

BURWASH PARISH COUNCIL – NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

INFRASTRUCTURE GROUP

BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

This analysis is primarily factual and does not attempt to draw detailed conclusions. However, it seems clear from the responses received that most of the businesses in the parish of Burwash are sole traders who have no plans to expand or employ staff. In the light of this, the Parish Council may wish to consider how it can help local businesses to change their current plans or, failing that, attract to the area new businesses which are more likely to generate employment.

No attempt has been made to establish the statistical significance of the results.

The business questionnaire ([Annex 1](#)) was sent out to 83 local businesses identified by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NP-SG).

By the deadline of 31 May 2018, responses had been received from 21 businesses (25%). 3 businesses responded after the deadline and they have been included in this analysis, making a total of 24 businesses (29%) responding.

About your business

23 businesses (96%) are managed entirely by their owners. Only 1 (4%) is part of a larger organisation operating more widely than the parish.

Responders were asked to classify their type of business inclusively based on several pre-determined descriptors. They also had the option of adding their own descriptors.

9 businesses used *Services to the General Public* to describe their activities.

5 businesses used *Building Trades*.

4 businesses used *Horticulture*.

4 businesses used *Services to Business*.

4 businesses used *Retail*.

2 businesses used *Workshop/Repair*.

1 business in each case used: *Agriculture, Arts and Teaching, Consultancy, Estate Agency, Hair and Beauty, Healthcare, Hotel or Catering, Jewellery, Landscaping, Manufacturing, Tourism and Wholesale*.

17 businesses (71%) have no on-line activity and, of these, only 2 (8% of the total) expect to develop on-line activity in the next 10 years.

7 businesses (29%) are already on-line. Of these, 1 business (4% of the total) already operates wholly on-line; 1 business currently operates 75% on-line and does not expect this to change; and 5 businesses (21% of the total) have varying amounts of on-line activity but expect this to increase over time.

10 businesses (42%) have access to Superfast Broadband. 11 businesses (46%) do not. 3 businesses (13%) either did not know or did not answer the question.

Of the 14 businesses (58%) which either do not have access to Superfast Broadband or did not know or did not answer the question, 2 of these (14%) did not express a view on the importance for them of the provision of Superfast Broadband within the next 5 years. The remaining 12 (86%) were split between *Business Critical* (3, 25%), *Important but not Vital* (3, 25%) and *Not Important* (6, 50%).

Further work might be done to correlate access to Superfast Broadband with (a) location, and (b) type of business.

About your employees

5 businesses (21%) employ more than 2 people, with one of these employing 20 staff, two employing 10, and two employing 4. 3 businesses (13%) employ just 2 staff. 16 businesses (67%) employ no staff at all.

Of the 8 businesses employing staff, only 2 (25%) have plans to increase their headcount. The other 6 (75%) have no plans to take on additional staff. Of the 16 sole traders (i.e., businesses currently employing no staff), only 2 (13%) have plans to take on staff within the next 5 years.

Of the 8 businesses employing staff, 4 (50%) find recruitment *Very Difficult*; 2 (25%) find it *Reasonably Easy* and 1 (13%) *Very Easy*. One business finds recruiting skilled staff *Very Difficult* but unskilled staff *Reasonably Easy*.

Of the 54 people employed by the 8 businesses which have staff, 16 (30%) live within the parish. 38 (70%) live outside the parish boundary with 22 (41%) living more than 5 miles from the parish.

About your premises

Of the 24 businesses which responded to the questionnaire, 7 (29%) have business premises separate from their homes and 1 (4%) has a combined home and business premises. Of the 8 companies which have business premises, 1 is leased or rented. 16 businesses (67%) operate from home, including some of those that employ staff (see **About your employees** above).

Only 4 businesses (17%) have plans to expand their premises (or move from home to separate business premises) with the next 5 years. Of these 4, 2 (50%) plan to move to another site within the parish, 1 (25%) plans to expand on its existing site and 1 (25%) plans to acquire adjacent property/land for expansion.

About your customers

Across the 24 businesses responding, 28% of the customer base is within the parish; 39% is within East Sussex, 31% is within the wider UK; and only 2% is international.

The customer base profiles for individual businesses vary considerably. Further work could be done to correlate the spread of the customer base with business type. There does not appear to be a direct correlation with business size (as expressed by headcount).

About your business in Burwash

3 (13%) of the businesses who responded to the survey gave answers of 0 years for the length of time they have been trading in Burwash or did not answer the question. The remaining 21 businesses (87%) have traded in Burwash for a combined total of 580 years. The mean duration of trading is 28 years and the median 20 years. 12 businesses (50%) have traded in Burwash for 20 years or more. 6 businesses (25%) have been trading for 4 years or less. Individual trading durations range from 1 year to 147 years.

9 businesses (38%) said they were based in Burwash for *Historical reasons*. 6 businesses (25%) cited *Attractive local environment* as their reason for being in Burwash. Just 2 businesses (8%) indicated that they are based in Burwash because it provides *Easy access for customers/staff*. 1 business (4%) cited all three of the above reasons. 5 businesses (21%) gave other reasons but all of these are either because they have long associations with the parish or because the business is home-based and their home is in Burwash. 1 business (4%) gave another reason relating to the suitability of premises.

Annex 2 lists the factors cited which make Burwash attractive to the business. Annex 3 lists the factors cited which make Burwash unattractive. Annex 4 sets out respondents' views on what the parish council could do to help businesses develop in Burwash. Not all respondents replied to all these questions. No attempt is made here to draw conclusions from the responses.

And finally...

Of the 24 businesses that responded, 17 (71%) supported the idea of a Chamber of Commerce for local businesses; 4 (17%) did not support this idea. 1 business (4%) questioned the cost/benefit balance of such a proposal. 2 businesses (8%) did not respond.

18 businesses (75%) supported the idea of a web-based business directory for Burwash. 3 businesses (13%) were opposed to this idea. 2 businesses (8%) did not express a view.

20 businesses (83%) said that they would like to see the anonymised results of the survey. 1 business (4%) did not want to see the results. 3 businesses (13%) did not answer the question.

Respondents were given the chance of adding any further comments they wished to make at the end of the questionnaire. Not every business took advantage of this. The comments received are listed in Annex 5. No attempt is made here to draw any conclusions from these comments.

Neighbourhood Plan Infrastructure Group
June 2018

BUSINESS SURVERY QUESTIONNAIRE AND COVERING LETTER – see separate PDF documents

FACTORS CITED BY RESPONDENTS AS MAKING BURWASH ATTRACTIVE TO LOCAL BUSINESSES

In no particular order:

Nice central location for access to East Sussex
Being close to home
Ideal customer base
Fairly tight-knit community
Nice area to live and work
Based in South-East - more wealth
Loyal to the village
Peaceful and beautiful surroundings
Friendliness of the people
Loyalty
Land and buildings passed down
No desire to move
Nice outlook
Long established
Supporting the village and community
Cost of moving/relocating
Close to other branches ie. Heathfield and Ticehurst
Good for buyers, attractive, stations nearby
Good local reputation
Home
Community support
Generally, traffic-free roads
Free parking in towns
Suppliers of materials quite near
We own the land
Good client base
Built a good local reputation
Freehold property - low overheads
Convenient commute
Shop linked to my mother's accommodation
I live on the premises
I live in the village
Great location
Good shops and pubs
Can't move farm
Access to affluent customers
It is a recognised place of interest
Well situated
Family
My home
My customers
Support from other businesses in parish
I work at my own pace here
I own property
27 years in Burwash
Established customer base
Good premises
Close to previous location
Easy for customers to find

FACTORS CITED BY RESPONDENTS AS MAKING BURWASH UNATTRACTIVE TO LOCAL BUSINESSES

In no particular order:

Small population/catchment area
Lack of local support (people use businesses outside parish)
Distance from parts suppliers
Premises for expansion difficult to locate
High property prices
Lack of footfall
Residents not using local services
Poor transport links
Church magazine ad brings little business
Not really a vibrant town
Older population
Poor roads (quality)
Reduce parking on High Street
Neighbours!!
Small area
Grade II listed puts buyers off at times
Not many shops; drive to station
Busy road
Lack of other businesses particularly opportunities to sell out
We have at least one power outage a month (one day, six)
Too many unnecessary speed restrictions
Poor quality roads causing more expense to motoring
Access to skilled (young) staff
Broadband is poor
Low footfall
Limited parking
Very few other shops to attract people to visit Burwash
Few customers due to lack of interesting businesses
Road noise
Poor road surface
Unsafe parking on pavements
Public access to land
Not enough locals buy my hens' eggs
Lack of connectivity for bridleways
Level of traffic
Litter due to open bins and dog mess
Parking
Potholes in roads
Proposed double yellow lines
No special contact with other businesses
Road
Parking
No shops left

SUGGESTIONS FROM RESPONDENTS ABOUT ACTIONS THAT THE PARISH COUNCIL COULD TAKE TO HELP DEVELOP LOCAL BUSINESSES

In no particular order:

Advertise and promote using local businesses
Help with finding suitable premises
Help with advertising
Possible industrial/business park
Free advertising/notice boards
Online or print business directory
Web site presence for the business
Active promotion
A Co-Operative or Tesco
Widen local business free paper
More house building.
Keep parking free of charge
Improve broadband
Help promote the brand
Recommend us
Manage parking
Encourage new shops/businesses
Promote existing businesses
They have supported our developments - keep doing this please
Low cost housing might help attract staff to the area
Lobby for better broadband and support Wealden Works!
I was hoping you could tell me
Sort out road parking
Police yellow lines
Put in traffic calming system
Make public aware that farms are not recreational parks
Buy my eggs
Continue to make the village beautiful
Introduce some sustainable and eco-aware initiatives to benefit the area and the people
Less street parking
Advertising
6. answers the question
Sort road
Sort parking in car park
Get more business into Burwash
Oppose double yellow lines

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MADE BY RESPONDENTS AT THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In no particular order:

Let Burwash grow. 20-50 new houses per year at least. Some green belt development encouraged within the area - Witherenden Hill.

Thank you for asking us our views. I would really welcome a business network, particularly for sole traders

The average age of my customers is 65. As they age and pass away my turnover declines year on year. On a positive note I am still making a living, unlike so many of the shops that I have seen close in Burwash. I can remember when there were 15 shops plus garages and 4 pubs. Unfortunately, its now a busy road with people passing through in a hurry to get somewhere else.

Burwash is a lovely place. I live on the premises but when I came 26 years ago there were 4 antique shops in the village - now there is just one so there is very little to encourage visitors except the charming church and cottages

It is a good idea that this plan is going ahead. I thank those that are devoting so much time to it. May not see all the result but can rest assured that it will have been necessary. Community and council are not joined up if you don't engage the youth. Let's see them at parish council having a say.

As relative newcomers to the village we are delighted with our new premises and the reception that we have been given by Burwash. My biggest fear is that double yellow lines would drive customers away and result in us having to move on.

Burwash has declined in the last 10 years due to Council letting too much development of old shops become houses and not using and prioritising them. In the past since change of use has been turned down ie. chemists we could do with