

BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Results



As at March 2018, 31 businesses have been consulted in preparation of Somerby Parish Neighbourhood Plan. 18 consultations took place face-to-face, the remainder were submitted by the businesses on paper or electronically including 8 businesses at Burrough Court. Three businesses based just outside the Parish were included either because they were large or because Melton Borough Council had referenced them as evidence of 'employment opportunity' for Somerby village.

There is no comprehensive list or database of businesses in the Parish. Melton Borough Council were unable to assist and such directories or records as exist are not organised on 'parish' lines. This is unsurprising as parish boundaries are not generally significant to the running of a business.

The Household Questionnaire included an option for respondents to request a Business Questionnaire but none exercised this option. However, 72 Household respondents described themselves as 'self- employed' so their views are captured in that questionnaire.

Neighbourhood Plan volunteers therefore approached as many known businesses as reasonably practicable in February-April 2017. It was never expected that we would be able to speak to *every* business in the Parish; the objective was to speak to all the larger employers and obtain a representative sample of the rest.

Thanks are due to all who contributed or responded by whatever route.

Sizes of businesses consulted

There are nationally recognised categories of business size in terms of employment. The following table indicates how many of each size were consulted:

BUSINESS SIZE	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	BUSINESSES CONSULTED
Medium	50 - 249	1
Small	10 - 49	7
Micro	1 - 9	13
Sole trader	0	10


These categorisations are of limited value in the context of a small parish because the bands are very broad. It is also important to recognise that number of employees is not much indication of local employment opportunity. The Household Questionnaire provides better data on how many residents work inside or outside the Parish and how far they travel to work.

Confidentiality and anonymity

The Business Questionnaire was confidential and for this reason the names and nature of the individual businesses are not included here. Also comments made in free text are not attributed to any of them individually. It may be possible to deduce which business some of them are but the reader is advised to exercise caution in trying to do so; 'guesses' will be unreliable – many of these businesses employ considerably more or less people than they were believed to before we actually spoke to them. One reason for this is widespread use of contractors and sub-contractors.

Presentation of results

This could not be done in the same way as for the Household Questionnaire by simply adding up selections and/or converting them to percentages. There are insufficient data points for this approach to have been meaningful and the businesses vary too greatly in size. Any decision to give more or less weight to larger or smaller employers, or to those offering permanent employment rather than using contractors, would be too subjective.

The approach followed was to list all responses in descending order by number of people employed. This order is approximate due to the complications of part-time and sub-contracted work. The three businesses lying just outside the Parish are listed last, coloured 

Results are presented in three parts:

Part 1 Questions 3 - 10.

Part 2 Questions 11 – 17.

PART 1 (Questions 3 – 10)

B U S I N E S S	How many people do you employ?			How much space does your business use?			Home working		How do your customers / clients find your business?							Local Business Directory?
	Full Time	Part Time	Contractors (V=variable)	Land (Hectares)	Buildings (Sq Metres)	Sufficient for? (Years)	Are you a Homeworker?	Need more space in 5 yrs?	Internet	Local contacts	Word of mouth	Passing trade	Local publications	Existing customers	Other (see Part 3)	Would you like to appear in a local business directory?
1	30		V		10k	D/K	N		√					√	√	Y
2	15	1	V	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	15				926	N	N							√		N
4	12				500	N	N		√		√			√	√	N
5	10		V	4.8	25k	5+	N							√	√	N
6	10				1.3k	N	N		√	√			√	√	√	N
7	9		14	120	555	20+	N		√	√	√			√		N
8	9				55	N	N				√			√		N
9	6		4/V	2.8	10k	20+	Y	N	√	√	√	√		√		N
10	4		V	-	-	-	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y
11	3	6		0.2	0.1	20+	N		√	√	√	√		√		N
12	3		5	480	V+	20+	N		√		√	√	√	√	√	Y
13	2		3	10	V	N	Y	Y	√	√	√			√		Y
14	2				h/a	20+	Y	N			√					Y
15	2			0.2	0.1	N	Y	Y	√	√	√	√		√		Y
16	1		4/V	440	V	5+	Y	N			√				√	Y
17	3		3	140	V	N	Y	N	√					√		N
18	1				h/a	20+	Y	N			√			√		N
19		3	V		14	20+	N								√	N
20			2		20	N	N		√		√			√		Y
21		1			100	20+	N			√	√	√	√	√	√	Y
22		1			h/a	20+	Y	N	√	√	√			√		N
23					h/a	N	Y	Y	√	√	√		√	√		Y
24					h/a	20+	Y	N		√	√	√	√			-
25					82	5+	N		√	√	√		√			Y
26					h/a	20+	Y	N			√			√		Y
27					h/a	20+	Y	N	√		√			√		N
28					h/a	20+	Y	N						√		N
29	40	60	V	100	160k	N	N		√		√	√		√	√	Y
30	15		V	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
31	6		8/V	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Observations on Part 1 (Questions 3 – 10) above

- In total these businesses employ about 200 full-time, 70 part-time, and 45 (variable upwards) contractors. The largest single employer is of course Business 29 just outside the Parish. Eight of the businesses are based at Burrough Court employing about 80 people between them. Many more people than that work at Burrough Court (about 200 full-time plus 80 part-time, casual and contractors) but most have little direct connection to the parish or parishioners. Nonetheless the sample of businesses there is large enough to be valid.
- When counting 'contractors' bear in mind several businesses might be referring to some of the same contractors. At least two of the businesses operate only as contractors to others.
- Only two of the businesses listed could accurately be described as 'farms'.
- 10 businesses say their land or premises will probably not be sufficient for the next five years. Some detail is provided in their responses:
 - One is moving to much larger premises in Melton.
 - Two may look to rent larger premises (potentially at Burrough Court).
 - Two intend additional large buildings on land they own (one warehouse, one agricultural).
 - One may buy or rent more grazing land and improve or add to its outbuildings.
 - One wants to build (another) anaerobic digester (approved)
 - One would like to moderately enlarge its car park.
 - One needs a bigger office (to rent).
 - The largest business intends to continue enlarging and building on its present land.
 - One homemaker is finding their home too small for their business
- 14 respondents describe themselves as homeworkers but this doesn't mean they do all their work actually at their homes. 'Homeworking' is to an extent open to interpretation. Two are farmers, one a farming contractor, others are based at home but travel to various locations to complete paid tasks. 6 run a business entirely within their own home. The ones who say they will need more space are included in the previous bullet.
- Asked how customers/clients find the business, the most frequent replies were 'word of mouth' and 'existing customers' followed by 'Internet.' There may be some overlap here – for example, would Facebook be considered 'word of mouth' or 'Internet'? The 8 businesses who selected 'other' can be broken down as follows:
 - Nationwide projects and contracts to industry
 - Stores/outlets nationwide or overseas
 - A commodities market which is nationwide
 - Estate agents
 - Freelance workers abroad

TV advertisement and road-signs
Two did not elaborate.

- 13 businesses said they would like to appear in a local directory. They did not assume that this would be free and enthusiasm might be greater if it was. Perhaps we were not clear.
- Other observations could be made and the reader is encouraged to make them.

PART 2 (Questions 11 – 17)

BUSINESS	What local facilities could be improved or provided which would help your business?								Which of these are important to your business?			Planning Policy	
	Post Office services	Managed services (receptionist etc.)	Meeting facilities for hourly rent	Business hub or cafe	Small office space for short-term rental	Communal workshop area	Storage / lock-up	Other (Free text - see Part 3)	Public transport (bus service)	Attractive appearance landscape & villages	Promoting Tourism (Free text – see Part 3)	Do any aspects of local planning policy limit or cause difficulty for your business?	Policies you would like in the N’hood Plan? (V = Free text comment – see Part 3)
1				√		√	√					N	√
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3				√					√			N	
4				√					√	√		Y	√
5												N	√
6	√							√				N	√
7										√		N	√
8	√											N	
9												N	
10										√		N	
11							√		√	√		N	√
12										√		N	
13		√			√					√		Y	√
14	√	√	√	√	√					√	√	N	√
15				√					√	√	√	N	√
16												N	
17												Y	
18												N	
19								√				N	
20										√		N	

21										√	√	N	√
22				√				√		√	√	N	√
23				√				√		√	√	Y	√
24										√	√	N	
25	√									√		N	
26												Y	√
27												N	√
28												N	
29										√	√	N	√
30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
31	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Observations on Part 2 (Questions 11 – 17) above

- When asked what local facilities could be improved or provided to help their business, there was not very great enthusiasm for any of the suggested options. Most popular selections were 7 for a café or business hub and 4 for an improved postal service. The 5 who selected 'other' will be covered in Part 3 (free text comments).
- Burrough Court provides many services and facilities for its tenants which are very similar to the ones suggested in the Questionnaire. Two businesses pointed this out specifically.
- Some larger businesses do not rely on 'standard' provision of services and but have made (and paid for) their own arrangements. Examples include two private high-capacity broadband connections and use of various commercial post and delivery services.
- Public transport is overall unimportant to Parish businesses but this may reflect the limited service provided by the 113 bus which is insufficient for travelling to and from work. More than 95% of employees at Burrough Court arrive by their own private car and most of the rest car-share. If public transport was more frequent or flexible it might be used more but this is not proven.
- 'Attractive appearance of the rural landscape and villages' is important to half of all the businesses surveyed including the two largest employment sites. Only 5 of these are businesses directly reliant on tourists and visitors (eg. pubs, bed-and-breakfast). For the other 10 the importance is less obvious, to do with clients combining business with a visit to the countryside, employees liking the rural setting, or an environment conducive to knowledge-based or creative work.
- The 8 businesses who said tourism is important to their business were of the expected types (pubs, accommodation, crafts) and probably would not be sustainable at all without support from visitors and tourists. This is particularly true of the pubs and shop.
- Their suggestions for promoting visitors and tourism appear in Part 3. (The Household Questionnaire also contains much material in this regard).
- 5 businesses said aspects of planning policy had caused difficulty for them. 3 said the planning application process was difficult or should be made easier but none had actually had an application refused. One needed more on-street parking, one perceived housing development as a threat to their business.
- 15 suggested policies they would like to see included in the Neighbourhood Plan. These appear in Part 3 below.

PART 3 (Free Text comments, wherever made)

Medium business (50+ employees)

Increase of population over time would help the business because a percentage of new people would become customers. Suggest perhaps 40-50 houses over a period of years.

Preserve the visual attractiveness of the Parish, particularly unspoilt views, as people visit this business partly as a 'day out in the countryside'

Business rates are excessively high.

Small businesses (10 – 49 employees)

Better access for HGVs

Build a footpath from Burrough on the Hill and Twyford to Burrough Court, and a bus stop there

Support and encouragement of renewable energy sources

Permitted development of sustainable business

Mobile banking service (weekly visits)

Small housing developments gradually introduced, with affordable homes for workers who want to live locally

Lower business rates (or at least do not increase them)

Micro-businesses (1 – 9 employees)

Improved mobile phone coverage is required (x4)

Increase availability and/or speed of broadband connections (x2)

Preserve visual attractiveness and peacefulness, rural nature, of the village (for walkers, cyclists, visitors) (x2)

Preserve the open countryside and views. Avoid intrusion of excessive tree-planting and large buildings.

Promote tourism and related activities eg. Bed and breakfast (x2)

Provide more information on facilities, attractions and history for visitors (signage, leaflets, and especially an online site)

Open a café in the Parish

Measures are needed to reduce congestion on Somerby High Street which is in danger of becoming impassable for farm machinery (x2)

More parking space for Somerby High Street (and enforce existing parking restrictions)

More affordable housing in small, non-urban developments

More frequent or better public transport

Build a bus stop at Burrough Court

Support and encourage conversion or change of use of existing outbuildings for eg. Holiday homes or short-term lets

Support and encourage farm diversification

Support and encourage homeworking

Support the expansion of existing businesses

More places like Burrough Court to encourage small and start-up businesses

Make it easier to get planning permission for housing development (theirs was approved)

Discounted business rates

Move with the times, develop the parish for 21st century. Don't try to make it a museum

Sole traders (no employees)

Superfast broadband (x2)

Avoid large housing development, protect rural lifestyle and natural environment

Encourage young families but avoid large developments or rapid population increase

Support tourism and visitor-related business activity

Maintain or improve ready access to attractive countryside and rural activities

Provide a community space in Burrough on the Hill

Establish a business directory

Provide more or better car parking space on Town End, Somerby

Improve the children's play area in Somerby village

Integrate public transport with the rail network

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

The results from the Business Questionnaire cannot readily be converted into totals or percentages. To do so would be misleading due to the greatly varying sizes of the businesses.

Except for the number of people employed, the results are possibly best regarded as qualitative rather than quantitative.

The visual attractiveness of Parish countryside and villages is important to many businesses, and this accords with views expressed in the Household Questionnaire. The same can be said of support for tourism-related activity and enterprise.

The view that more housing would benefit local businesses was rare. This may reflect the fact (evidenced in the Household Questionnaire) that local people are rarely locally employed. The exception is homeworking which is quite strongly represented in the Parish (Census 2011).

Broadband provision is improving as part of a county-wide programme but mobile phone reception is a problem frequently highlighted for which no clear improvement is guaranteed.

Economy Theme Group 14/04/2018