

Newbold Verdon Neighbourhood Plan

Economic Development

Reference ED 9

Report on local businesses that Serve the Parish, November 2017

This report was compiled after contacting all local businesses that serve parishioner. Initially, each business received an invitation to a meeting to discuss what it was like running a business in the parish.

Unfortunately, the response to this invite was very poor and so it was decided that we make appointments to see managers and owners of each business and 16 out of 20 agreed to be interviewed.

The information and views gathered, contributed to the evidence base for Economic Development Policies and Community Actions as well as polices within the Transport chapter.

Newbold Verdon Neighbourhood Plan

Report on local businesses that Serve the Parish November 2017

Introduction

As part of the Group's gathering of information on amenities and their economic and social benefits to the community, the TI&ED group undertook a survey of all businesses in the village that provide a service to parishioners and those from surrounding areas. We identified twenty such businesses (see Appendix A) including three public houses, four fast food outlets, and two food and consumables shops.

Of the twenty approached sixteen responded, two declined and two others did not acknowledge our requests. Those that did were initially invited to a drop-in session but this was poorly attended (only one business) so we visited each establishment personally and either left questionnaires with them (see Appendix B) to be collected at a later date or we interviewed the owners and completed the questionnaire in their presence.

Rationale

In the Hinckley and Bosworth Local Development Plan Newbold Verdon is identified as a Key Rural Centre: a place providing a range of services and amenities for not only the parish but for nearby parishes. The village actually has a range of shops and services not found in such numbers in all but the larger villages of the District. HBBC are committed to supporting these centres and their amenities, as are the parish council in Newbold Verdon. They bring not only money into the local economy but help maintain a vibrant community. A community with these facilities is attractive to those looking to move into the area and encourages people to stay.

Objectives

We wanted to find out the following:

- What was it like trying to run businesses of this type within the parish?
- How many people were employed and where did they live?
- What infrastructure and other related issues supported or undermined the success of the businesses?
- Could owners suggest ways in which their business could be helped to flourish?
- What kinds of contribution did the businesses provide for the parish, irrespective of the service and goods already supplied?
- How could the parish and businesses work together?

What was it like trying to run businesses of this type within the parish?

Whether a business had been established for many years or just a few weeks, the unanimous response from owners was that the Parish was a very welcoming place in which to run a business. One of our longest standing shop owners summed up the experience of all with the following observation.

'There is a good heart to the parish and the people are very friendly.'

Owners also welcomed the fact that there were other shops and services which brought people into the village and past their shops, though several did request a sign be erected along the B582, advertising what businesses were available to passing traffic.

How many people were employed and where did they live?

From the sixteen businesses that responded we were able to calculate upwards of ninety people being employed, many of them part-time. Sixty-eight of the ninety lived in the village and twenty-two from nearby villages and towns. Most employed between 2 and 5 employees, whilst the Co-op had twenty-two employees and The Windmill twenty-five. The Windmill also pointed out that 70% of the staff was aged between 15 and 20: the work providing for most an introduction to the commercial world.

This ninety, coupled with an approximate conservative estimate of 10 from the four shops not responding, reveals a significant number of job opportunities for the near 70% of parishioners.

What infrastructure and other related issues supported or undermined their business' success?

Below is a table recording the aggregated responses to the request to rate how each of the following infrastructure and related issues affected their business negatively and to what degree.

Please note: Numbers do not always add up to 16 because some elements (eg Gas supply) were not always applicable

	Rarely	Occasionally	Often
Electricity supply	13	3	
Water supply/pressure	16		
Drainage or sewage	11	3	2
Gas supply	8	1	1
Mobile reception	1	4	11
Internet speed and reliability	4	4	7
Parking space for employees	9	4	3
Public transport for employees	6	1	3
Parking for customers	4	7	5
Ease of travel for customers into the village	8	2	3

The main utilities of electricity, water and gas appear to cause few issues for the businesses; the one exception being sewage and drains where three owners complained of occasional problems and two of regular difficulties. In some of these cases the problems stemmed from the premises themselves rather than an infrastructural fault in the systems. The same could not be said for mobile reception and internet speed and reliability.

Mobile reception was almost universally acknowledged as at best patchy and at worst non-existent. Owners had tried changing companies but this did not seem to make any difference. Internet connectivity and speed was a little more reliable but it still impacted adversely on eleven of the sixteen businesses. In these times of great reliance on quick and easy forms of communication, for businesses to be able to function efficiently this is a very worrying outcome. For example, shop keepers complained of the poor internet connection affecting their ability to place or chase orders. Sellars' Funeral Directors struggled at times to contact the office at Newbold. And whilst they had

found ways to work around the problem this was an unnecessary and unwelcome obstruction in their desire to support clients.

Parking for employees was not a problem for the majority of businesses and only an occasional problem for a further four. Those who did site it as a serious issue (The Swan, Village Care, Co-op) did so because of where the business was situated in the village. In the case of the Co-op, it may also have been because they had limited space for customers to park, which then put pressure on spaces for employees. Perhaps a more significant issue is the parking for customers, where twelve of the sixteen businesses had problems. The fact that 7 businesses found this an occasional issue probably reflects the ebb and flow of customers within a day or week. Nevertheless, there is a potential here for it to put off people using the services if they are not able to park safely and conveniently.

Outside the Co-op parking is not just an inconvenience, it is also posing a danger to vehicles and pedestrians. During the course of this survey there was a three week gap between delivering the survey and then interviewing the Co-op manager. Within this time there had been three accidents involving vehicles backing off the car park and into parked cars across the road. The manager assured us that whilst this was an exceptional three weeks, it was a common occurrence throughout the year.

Public transport did not always make it easy for customers to use certain shops and amenities. The lack of a Sunday service was mentioned on two occasions, but it was mainly the loss of later bus services and the limited service to Barlestone and Market Bosworth that caused some concern, especially when it came to employee access. These findings echo those found in the bus passenger survey, and whilst they may only affect a few people (customers or employees) for them a limited service impacts on the access to amenities or even to employment.

Could owners suggest ways in which their business could be helped to flourish?

Answers to this question ranged very widely but there were several constant themes:

- Improve internet and mobile services;
- Help highlight that our businesses are here;
- Support the improvement of car parking for customers;
- Improve the rather tardy look of some parts of the shopping areas of the village to make it a more attractive place in which to shop.

Several owners complained of business rates being too high and the red tape that came with running a business, but solutions to these types of problems are beyond the remit of a neighbourhood plan. There is however common ground that businesses can expect support from the parish and district and in turn they can perhaps do more themselves.

- Improving the look of parts of the village

In the very first engagements with the public the tidiness and general look of some parts of the village was mentioned by many. This offers an opportunity for all interested parties to meet and discuss what can be done in the short, medium and long term.

- Maintain regular links between the businesses and parish council

Two contributors suggested a local chamber of commerce, or something similar, to help maintain more systematic links between businesses and where they could speak with parish and district council representatives on ways of maintaining and improving services to the public. Some of these links already exist, Sellars the Funeral Directors praised the excellent working relationship they had with the Parish Council.

- Maintaining and improving links with the community.

In answer to the question, 'How else do you support the parish?' business owners provided a very impressive list of ways in which they went beyond the provision of their own goods and services. Donations to raffles were the most common form of community support but there were examples of major sponsorship in the form of financial donations. The free use of facilities either to run functions or to act as a focal point for the selling of event tickets, charitable goods and in one case the creation of Santa's Grotto, are testament to the generosity of our businesses. Some have gone even further and there are examples of businesses providing staff support for the disabled and the more vulnerable members of our community.