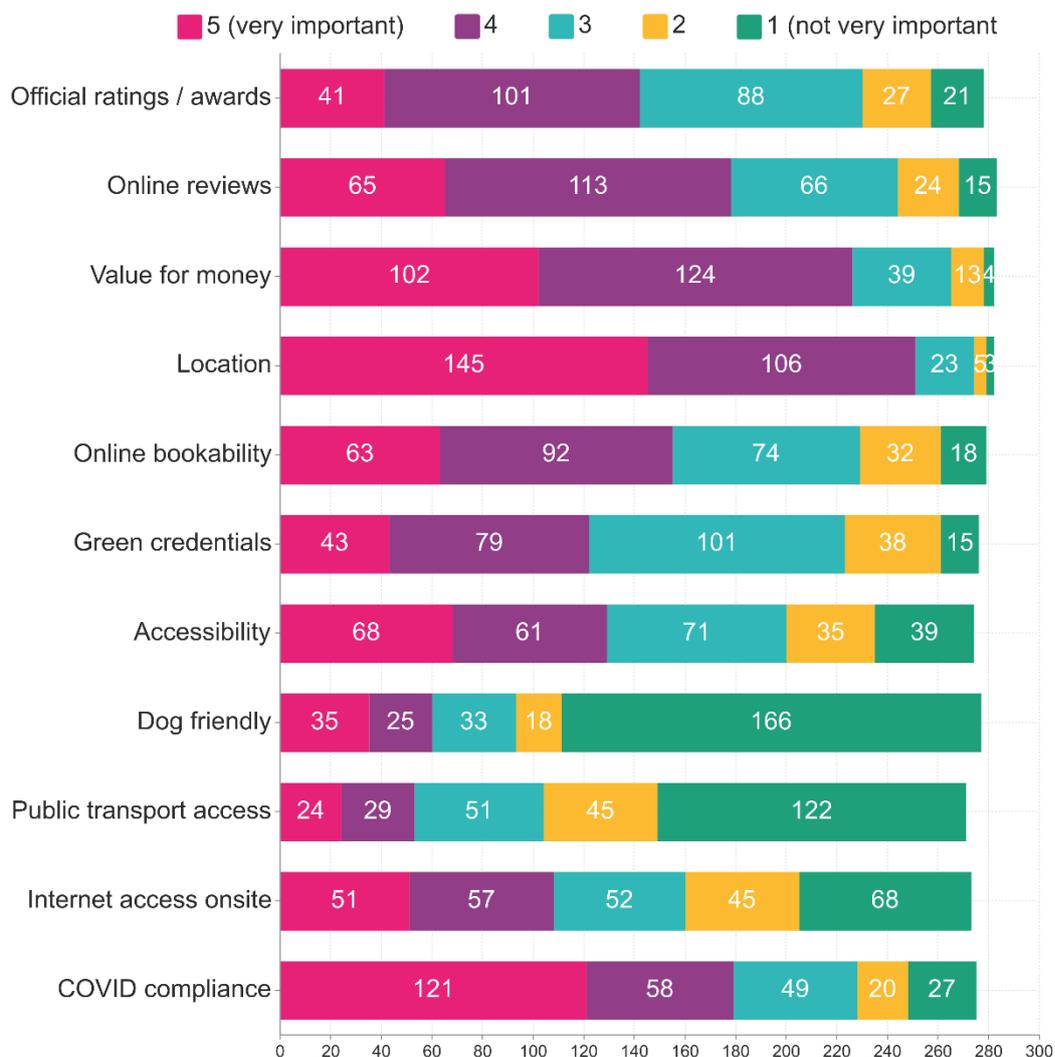
The majority of visitors said that they planned their visits to Rutland with the help of online research and relied very little on printed information. Most respondents had heard of Discover Rutland’s website, rather than its printed guide and tourist maps. Just under a quarter of respondents (24%) had not heard of it at all.

Moving away from Rutland, respondents to Future Rutland’s ‘Visitors’ survey were asked which factors were most important when choosing which places to visit, in general. Again, this was presented as a series of sliding scale questions, with the option to give a score from 1 to 5 (5 being ‘very important’ and 1 being ‘not very important’).

The most important factors (in rank order) were:

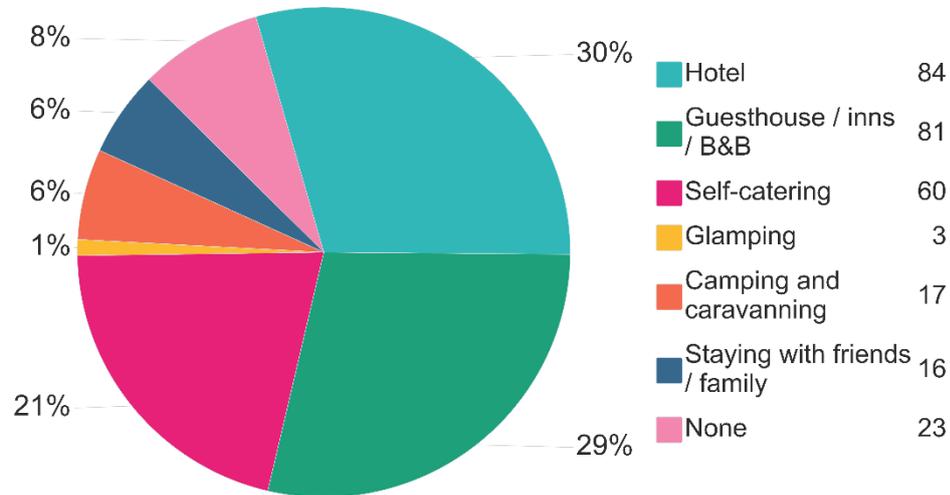
1. Location
2. Value for money
3. Online reviews
4. Implemented changes for COVID regulations
5. Online bookability

**Figure 5 – How important are these factors when choosing which places to visit? (1 = not very important, 5 = very important)**



Visitors were also asked which accommodation type most interests them in Rutland. The majority of respondents selected hotels or guesthouses/inns/B&Bs. Self-catering was the third most popular option.

**Figure 6 – Which accommodation type most interests you in Rutland? (Choose one)**



Visitors who took part in the survey were asked if they plan to visit Rutland again. Encouragingly, just over 90% of respondents said ‘yes’, while 8% said ‘maybe’. Just one person said ‘no’.

When asked why they plan to return, the most popular reasons were:

- They had family in Rutland
- They have a holiday home here
- Rutland has beautiful countryside
- There are lots of things to do
- They could de-stress and connect with nature

## 6. Sharing further feedback

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This report summarises the comments, feedback and survey responses collected throughout Future Rutland's 'Visitors' conversation. The purpose of gathering this feedback is to develop a new shared vision for Rutland – one that's based on things that really matter to local people and helps organisations like Rutland County Council plan for the future.

Please remember that you can read all of the original data and information behind this summary report by visiting: [future.rutland.gov.uk](https://future.rutland.gov.uk).

Getting your views and feedback was just the first step of the Future Rutland Conversation. Now, we need to know if we heard you correctly. To tell us what you think about this report and whether you feel it's an accurate representation of what matters to people in Rutland, please go to: [future.rutland.gov.uk](https://future.rutland.gov.uk) or email: [rutlandconversation@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:rutlandconversation@rutland.gov.uk). If you don't have access to the internet, you can call us on 01572 722 577.

Once we're sure that there's nothing we've missed, we'll use all this information to develop a draft vision for the county, which we hope to publish before the end of summer 2021 to invite even more discussion and feedback.

