

EWHURST AND ELLENS GREEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN BUSINESS SURVEY

2015

1. Background

A survey of the businesses and enterprises providing employment (hereafter generically referred to as ‘employers’) operating within the Ewhurst and Ellens Green parish was conducted in the summer of 2015. The definition of a business in this context was defined as “a registered activity located and operating in the parish with at least five employees”. The Parish is in a rural setting and has no designated commercial or industrial centres, though there are some commercial units in a few converted farm yard properties.

2. Survey

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix page 8) was constructed to obtain information about the employer’s activity, and manpower by skill type, also to establish their vision for future development and what assistance they might require for the maintenance or expansion of their activity.

39 employers were identified as operating within the Parish and meeting the previously defined employee size criterion. Survey questionnaires were distributed by post with a reply paid envelope in which to return the completed questionnaire. No attempt was made to identify the respondents, by name, for confidentiality reasons, however all respondents indicated their broad business activity by selecting one of the following business activities:

- Agriculture and farming
- Bed and Breakfast
- Building and Allied Trades
- Education and Training

- Environmental Management
- Hair and Beauty
- Manufacturing
- Medical and Health
- Hospitality
- Professional Services
- Retail Shops
- Vehicle and Machinery Maintenance
- Any Other Activity (please describe)

3. Survey Respondents

In an essentially rural setting situated within the daily commuting envelope to London, it is no surprise that the industrial/commercial activity is relatively low but the availability of large old country houses and estates, no longer practical for domestic use, provide the perfect facility for activities which require extensive living accommodation.

3.1 Employer Characteristics

All the business sectors were represented in the responses except for Hair and Beauty, Manufacturing, Hospitality and Professional Services.

It is acknowledged that there are a number of individuals and small groups of fewer than five people, who provide Professional Services from home in the Parish (typically, accountancy, financial advice and IT support) to clients within and from outside the Parish. It has not been possible to accurately identify all these, so their numbers, locations and types of service provision have not been included in this survey.

The customer demand for the respondent organisations' activities was reported as 23% from within the Parish and the remainder equally split between, up to 10 miles and more than 10 miles distance outside the Parish. Interestingly, 10 (91%) of the respondents are led from within the Parish (i.e. are not

subsidiaries of an organisation located outside the Parish) and only 1 led from outside.

3.2 Employees

11 employers (28%) responded, accounting for 254 employees of which 148 (58%) were registered as full time employed. A further 15 employees were identified as Apprentices/ Trainees.

Of the respondent employer organisations, 3 accounted for 203 (80%) of the total employees and 12 (80%) of the 15 trainees.

The skill mix of employees is heavily influenced by the 'big three' above. 76 (30%) of the total employees are defined as 'Management and/or Graduate' level, 127 (50%) as 'Technician and or Job trained' with the remaining 20% as unskilled.

However, the ability to supply this labour force from within the Parish is limited to only 20% of the total employees - those who actually live in the Parish. The corollary to this is that 80% of labour force commute to work into the Parish from outside it.

3.3 Benefits of a Parish Location

When asked the question "...main advantage to your business activity of being located in the Parish" 7 (47%) gave the answer of **"suitable available premises"**. This was followed equally by 3 respondents stating **"it is where I live"** and **"it is close to my market"**. Only 2 (13%) listed **"the availability of a skilled work force"** as an advantage.

General satisfaction at having a business activity located in the Parish was highlighted by the 100% positive response of **"good, very good or excellent"** to the question "...how do you rate the location of your business activity within the Parish..."

3.4 Constraints and Sustainability

One-third of the reasons quoted for external constraints on their activities was **"a shortage of suitable employees"**. This is

supported by 82% of respondents who found it “hard or very hard” to recruit suitable staff.

A quarter quoted “poor communications through both broadband speeds and mobile phone coverage”.

Other reasons quoted singularly were:

- On road parking
- “Red tape” and local/national legislation
- High housing costs limiting local recruitment

Satisfaction with current business conditions and suitability of location resulted in a high degree of positivity towards the future with 10 out of the 11 respondents confidently expecting to “... remain active for 10 years or more”.

3.5 Future Developments within the Parish

It was evident that the most important and frequently mentioned initiative that could be undertaken by the Parish Council was the issue of a better balance of a socio-economic mix of residents through the provision of “affordable housing”, identified by 86% of business respondents.

There was no limit to the number of initiatives that respondents could identify and a total of 15 were recorded. The issue of housing for staff (see paragraph 3.4 above) was identified 7 times, traffic issues including improvement/yellow lining/parking/signage 3 times, communication 3 times. One further initiative identified was the provision of a business park.

Resulting from the application of these initiatives it was suggested that the prospects for local staff increases in employment were “Good 56%, same 33%, poor 11%”, whereas without applying these initiatives the prospects for increases in employment were “20%, 70% and 10% respectively”.

Despite this strong suggestion that provision of the right kind of housing would have a very positive effect on their activity, there was an air of quiet confidence expressed in the replies to the question “Do you have plans to expand, contract or stay the

same...” where 20% would expand, 80% would remain the same but no one predicted any contraction in their business activity. Consequently, this is unlikely to have any impact on land usage within the Parish in the medium term.

3.6 Other Comments

The two final questions in the survey were designed to solicit any further ideas or comments which had not been picked up by the earlier questions. There were two observations submitted which should be mentioned so that they may be taken into account in the general deliberations on local employment by the Parish Council:

- Local enterprises providing employment should provide employment for local people, where possible
- For recruitment from outside the Parish, better county-wide public transport could facilitate local employment
- Information should be provided on the support and help that the Parish Council can provide for local employers

4. Relationship to the Residents Survey

There is some disparity between the Residents Survey findings and the Business Survey. In the Residents findings 86% said when asked, that **“the Neighbourhood Plan should make provision for small and start-up businesses”**. However, the business respondents when asked if ‘designated business parks should be a specific initiative by the Parish Council’ only one respondent employing 11 people thought this a viable initiative.

This difference may require further research before financial commitment could be made. Or it may be the difference in perception between a ‘nice idea’ and a ‘commercial reality’. The latter would require entrepreneurs with ideas/services/products, risk-taking ability and perhaps capital, and businesses requiring suitable staff with appropriate skills, the right premises and access to markets.

The Residents survey also identified the types of businesses needed which were mainly retail outlets and building trades. While this seems more like a resident wish list, we should bear in mind that most of these suggested businesses did once exist in the Parish and have progressively closed down due to more comprehensive facilities nearby (e.g. in neighbouring Cranleigh), lack of available staff and cost of housing. The contributors to the business survey saw a vision of 'business as usual' with no indication that there was potential for such significant development and expansion.

5. Conclusion

There are 39 employers operating within the Parish which employ five or more employees. The main conclusions from the survey results from respondents were as follows:

- Employers are largely content with their location and size within the Parish but wish to see improvements to infrastructure, particularly in communications - mobile phone coverage and fast internet connection.
- Staff recruitment (from within and from outside the Parish) is difficult, the high cost of housing is cited as a primary cause. Only 20% of the employees live within the Parish. Employers would support the provision of more 'affordable housing'.
- Public transport and greater control on street parking with clearly indicated parking sites are seen as desirable improvements within the Parish.
- The respondents are reasonably confident about their ongoing prospects in the medium term, but most do not expect to develop through expansion (or to contract their activities) which might influence land usage in the Parish.
- Employers would like to see the Parish Council to be generally more pro-active in support of their activities.

However, the ability to supply this labour force from within the Parish is limited to only 20% of the total employees - those who actually live in the Parish. The corollary to this is that 80% of labour force commute to work into the Parish from outside it. However, the ability to supply this labour force from within the Parish is limited to only 20% of the total employees - those who actually live in the Parish. The corollary to this is that 80% of labour force commute to work into the Parish from outside it.

EWHURST & ELLENS GREEN

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN BUSINESS SURVEY APPENDIX

You will be aware that every household in the Parish has received a Resident's Survey. This is intended to seek the opinion from every adult about what we want to see our Parish Council do for the general benefit of the village. It is essentially a bottom-up approach to have our views formally presented to and adopted by the Parish and Borough Councils.

This brief questionnaire is only being distributed to local businesses, to whom the Resident Survey is not relevant or has not been sent. There are approximately 40 businesses in the Parish employing 5 or more staff.

Please complete this on behalf of your business; inform us if you think that there is another business in the Parish which should also be consulted; do add any extra page(s) of comments you feel may be relevant; and send it back to us by Friday 10th October.

Finally, thank you for your help in providing input to our Neighbourhood Plan. It is our one chance to put forward a considered opinion supported by you, our local businesses.

Ewhurst & Ellens Green Parish Neighbourhood Plan

**Questionnaire for employers in businesses and other organisations located in the Parish.
This information will help the Parish Council to plan its future use of land and property for
your benefit.**

A. Description of your business activity

Qu 1.	Which category in the following list defines your activity? Please tick one box:	
A	Agriculture & farming	
B	Bed & breakfast	
C	Building & allied trades	
D	Education & training	
E	Environmental management	
F	Hair & beauty	
G	Manufacturing	
H	Medical & health	
I	Hospitality	
J	Professional services	
K	Retail shops	
L	Vehicle & machinery maintenance	
M	Any other activity, please describe:	

Qu 2.	Where does the demand for your products/services come from? Please give a % to each box:	
A	Within the Parish	%
B	Inside a 10 mile radius	%
C	Beyond a 10 mile radius	%
	Total	100%

Qu 3.	Is your organisation led from an address in the Parish or is it a subsidiary of an external organisation? Please tick one box:	
A	In the Parish	
B	Subsidiary	

Qu 4a	How many people do you employ listed by skill group?		
		Full time	Part time
A	Management		
B	Graduate		
C	Technician		
D	Job trained		
E	Unskilled		
	Total:		
Qu 4b	How many of the above are apprentices or trainees		

Qu 5.	How many of your staff lives in the Parish and how many live outside? Please record an approximate percentage on each category		
A	Within the Parish		%
B	Up to 10 miles away, but not in the Parish		%
C	More than 10 miles away		%
	Total		100%

B. Benefits of location in the Parish

Qu 6.	What do you consider to be the main advantages to your business of being located in the Parish? Please tick all that apply		
A	Available skilled work force		
B	Suitable premises		
C	“It is where I live”		
D	Close to your market		
E	Other. Please describe:		

Qu 7.	Overall, how do you rate the Parish as a location for your organisation? Please tick the appropriate box: 1 = poor; 5 = excellent		
-------	---	--	--

Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent

C. Current constraints and sustainability

Qu 8.	How difficult is it for you to recruit suitable staff? Please tick the appropriate box: 1 = very hard; 5 = very easy					
Very hard	1	2	3	4	5	Very easy

Qu 6.	Are there any other constraints that you experience in carrying out your activities? Please tick all relevant boxes	
A	Shortage of suitable employees	
B	Poor transport infrastructure	
C	Lack of car park spaces	
D	Poor communications (e.g. internet speed)	
E	Other. Please describe:	

Qu 10.	How sustainable is your organisation activity in the longer term? Please tick the most relevant box	
A	Last for more than 10 years	
B	Last for 5 to 10 years	
C	Last for less than 5 years	
D	Unsustainable	

D. Future developments

Qu 11.	Are there any specific initiatives that could be undertaken by the Parish Council which would be helpful to your activity in the Parish? Please rank in order of priority: 1 = most urgent	
A	Designated business parks	
B	Affordable housing for staff	
C	Other:	

D	Other:	
E	Other:	
F	Other:	

Qu 12.	What are the prospects for an increase in the number of your employees over the next 5 years with and without the above [Qu11] initiatives? Please tick the appropriate boxes			
		Good	Same	Poor
A	Prospects for an increase in staff numbers <u>WITH</u> the above initiatives			
B	Prospects for an increase in staff numbers <u>WITHOUT</u> the above initiatives			

Qu 13.	Do you have any plans to expand (or contract) your facilities or buildings which might impact on land usage in the Parish? Please tick the box	
A	Expand	
B	Contract	
C	Stay the same	

Qu 14.	Are there any other businesses or organisations not currently in the Parish which you would like to see encouraged to locate in the Parish by the Neighbourhood Plan?	
A		
B		
C		

Qu 15.	Are there any other comments you would like to make as an employer running a business or other organisation within the Parish?