

Somerby Parish Neighbourhood Plan Business Questionnaire Results May 2018



In 2017, 31 businesses were consulted in preparation of Somerby Parish Neighbourhood Plan. 18 consultations took place face-to-face, the remainder being by 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. Such directories or records as exist are not organised on 'parish' lines.

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 as many known businesses as reasonably practicable in February-April 2017. It was not attempted 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.

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 categories are of limited value in the context of a small parish because the bands are so wide. 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.

Businesses responding to the Questionnaire were:

Artistic Industries Ltd
Burrough Court Estate
Dynamic
Gemini Stud
Grants Free House
H N Barnes and Son
H & W Wines Ltd

Belmont Farms
Driven
Edwards childminding
Gates's Garden Centre & Restaurant
Hi-Fi Racks
House of Paws
James Massman Ltd

John o' Gaunt Rural Industries
Little Shop of Loveliness (Somerby shop)
Melton Meat Ltd
Nesbit Bros Coaches Ltd
Paul Ford Tree Surgery
Redd Retail Group (John-o-Gaunt)
Rural Energy Ltd
Stilton Cheese Pub (Somerby)
Western Front pilgrim tours

Larson Howie
Maryland Farms / A & R Cramphorns
Monsoon Books
Old Stables B & B
R A Barnes and Son (farm)
Rose Cottage B & B
Somerby Basketry
Ward's window cleaning

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

The Business Questionnaire was confidential and for this reason the businesses are numbered not named in the results tables. 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 that 'guesses' based on number of employees will be unreliable; many of these businesses employ considerably less or more or people than was generally believed before we asked them. One reason for this is widespread use of contractors and sub-contractors.

PRESENTATION OF RESPONSES

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. Equally any decision to give more or less weight to larger or smaller employers would have been arbitrary.

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 pink.

Results are presented in three parts:

Part 1 Questions 3 - 10

Part 2 Questions 11 – 17

Part 3 Free text comments wherever in the questionnaire they were made.

A **short methodology** statement follows the results.

PART 1 (Questions 3 – 10)

	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?
B U S I N E S S	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 and do not employ them. 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.
- Three of the businesses listed could accurately be described as 'farms'.
- 10 businesses say their premises or (more rarely) land 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 on its existing land.
 - 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 have been greater if it was.

PART 2 (Questions 11 – 17)

	What local facilities could be improved or provided which would help your business?								Which of these are important to your business?			Planning Policy	
B U S I N E S S	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 Can offer 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 nearly all 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 (Single free-text comments)

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 is needed 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'

'Would benefit from weekly visits by a mobile banking service'

'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)

4 x 'Improved mobile phone coverage is required'

2 x 'Increase availability and/or speed of broadband connections'

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

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

2 x 'Promote tourism and related activities eg. Bed and breakfast'

2 x 'Measures are needed to reduce congestion on Somerby High Street which is in danger of becoming impassable for farm machinery'

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

'Open a café in the Parish'

'More parking space is needed for Somerby High Street and existing parking restrictions should be enforced'

'More affordable housing in small, non-urban developments'

'More frequent and 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'
- 'Discounted business rates are needed'
- 'Move with the times, develop the parish for 21st century. Don't try to make it a museum'.

Sole traders (no employees)

- 2 x 'Increase/improve Superfast broadband'
- '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 half of 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 rapidly as part of a County-wide programme but mobile phone reception is a problem frequently highlighted to which improvement is more sporadic.

Business Questionnaire – methodology

Designing the Business Questionnaire

Questions were designed and selected based on the following:

- Analysis of the open day of 18th June 2016, to include the headings and issues raised by parishioners there, which included several local business people.
- Recognition that considerable variation in the size and activity of businesses necessitated flexibility and plenty of open questions and opportunities for free text.
- Suggestions and discussions at the Economy Theme Groups, which were then fed into the Advisory Committee.
- Suggestions, discussion and selection over the course of three public Advisory Committee meetings at which the business questionnaire was a formal agenda item.
- Opinions of business people represented on those committees.
- The professional advice of *Yourlocale*.

In this way 17 questions plus a section for ‘any other comments’ were agreed at a meeting of the Advisory Committee on 15th November 2016.

Identification of businesses

During November 2016 the following organisations were approached to try to systematically identify all (or as many as possible) businesses in Somerby Parish:

Companies House, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Melton branch of Business International, Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce and Melton Borough Council Economic Development Team. Although helpful to varying degrees, none of these were capable of providing anything like a definitive list. There are several reasons for this:

- None of the organisations need or are required to break down data by parish.
- It is not usually important to a business what parish they are in.
- What constitutes a ‘business’ is not necessarily the same for different purposes or to different organisations. For example, almost any activity for profit will be a ‘business’ for HMRC self-assessment purposes but will not necessarily be registered as company. Many sole traders, self-employed people and homeworkers are one but not the other.
- Some businesses have an office or even only a ‘virtual office’ in the Parish but carry out no visible activity or employment here.

Businesses for consultation therefore had to be identified by other methods. These consisted of:

- Applying local knowledge. The presence of businesses with large premises, clear signage or a significant number of employees was obvious. These were listed and any other businesses known to Planning Group members added to the list.
- The Household Questionnaire signposted the Business Questionnaire to anyone wanting to complete it.
- Availability of the Business Questionnaire was advertised in the Parish magazine and on the parish website.

- The Household Questionnaire received responses from 72 self-employed people, 55 running a business in the parish and at least 17 homeworkers (these people overlap of course). This represents significant capture of the views of ‘business people’ and was considered alongside the actual Business Questionnaire in preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Conduct of the Business Questionnaire

The above methods produced almost no approaches from businesses positively wanting to complete a questionnaire. Rather it proved necessary for Theme Group members to approach them directly and invite them to. Business people on the Theme Groups and *Yourlocale* had expected this to be necessary and it proved much more effective.

From January to April 2017, 37 businesses were approached and 31 completed the Business Questionnaire.

18 questionnaires were completed in face-to-face interviews with either the owner, a director or their duly authorised delegate. Interviewers were briefed to respect business confidentiality during and after the interviews. 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 previously referenced them as evidence of employment opportunity for Somerby village.

It is accepted that we have not consulted or even identified *every* business and self-employed person in Somerby Parish. However we are confident that we have consulted all those permanently employing 10 or more people and a representative sample of the rest.

Collation and analysis of results

Completed Business Questionnaires were collected and retained by the Chair of the Economy Theme Group. Responses were collated by hand by two of its members including the Chair and were fully known by July 2017. These were used to inform the draft policies put forward to the Advisory Committee. In order to preserve the business confidentiality promised on the questionnaire, statistical findings were discussed at public meetings but individual responses were not.

In April 2018 an anonymised document ‘Results – Business Questionnaire’ (now **Appendix 2J**) was finalised and circulated to all Advisory Committee and Parish Council members but no further as a person with local knowledge might still have been able to identify some respondents by deduction. The relevant business are numbered 1 – 31.

The original completed Business Questionnaires and an index identifying the businesses by name have been retained and are available for inspection if required.