

Chair: Robert Wills Vice Chair: Edward Baines Secretary/Treasurer: Ron Simpson BEM

Uppingham  Webcam

The Planning Policy Manager
Rutland County Council

23.9.2018

Dear Sir,

UF Response to Further Public Consultation on a Draft Rutland Local Plan Incorporating St George's

Please find below the Uppingham First Community Partnership's response to the above consultation.

1. Preamble

1.1 The Uppingham First Community Partnership is grateful to Cllr Oliver Hemsley, Leader of Rutland County Council, for confirming that responses to this consultation will be accepted in letter form as some elements of the partnership's response do not fit comfortably into the online template.

1.2 This response is submitted to not only reply to the additional consultation incorporating St George's into the draft Rutland Local Plan, but also as a supplement to the partnership's response to the initial consultation on the draft Local Plan undertaken in 2017. The two responses should be seen as 'complementary' to avoid the need for repetition of the important points made in both documents. This reply also complements the consultation response of Uppingham Town Council to the St George's proposals and seeks to add the views of civil society and local business following minuted debates at the Uppingham Business Forum and Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum.

1.3 The evidence and experience base upon which the partnership feels able to speak out on behalf of the Uppingham community is laid out in its 2017 response, as is the Uppingham First call for the next Rutland Local Plan to respect the new NPPF and the government's increasing endorsement of, and support for, localism and local determination. The new Rutland Local Plan should approach the incorporation of St George's development with a careful eye on the **'actual' future social and economic needs** of this beautiful county. While our research suggests that a majority recognise the opportunities presented by acquiring and appropriately developing the St George's site, the move has prompted significant concerns about the impact of any substantial house building programme on the town and the county's infrastructure and way of life. There is particular concern about the impact of the St George's proposals on Uppingham's well documented social and economic development strategy detailed in plans at www.uppinghamneighbourhoodplan.info

2. Our Evidence Base

2.1 Uppingham First has responded last minute to this consultation to allow time to consult relevant community groups and partners. Specifically the partnership, by virtue of its construct, has been able to found this submission on debates and papers from:-

- The executive and general membership 2018 AGM's of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum
- The 2018 AGM of the Uppingham First Board of Directors
- The 2018 AGM of the Uppingham Business Forum
- The September 2018 meeting of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan Committee
- August and September 2018 meetings of the town's two active Residents' Associations
- The September 2018 meeting of Uppingham Town Council

- Responses to September community newsletters and online/social media exchanges
- A recent meeting of the Uppingham Vanguard Board +
- The outputs of the A6003 Parish Working Group.

3. Concerns and Opportunities

3.1. Of primary concern is the significant impact that constructing a town potentially larger than Uppingham will have on the county's heritage and settlement hierarchy. There is significant business concern that the creation of many hectares of business park space at such a rural and remote location will damage the sustainability of Uppingham's business economy; a market town with a vibrant high street and three business zones already seeking further expansion. The county council's current practice of publicly funded subsidies and below market rents on its own properties, together with partisan officer advice trying to tempt new businesses to its own sites and away from the county's two market towns, can only be exacerbated by any substantial commercial development at St George's.

3.2 One can be forgiven for believing, as some do, that the huge development currently being mooted for St George's is more about future income generation than the sustainability of Rutland. A competent evidence base for anything above a new modern garden village of up to 1000 homes intended to lower the average age of Rutlanders, create some really affordable homes for younger workers and widen the county's skills base is not transparent in the site's literature to date.

3.3 If substantial development is to go ahead at St George's, there must be an authoritative and competent study of the whole county's infrastructure needs by 2036. This should include a masterplan for the further development of the A6003 in the south of the county between Caldecott, Uppingham and Oakham. In particular, as raised recently by Sir Alan Duncan, the line of a possible north south relief road to the west of Uppingham and around Caldecott should form part of this study. This requires integration between the draft Local Plan and the imminent Local Transport Plan.

3.4 The inclusion of St George's in an updated Local Plan must demonstrate how housing and commercial development at St George's will not be undertaken at the price of an absent economic development strategy for the sustainability of Uppingham. Uppingham businesses wish to see more shop frontages protected and new sites for shops identified, not less.

3.5 Increasing the number of homes in Rutland by building at St George's could benefit the Uppingham economy if the new Local Plan identified a site for an additional long stay car park in the town. Specific parking for local business employees would also make a significant contribution to the town's future.

3.6. Alternative uses for part, or all, of the St George's site do not appear to have been given serious consideration in the site's options. Rutland will be short of power by 2036 if it's proposed electric car charging policies (one in every new home) are successful. Never will there be a better opportunity, or a better site, to build a substantial next generation solar powered (with battery storage) electric power station. Such a development really would contribute to Rutland's future needs as well as protect our rural environment while transforming a brownfield site.

3.7. It appears to the layman and professional alike (see the response from CPRE Rutland) that RCC is willing to sacrifice many of the protective principals and policies embodied in the current Local Plan to meet the commercial aspirations of the Ministry of Defence for St George's. Arguing sustainability requires significant overdevelopment is the popular position of city folk. It is not a philosophy expounded by the Rural Coalition, our national parks or Natural England. That is why so many of us have chosen to live in Rutland despite its level of council tax. The economies of scale will not apply. The commercial line pursued by the MOD will ensure that many of the proposed homes, even those to rent, will still be unaffordable for those we need the most, young families. A modest sized development with excellent public transport links to Uppingham and Oakham would be more likely to enhance the Rutland offer to those we seek to attract.

3.8 The huge planned growth of Corby (14k homes) just 6 miles to the south of Uppingham during the same time frame as St George's appears not to have figured in the St George's master planning infrastructure calculations. This major error, if not addressed, will have serious consequences for the future of Rutland.

3.9. Working papers for the St George's project appear to suggest that RCC is trying to attract LEP resources in support of the project, almost certainly at the expense of the county's two market towns. This is unacceptable given the long awaited request for LEP support for a development study for the Uppingham Station Road Industrial Estate highway and entrance.

4. Summary

4.1 As stated earlier, this consultation response is intended to complement that of Uppingham Town Council and the 2017 Local Plan submission by Uppingham First. Hence repetition of comment on specific policies has been avoided. The Uppingham community appears to be supportive of a small new garden village being created at St George's only if such development is accompanied by substantial support to address the implications for Uppingham. This would be attractive if accompanied by a beneficial transport strategy and an eco-friendly new power plant.

4.2 Thank you for the opportunity to respond. The partnership is happy to expand on its views if required.

Ron Simpson BEM

Secretary - Uppingham First

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Chair - Uppingham Business Forum

UPPINGHAM
FIRST

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