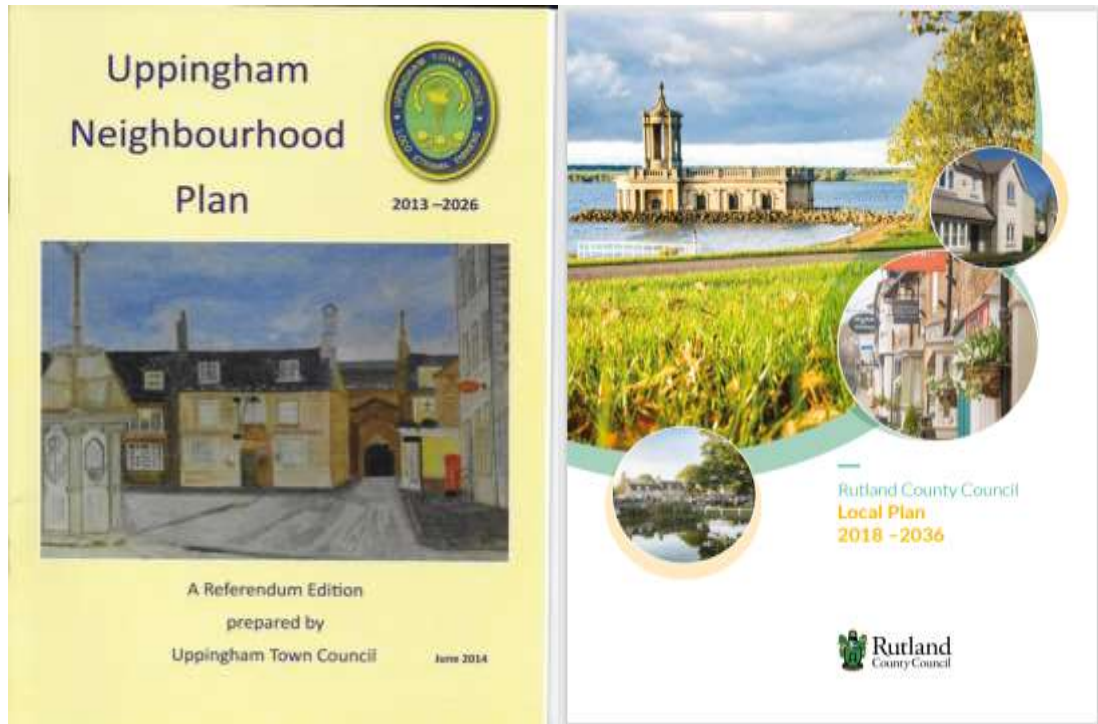


*Draft Version*

## Support for Uppingham Town Council on the review of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan



## Overview Report

(Contractor: Clive Keble (MRTPI) on behalf of Design Midlands Dec. 2020)

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The report complements two earlier pieces of work which were undertaken in 2018 for Uppingham Town Council by Clive Keble (MRTPI) on behalf of OPUN (the predecessor to Design Midlands). The earlier work is listed in Appendix 1. Much of the information and analysis contained in those earlier reports remains relevant to the NP review. It is cross referenced in the current work and should be read in conjunction with it.

1.2 The context for the current work is that Uppingham Town Council (UTC), working through a Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group (NPAG) is committed to reviewing the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The review is timely because Rutland County Council (RCC) is currently at the Pre-Submission Consultation stage for a new Rutland Local Plan (RLP) which will look forward to 2036. This will enable the NP to run in parallel with the new RLP, with a greater degree of certainty in achieving the requisite conformity between the two plans. In the new RLP the allocation of new housing sites in Uppingham is specified to be achieved through the NP, provided that the NP is completed within three years. The current work includes the following elements:

1. Review the existing NP and consider the policies in the emerging Local Plan to recommend which policies need to be replaced/added through the NP review. Also audit the extent that existing NP policies have influenced planning decision by RCC.
2. Consider the evidence base for the NP review, e.g. existing housing stock, mix in recent developments, population data, employment data, the state of retailing and the town centre and the extent that new development meets design expectations.
3. Suggest a list of policies for inclusion in the revised NP. Advice on scope/wording, cross referenced to the NP Vision and Objectives and the fit with Local Plan policies.
4. Provide advice on external consultees (who/when) to be engaged in the review.

1.3 Although it is not to be undertaken at this stage, several items of possible future work are to be considered. These include housing sites assessment and selection, design support for selected housing sites, drafting of diagrams, health check of NP Policies, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening report, submission documents, and post examination support/advice.

1.4 The current work has considered a wide range of source material to cover the diverse brief and included a remote inception session (using Zoom) with the NPAG and a focused session with NP Theme Group leaders. This Draft Version of the final report is to be consider by a second full meeting of the NPAG on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020. In addition to this overview report, the analysis that has been undertaken and the findings which have emerged are set out in a series of papers, comprising:

1. Principles underlying the review of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan
2. Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan Policies and the emerging Rutland Local Plan
3. The evidence base

4. Planning records and the effectiveness of current NP Policies
5. Housing site assessment criteria and local transport considerations
6. Traffic Context (Corby/Kettering and Rutland) for the Uppingham NP
7. Proposed approach to external consultation

## **2. Summary of findings and recommendations**

2.1 The findings of the 2018 report remain pertinent in terms of the relationship between Uppingham Town Council (TC) and Rutland County Council (RCC) and the extent to which the Local Plan seeks to direct the approach and content of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP). It is pleasing that the Submission Version recognises that new housing site allocations should be determined locally, but the current work (2020) demonstrates that any review of the NP should cover other key issues. In addition, legislation and guidance on neighbourhood planning and the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) constitute a compelling argument for the new Local Plan (LP) to operate at a genuinely strategic level, enabling the NP to reflect the very distinct local circumstances in Uppingham. The review of the NP should be comprehensive including not only site allocations but also detailed policies on a range of key issues, comprising:

- Achieving sustainable development, embracing the need to reduce carbon emissions.
- Recognition of the recent and proposed changes to the planning system in England.
- Consider the possible changes to lifestyle and the form and function of town centres, (including shopping and the hospitality sector) resulting from Covid-19.

2.2 To achieve this, a new Neighbourhood Plan will need to be soundly based on robust evidence. The quality of thought and decision making of the TC and others involved in the existing Neighbourhood Plan is good, but there is a tendency for decisions to be made (sometimes intuitively) on the basis that “We know best what we need in our town.” Equally, the County Council needs to recognise that it should support a strategy to provide improved infrastructure for Uppingham, to mitigate known problems (especially traffic) and create new opportunities for sustainable development. A positive partnership is needed in which RCC supports and provides information to the TC to maximise the extent to which planning policies and decisions can be made locally. At the same, the Neighbourhood Plan will need to focus on matters that are of genuine importance and relevance to the future of the town.

**The key recommendations of this report are:** (to be confirmed/completed/refined)

- 1.** The review should extend beyond housing site allocations to encompass measures on local needs, climate change, recent legislative changes and societal changes. Relates to Papers 1 & 2.
- 2.** The review should include early community consultation and engaging external consultees on a refreshed set of principles eg issues and options for the NP. Relates to Papers 1 & 7.

- 3.** A separate consultation on housing site assessment/selection will be needed for developers, landowners, external bodies and the community. Relates to Papers 1, 5 & 7.
- 4.** Many existing NP Policies can be carried forward, but some will require amendment. There is scope to convert selected proposals and explanatory text into formal policies and there are a substantial number of new policies that could be incorporated, (e.g. climate change, legislation & societal trends including, Covid-19). Paper 2 refers in detail.
- 5.** Policies should be drafted to reflect guidance and good practice. Policies should be clearly cross referenced to key objective and to evidence (including opinions, data and views of external consultees). Relates to Papers 1, 2, 3 & 4.
- 6.** Planning decisions should be closely and systematically monitored to assess the effectiveness of NP policies. In commenting on planning applications, the Town Council should refer to specific NP Policies and evidence.
- 7.** The revised NP should include an Implementation and Monitoring section to explain the importance of partnership working, identify key projects for development related and other external funding and as a basis for future reviews. Relates to Papers 1, 3 & 4.
- 8.** It is reasonable to include scoring and assessment criteria for new housing sites to assess if they prejudice or help to enable a future relief road. Relates to Paper 5 & 6.
- 9.** Wider partnership working is required between RCC, (involving Uppingham Town Council) and adjoining authorities on the implications of large-scale growth e.g. in Corby and Kettering and taking account of the proposed St Georges site in Rutland. This should be informed by a new traffic impact study for the A6003. Relates to Paper 6.
- 10.** RCC should be invited to a joint workshop with the NPAG to agree the policy content of the NP, to support policy drafting and associated evidence gathering. This should include agreeing a means of applying the results of the 2021 Census to NP policies such that they remain up to date/effective beyond 2022/23. Relates to Papers 1 & 3.

2.3 The 2018 reports included eight key recommendations, they are copied below and those which have been implemented/completed are highlighted in *italics*.

- 1 - Create a bespoke and accurate Census profile for Uppingham.
- 2 - *Undertake or commission a local housing need study.*
- 3 - *A business workshop on employment land need, units and improving existing sites.*
- 4 - *RCC to provide a new housing requirement figure for Uppingham.*
- 5 - *Request RCC traffic studies and consideration of long-term routes around the town*
- 6 - Request RCC/LEP to fund/undertake a feasibility study of an exit from Station Road.
- 7 - Maintain records of town centre planning decisions and monitor occupancy levels.
- 8 - Identify baselines/indicators to measure progress towards economic growth targets.

Some of the above are incorporated into the 2020 key recommendations, where this does not apply, consideration should be given to new requests to the appropriate bodies for partnership working and bespoke studies of issues in Uppingham.

## **Appendix 1 Summary of work undertaken in 2018 by OPUN/Clive Keble (MRTPI) for UTC**

### **(A) May 2018: Consideration of the strategic policy context, sites and issues to inform a proposed review of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan.**

Executive summary and key recommendations

1. Introduction: the brief, scope, purpose and methodology adopted.
2. The Local Plan Review, Neighbourhood Planning and Localism
  - General relationship with the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan
  - Is the intent and purpose of Localism being satisfied?
3. Consideration of specific sites:
  - 3a. UPP/02 (Uppingham Gate)
    - A critique of the evidence used in the Local Plan.
    - The current and projected future demand for employment land in Uppingham up to 2036, including supporting evidence for the site to be changed to mixed use.
    - Access from A47 with a possibility that it may link to sites UPP/01 and UPP/09 in time.
    - Provisional recommendations on townscape; approaching from the North.
  - 3b. UPP/05A (Land off Ayston Road - Larkfleet)
    - A critique of the evidence in the Local Plan, specifically referencing possible alternatives for access to the site and the impact on townscape from the North.
  - 3c. UPP/09 (Land off The Quadrant)
    - A critique of the evidence in the Local Plan, referencing access, the most suitable type of homes given topography/limitations and the impact on townscape from the East.
4. Housing needs: analysis/understanding for Uppingham in terms of likely demand for:
  - Single storey accommodation either detached or semi-detached/linked;
  - Social / affordable housing and 'low rent housing' (circa 80% of market rent);
  - Work from home dwellings.
5. Retail and Shopping Frontages. A critique of the proposed change in designation for Queen Street and High Street West from 'primary' to 'secondary' in the Local Plan and the likely impact on the retail offer.
6. Projected infrastructure needs. A review the projected infrastructure needs related to targeted economic growth plans of 2%+ for the period up to 2036.
7. Recommendations for evidence gathering for the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **(B) November 2018: A series of papers/report covering specific aspect of the NP review**

1. Census Data/Population
2. Local Housing Needs Study (including consideration of housing requirement figure)
3. Local Business Aspirations
4. Roads and Transport (Links between radial routes and Station Road Industrial Estate)
5. Town Centre Planning History and Proposed Monitoring System
6. Suggested Timeline for Review of Neighbourhood Plan and Consultancy Support