

The Future Rutland Conversation

Narrative summary report:
Your Life in Rutland

June 2021

A summary report outlining the key findings and themes identified as part of
the Future Rutland Conversation on 'Your Life in Rutland'

Contents



1. Introduction	page 3
2. Method statement	page 4
3. Who took part?	page 5
4. Thoughts and feelings about key issues	page 7
5. What do people want to preserve?	page 15
6. What do people want to change?	page 16
7. Sharing further feedback	page 17

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

1. Introduction

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 'Your Life in Rutland' conversation.



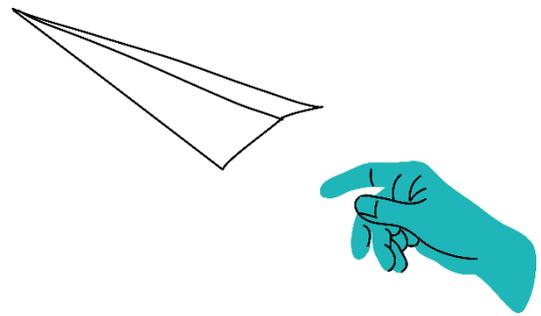
2. Method statement

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/your-life-in-rutland

3. Who took part?



1,069 responses

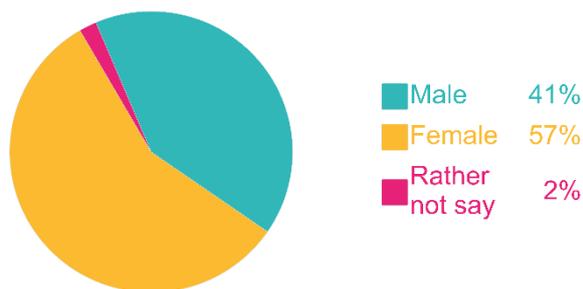
A total of 1,069 people provided responses to the 'Your Life in Rutland' survey that ran from April to June as part of the Future Rutland conversation. This number does not include the 465 children and young people who took part in Future Rutland, whose feedback has been captured in a further report.

Of those who completed the 'Your Life in Rutland' survey, 953 chose to share information about their gender, age, connection to Rutland and (in the case of residents) how long they have lived in the county.

Gender profile

Just over half of respondents to the 'Your Life in Rutland' survey were female (57%), while 41% were male. A small proportion of respondents (2%) chose not to share this information.

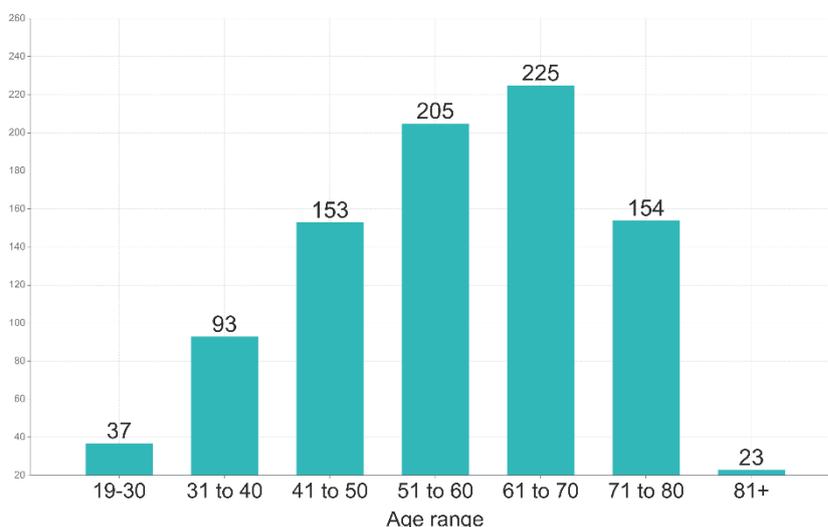
Figure 1 – Gender profile of 'Your Life in Rutland' respondents



Age range

Excluding children and young people aged 0-18, the largest number of responses to the 'Your Life in Rutland' survey came from the 61-70 age group. Out of all the adult respondents who chose to share their age, more than two thirds (68%) were aged 51 and over.

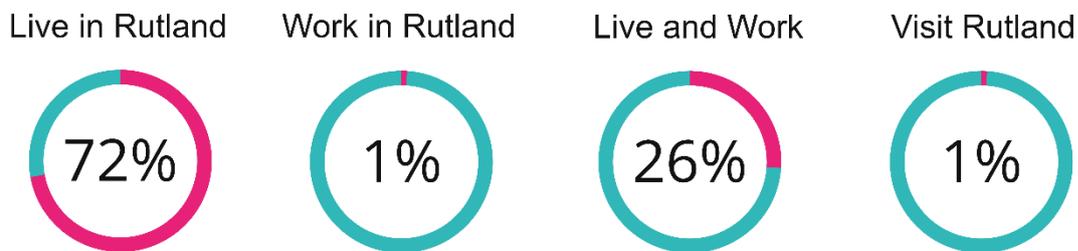
Figure 2 – Age range



Connection to Rutland

Respondents were asked to give an indication of their connection to Rutland. Almost three quarters of respondents to the 'Your Life in Rutland' survey (72%) were residents, while 26% both lived *and* worked in the county. A very small percentage of respondents lived outside of Rutland but travel into the county for work or as visitors. The results from a dedicated 'Visitors' survey carried out as part of the Future Rutland Conversation have been captured in a further report.

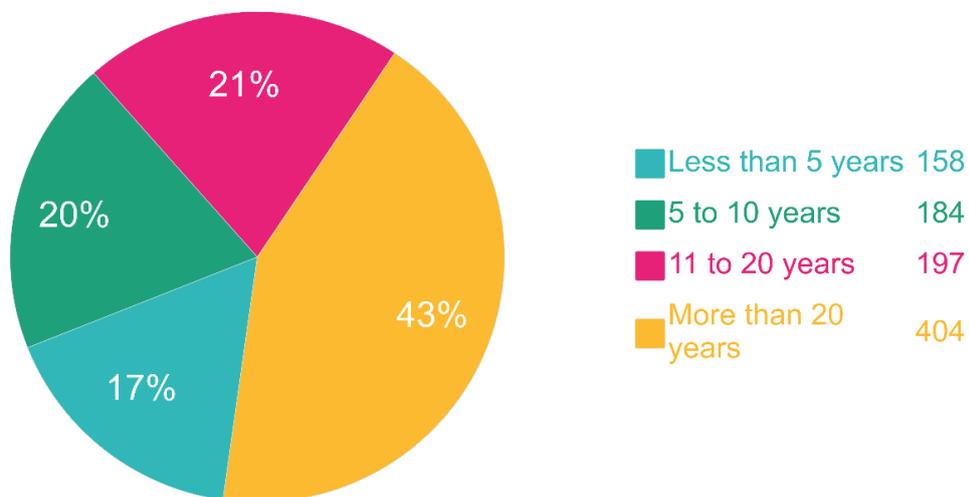
Figure 3 – Connection to Rutland



Length of residency

Of the respondents who took part in the 'Your Life in Rutland' survey and identified themselves as local residents, 43% have lived in the county for more than 20 years. Just 17% of respondents have lived in the county for less than five years.

Figure 4 – Length of residency



In terms of geographical location, the areas of Rutland that contributed the largest number of responses were:

- Oakham (30%)
- Uppingham (10%)
- Barleythorpe (7.5%)
- Ketton (3.5%)
- Langham (3.5%)
- Cottesmore (3%)
- Whissendine (3%)

4. Thoughts and feelings about key issues

People who engaged with the 'Your Life in Rutland' element of the Future Rutland Conversation were invited to talk openly about the things that matter most to them and their families, as well as the things they find frustrating. From the many hours of live discussion and hundreds of responses to open text survey questions, a number of key issues have emerged as being of particular importance to a great many people in Rutland. They are:

- Quality of life
- The rural environment
- Community spirit
- Our market towns
- Development

In this section of the report, people's thoughts and feelings about these key aspects of life in Rutland have been summarised in a series of short statements, which are accompanied by direct quotes from individuals who took part in live discussions and completed the 'Your Life in Rutland' survey.

Quality of life

Summary statement

You told us that Rutland is a safe place to live with good communication links, and that visitors are sometimes surprised by the high quality of life we share here. However, you also said that while Rutland provides a good quality of life for most people, we should not forget there are others who need help and support. Many people we spoke to feel strongly that Rutland offers something truly special and unique, and that we must not become complacent about what we have here. You said that transport is important in order to stay connected and that, in particular, we need suitable housing, schools, healthcare and community facilities for everyone – especially our young people, so they can remain in Rutland and build their home and work lives here.

-  *"We are here because we like it. People don't realise how nice it is. Lots of people take it for granted that it is beautiful and I want to see it continue in its unique way."*
-  *"I choose not to go to the cities to shop but prefer online or in Rutland. Rutland is a really special place."*
-  *"Rutland is like a pointer to navigate by. Wherever you go around the world you take a bit of Rutland with you. It's like having a comfy dog with you wherever you go."*
-  *"One thing I find quite difficult is the restriction of health services. We so desperately need another doctor's surgery."*

-  *"One thing that does strike me is that there are a lot of people who have lived here a lot of time and I just wonder if they've forgotten and don't really appreciate what they've got around them until it's gone."*
-  *"The convenience of having the railway station and being near the A1. It is in the middle of the country."*
-  *"There are limited transport links at weekends and bank holidays and poor connectivity between transport providers if travelling across the county. Transport options in and out of the county are limited after 6pm."*
-  *"It's the schools that are very important in making a place at home."*
-  *"The ability to access education throughout life [is important] so that people can retrain in new things, so that they can still have a job and live longer."*
-  *"If we do get into old age, where are the folk going to come [from] who are going to look after us? Are they going to have to come in from Lincolnshire? Or from Leicester? Because there won't be any of that age group living in the county."*
-  *"I've lived in other places and what's happening here is actually pretty good – the main problem we're talking about is dog poo! That's actually quite a nice thing, for example we've not got a huge gang problem."*
-  *"Rutland feels very different... there's a certain sense of freedom and it feels a bit safer here."*
-  *"I like the fact that Rutland as a whole feels very safe as a community. I can go around places on my own or with friends and not feel too exposed or anything or too at risk."*
-  *"As young people we don't feel as respected as we should feel... there is a lack of places for youth to hang out."*
-  *"After being in lockdown, I've not thought for one minute that this is terrible because I'm actually living in a place that no one can complain about living in."*
-  *"There's a lot to do around here but that doesn't mean to say that we haven't got a lot of work to do to bring ourselves kicking and screaming into the 21st century. But... I've seen how difficult these things can be to try and engage with everybody on every opinion."*
-  *"There are good pubs and there are always nice places to go when you have visitors."*
-  *"People who come to visit us want to come back."*

81%

692

people said quality of life is one of the reasons they live in Rutland

of people said rural life was one of the things that made Rutland special for them

The rural environment

Summary statement

Our county is beautiful. You told us that you love the countryside in Rutland and want to sustain the surrounding environment. The health and wellbeing benefits we enjoy are considerable and it's possible to find peace in Rutland, so access to the countryside must be maintained. The wildlife in Rutland is also key. You told us that you're keen to preserve natural areas and wildlife because this is felt to be a big part of Rutland. So is farming and agriculture. You said it's not just the rural environment that you value in Rutland but also rural communities and the closeness and familiarity they offer. There's a strong sense that any development in Rutland must be done through good consultation and be sympathetic to the rural environment. Others feel strongly that Rutland cannot remain rooted in the past and must be willing to embrace some change that helps to sustain the things we love.

-  *"The minute you come over the boundary into Rutland there's this calmness and peacefulness and you can see the wildlife."*
-  *"Our green and open spaces are a key contributor to mental wellbeing."*
-  *"It's a quiet safe place. What gets me is not the community but access to the countryside... And the quiet gentle pace."*
-  *"I definitely want to live in a more lively area. As much as this place is really nice, I would like to have my own freedom and to explore around."*
-  *"What has happened to our rural wildlife? I no longer see the variety of birds I did when I moved here 19 years ago. Golden Plover, Little Owl, Cuckoo, Great Crested Newt. I'm not talking about the reserve but the local farming landscape."*
-  *"Rutland Water is a focal point and a source of well-being."*
-  *"I grew up in Birmingham... I recognise that I wouldn't want to go back to big-city life."*
-  *"As a community Rutland has the opportunity to lead the way in environmental matters."*
-  *"Rutland's idiosyncrasies are sometimes just as charming as they are frustrating - but we still love it."*
-  *"If you want to keep your older population in the village you are going to need more in the way of services available to them."*
-  *"The criticism is that we can become... 'little Rutlanders' to the point where the whole world is going on outside but we're carrying on as though it's still 19-whatever and it's not quite the 21st century."*
-  *"If we don't recognise that things have to adapt and change we'll be shooting ourselves in the foot."*

Community spirit

Summary statement

Many people said that the Rutland community and 'micro communities' which exist in rural areas make them want to stay in the county. In larger settlements like Oakham and Uppingham, residents spoke about knowing the names of shop owners and that people regularly greet each other on the street. You told us that people in Rutland look out for each other. Many responses referred to the fact that if you have to be in lockdown then Rutland is a great place to be. There is a great deal of community activity, hundreds of clubs, groups and organisations offering an extremely wide range of sport and leisure activities – and this is a good thing. However, you also said there is a small group of people who don't necessarily look toward the benefits that most enjoy, preferring complaint to involvement. You said that Rutland is not without social division and your responses point to the community's overall responsibility to bring people together.

-  *"We are a small county with a good sense of community and a good rural life."*
-  *"I know my neighbours look out for me and I tell them if I'm away or whatever."*
-  *"People [need] somewhere to congregate and meet and develop community spirit and be able to better keep going with... traditions."*
-  *"We are a very close-knit community, and we don't always welcome visitors from outside who just to come in for the day."*
-  *"What would make me stay is the feeling that I have a say in what happens and my voice is heard. I get the sense, particularly in social media, that Rutlanders feel decisions get taken, their voice isn't heard and they don't have a say."*
-  *"My daughter said that what Rutland doesn't understand is that people want more choice because that's what everybody else does."*
-  *"Looking forward, it will be great for me to see Rutland as an aspirational place... so how can we develop that? What would it look like? Not just for those people who can afford to be here but for those people who struggle as well."*
-  *"I want to see it moving forward... I want it to be a place that everyone can live in and enjoy."*
-  *"I really like being in Uppingham. It's a friendly neighbourhood. Everyone here is just trying to help you out if you get lost something like that. Everyone's really nice to you and I've found that's really important for a younger age group."*
-  *"I think there are two main drivers for enjoying life in Rutland. One is just the sheer beauty of the area and wanting to be here; and also the community spirit and people making you feel welcome."*
-  *"My community's really lovely and they all of them want to help each other all the time."*

Our market towns

Summary statement

You told us that you care about our market towns and particularly their distinctive character – which you are afraid of losing. You feel it's important that our towns and county don't become like everywhere else, and that we need to support Rutland's independent retailers. Many of you believe it's this unique character which brings in visitors and supports our local economy, so it's important this is retained. You see our towns as places to meet and socialise and said that Oakham, in particular, needs improvement. Our towns need to be accessible for everyone and affordable for young people. You recognise that our towns need to develop and grow but through consultation and not at the expense of Rutland's unique character.

-  *"Resist the temptation to make Rutland look like everywhere else at all costs."*
-  *"There are too many charity shops; unfortunately, independent traders are closing down."*
-  *"Oakham town centre is crying out – it doesn't have to be modernised, but I would like it to be beautified in a coordinated way and made accessible."*
-  *"There is an opportunity for an outdoor cafe society to get people to come."*
-  *"I remember the bypass coming and the Barleythorpe estate. I think it revitalised Oakham in a way... It's also how to inject more people and keep the High Street alive."*
-  *"I'm quite cautious with my walking. Sometimes if (the pavement) is uneven I fall because my balance is not always so great."*
-  *"The way Oakham has been developed I find particularly frustrating. I appreciate there are restraints on the council, but the way it's been developed has been the cost of the character of the town. Moving forward, to me it's important to retain the character."*
-  *"Our high streets will change, I believe. Become much more in tune with leisure and entertainment. And I think that's why we really have to look to the sustainability of our two towns."*
-  *"This is a bit random, but when we get takeaways and stuff we usually try and get them off an app... and there's a really small choice in this area. It would be really good to introduce something like that to small businesses because that would be a really good way to support them."*
-  *"You don't want to set up this café culture we are creating just to sit and watch vans going past."*

“One of the issues... is that Oakham is an old town and there are a lot of buildings we can't get into (in our wheelchairs) and they can't change them because they are listed building.”

“If you want to maintain the life of the small town like Uppingham you have to think about what young people want. Otherwise, they have to leave because they got nowhere to live they can afford.”

“I just love the enterprise of small market towns in the community. You've got the fact that people open the door and you knew each other. You just talk to each other.”

Development

Summary statement

Based on what you've said, it's clear that growth, development and the building of new homes is a big concern for many people. Views also vary considerably. While many of you said that you're concerned about the impact of large scale development and do not want it, others are worried about further development in towns and villages, and on greenfield sites. Many of you accept that some development and change are essential. However, others want Rutland's population to remain fixed and for there to be no new homes built whatsoever. Wherever growth does occur, you told us the creation and preservation of community spirit and the essential rural nature of Rutland is essential. You also said the needs of older people wanting to downsize and of younger people wanting to live in Rutland coincide and need to be met through smaller and/or appropriately designed homes. You recognise that Rutland has opportunities thanks to its central position, technical infrastructure and unique attributes. However, there is a major concern that local infrastructure and services must keep pace with any development.

“Growth in such a beautiful county needs to be sustainable rather than just random because a lot of people would like to live here if they could.”

“This Saint George's barracks (thing); I don't think it's right. I'm gathering from these conversations that I'm in the majority because people like the rural aspect and if we're not careful we'll destroy it.”

“I'm disappointed that the government insists on so many houses being built in Rutland.”

“We've missed a golden opportunity with St George's barracks. We could (have) future proofed ourselves by having certain amount of houses in another place. Whereas now to keep up with the 160 houses we have to produce and build every year. The current expansion we are now having is to throw them in wherever they can go.”

- "I have no confidence that [St. Georges] could be made into a sustainable community given all the pressure was coming from outside. You don't have all the authority that you'd like to say it's going to be exactly like this."*
- "If you get a small village, they generally do have a very good community. Rutland isn't special in regard. It's the way in which you put communities together which is special, and that can happen anywhere. As for Saint George's barracks... I'm not sure how to build a community from scratch."*
- "We can be as modern as we wish with good modern Wi-Fi communication etc."*
- "What you got here is a sense of community and that needs to be continued. And I don't know the answer to how you manage to do that when there's a pressure on building new houses... I know that local authorities don't have all the say. That's part of the problem."*
- "The key thing which I think perhaps the Vision's got to try to get to is to weigh up the need for growth. A lot of people talk about growth being important, but clearly it can't go on forever."*
- "If you look at all the plans issued round here, they are all for five-bedroom houses because the attraction of Rutland Water makes it uneconomical for a developer to build, say, two bungalows on a plot."*
- "I would probably make it so there were more places for teenagers and young children - stuff like that. And more activities for us to do. Things that we can participate in."*
- "Children move out because there isn't the affordable accommodation for them and they can't afford to live in Rutland. And I think that's a consideration."*
- "The bigger our towns get, the less interesting and attractive they will be for people naturally to live there. It may be slightly different for young people."*
- "I think there's quite a lot of opportunity for Rutland. I think we can certainly look to maximise some of the changes being forced upon us."*
- "We need to look at having whole-life buildings so that if somebody is going to live in a three-storey townhouse, the lift needs to be part of the building.... I think we could really push better living through the planning process."*
- "I went to one of these early meetings about Saint George's... When I mention bungalows (for older people), I was looked at with astonishment and told "Oh no. They don't come in with our density plan at all." We must listen to our community."*

-  *“The more people you have in a community the more money you collect and have spent in shops and businesses in towns. So the interests of the councils may be totally different from the interests of ordinary people. So I’m very suspicious of councils.”*
-  *“If you going to have more housing where are people going to work? Where’s the employment incentive? And then there’s all the services that go with that and what the impact is then on transport road systems and so on.”*
-  *“How far are we prepared to go against drivers such as government targets for housing?”*
-  *“Do not keep building extra houses in our small villages. No big commercial developments in our small villages.”*
-  *“Fifteen years hence. How much bigger do we want the community to be in Rutland, if at all? And where are we going to stop?!”*
-  *“So I guess what you’re trying to do is to create the least damage possible to what local people want.”*
-  *“The hardest thing is managing change... If people can see why you’ve got to where you got to – then agree with it or not. People don’t agree with everything but providing there’s honesty you get more people on board even if they don’t like it.”*

5. What do people want to preserve?

As well as listening carefully as people talked openly about the things that are most important to them, Future Rutland’s ‘Your Life in Rutland’ conversation asked some specific questions. In particular, we asked:

What three things would you keep the same about Rutland for the benefit of your family, future generations and the people you care about?”

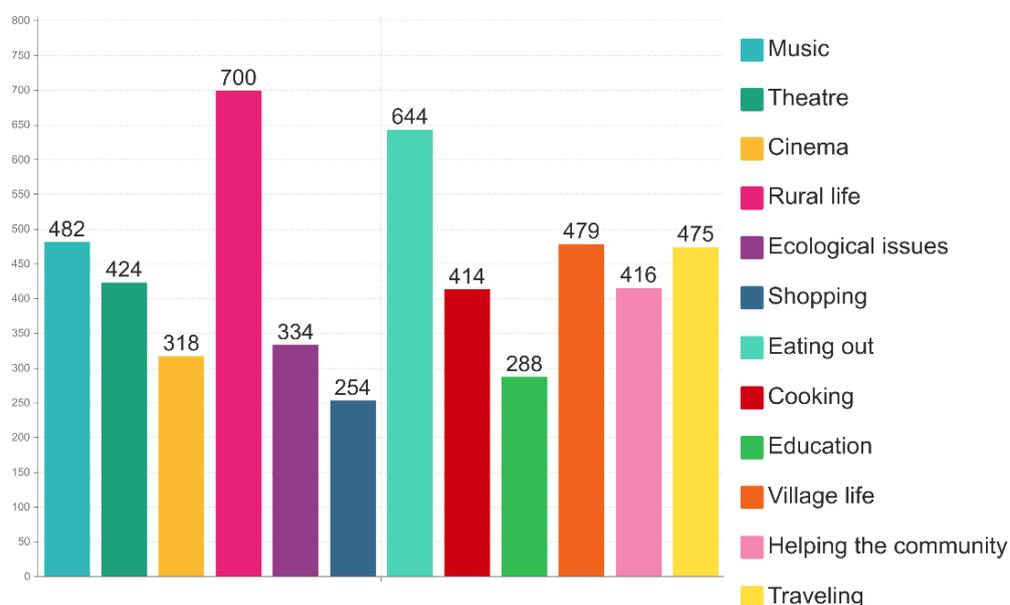
Replies to this question have been summarised as four short statements:

1. We value and want to preserve rural life in Rutland. We like the sense of belonging to a small countryside community and the associated lifestyle.
2. We value Rutland Water and the open spaces in the county. We want to preserve green spaces and the county’s heritage to sustain our physical and mental well-being.
3. We and our friends and visitors to the county enjoy a range of social facilities: pubs, restaurants, museum, water-sports, cycling, rambling and independent shops and retailers.
4. We value a feeling of being safe in Rutland, especially for our children.

As well as telling us what you want to preserve in Rutland, you also told us you are most passionate about:

- Rural life
- Eating out
- Music
- Village life
- Travelling

Figure 5 - What are you passionate about? (Answers that received more than 250 responses)



6. What do people want to change?

In addition to asking people about the things in Rutland that should be preserved or retained for benefit of current and future generations, the ‘Your Life in Rutland’ conversation also asked participants what aspects of the county they would like to change or improve, if given the chance.

“You have a magic wand. What three things would you improve for the future?”

Replies to this question have been summarised as seven short statements:

1. We value access to good quality healthcare facilities and would like to see this improved especially as we recognise that people have increased healthcare needs as they get older.
2. We would like a vibrant and varied high street offer in both of Rutland’s towns and a supportive system for independent traders.
3. We would like to have an accessible, interconnected, and co-ordinated public transport system across the county.
4. We would like to achieve a balance between providing more affordable housing and avoiding over-development of Oakham and Uppingham. We would like to see development that retains Rutland’s character.
5. We value good quality road systems that are well maintained, and we wish to avoid heavy traffic and congestion in small villages and towns.
6. We would like a greener sustainable future for the county, and we support ecological initiatives such as: linked up cycle paths, tree planting, litter control, electric vehicle charging points, re-wilding areas, e-bikes, food waste control and so on.
7. Families with school-aged children would value more in-county facilities for entertainment, such as a public swimming pool, cinema, play parks, places for young people to meet.

7. Sharing further feedback

This report summarises the comments, feedback and survey responses collected throughout Future Rutland's eight-week 'Your Life in Rutland' 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/your-life-in-rutland.

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 or email: 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.

[Click here to comment on this summary report](#)

