

BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT (2000 words)

The Business & Employment working group used the findings from the household questionnaires, comments from the two Parish Plan Open Days, and also undertook face-to-face consultations with a cross-section of employers based in business premises, and a cross-section of local business people working from home.

Findings

Employment

- 62% of adults are employed or self-employed
- 19% work in Woodcote
- 13% use their home as their main place of employment

Business:

- Woodcote shops face competition from superstores
- Growing need for services such as house repairs and maintenance
- Untapped tourism potential

Employment in Woodcote

62% of adults are employed or self-employed, 4% are in training or education, 6% not working, 7% at home, and 21% retired. People were not directly asked, but in the present economic climate it is unlikely that there is any significant unemployment which was very low (0.6%) in the last Village Appraisal in 2000. 'Not working' or 'At home' may apply to a variety of situations including looking after young children or where one partner works and the other is at home.

Percentage employment shows a drop from the last Village Appraisal in 2000, when 70% of those who filled in the questionnaires were employed or self-employed and may reflect the ageing population. 76% of adults are now over 40, compared with 69% in 2000 and 60% in 1991. Of those in employment, 78% are employed and 22% self-employed. 68% work full-time, and 32% part-time.

19% say their main place of work is in Woodcote and 23% work in other Oxfordshire locations, 22% travel to Reading, 9% to other Berkshire locations, 3% work in Hampshire and Surrey, 8% in London and 16% elsewhere (including Buckinghamshire/High Wycombe). 13% use their home as their main place of work, up from 10% at the last Village Appraisal in 2000. This follows national trends and has been helped by the advent of Broadband in the village. Residents working from home include those engaged in trades and services, IT workers, consultants, as well as employees of the public, private and the 'not for profit' sector who are based at home.

75% of local people working in Woodcote are in the education or service sector. 42% work in Services, 33% in Education, 8% in Retail, 8% in Health, 6% in Manufacturing and 3% in Childcare.

Youth employment

Results from the youth questionnaires show a similar picture to the 2000 Village Appraisal. 95% of 11-18 year olds are in full-time education, slightly up from 93% at the 2000 Village Appraisal, 8 are in full-time employment and 1 person is employed as an apprentice. 31 have part time jobs. Opportunities for part-time work in the village for young people still in education include newspaper rounds and working in retail outlets.

Business in Woodcote

Woodcote has a good range of shops and services, but inevitably local shops say they are facing competition from the big stores in nearby towns. We need to support our local shops and services, or we will lose them.

Of the businesses we consulted, most say the current services available in Woodcote are adequate for their needs and that they are happy to be working in Woodcote, especially those who also live in the village. The business units at Wards Farm and at Church Farm are highly valued.

The Post Office is also highly valued by businesses and those working from home, for both postal and banking services.

Businesses and their employees also value the fact that food for lunch breaks and evening working can be bought locally.

The lack of a petrol station within 7 miles does not seem to present a problem as business people in Woodcote buy their petrol when they are out and about.

Local businesses provide significant opportunities for employing Woodcote people, although they often have to look beyond Woodcote for people with particular skills. Several businesses, especially those based in the Industrial Units, said that more places could be made available for good quality apprentices.

There is little change from the 2000 Village Appraisal in the number of businesses located in Woodcote (36 in business premises) and The Oratory School is still the major employer. The statistics for all businesses which took part in the consultation, show that 46% of employees are from Woodcote.

Of the Church Farm/Wards Farm businesses, 50% of employees are from the village and 50% from elsewhere. The number of employees from outside the village is higher at Wards Farm than Church Farm, where there are slightly more from than half from the village.

Many Woodcote businesses say their market is not Woodcote, and some cover an area of 20 miles, others cover Southern England. Of the businesses we consulted, 50% stated that their business relied on custom from local people. The other 50% said their market was further afield or even national.

We asked people which new businesses they would support being developed in the village. The responses were as follows:

Bed & Breakfast

367

Tourism

131

Plumbing	300	Financial	135
Electrical	286	Legal	128
Carpentry	284	Building	109

53 residents and business people specified that they would support a take-away, 46 would like a chemist or pharmacy, 30 would like freshly baked bread, 23 would like fresh fruit and vegetables and 7 suggested a hairdresser. The Somerfield store is highly valued, but many residents commented on the restricted space within the store. The Manager of Somerfield is well aware of this. People were generally against the development of new shops, and would prefer mobile services.

Although local businesses already provide many of the above services, people are either unaware of them, or they feel the current businesses have insufficient capacity to meet village needs. For instance, Green's the Butchers of Pangbourne, deliver free of charge to Woodcote on Fridays, a baker delivers Tuesdays and Fridays, a fishmonger delivers, and a Dairy Crest milkman. Home deliveries will be listed in the updated Village Directory.

A Butcher or Greengrocer's shop is unlikely to be viable as so many of the residents of Woodcote work outside the village and do their shopping near their place of work or on their way home. Both working families and active retired people often find it more convenient and time effective to do a weekly shop at one of the big supermarkets.

There is a particular demand for household maintenance services as the village has an ageing housing stock and an ageing population. There may be opportunities for existing businesses through better local marketing or expanding their capacity, or for additional businesses to be set up. The most effective way of publicising these services is still through the Correspondent, and local businesses should be encouraged to advertise regularly.

With regard to possible new housing development expanding the local market, this depends entirely on the type of business. For instance plumbers/electricians may not see increased business as the houses would be new and need little work in the early years. For businesses such as carpet fitters and those offering MOT/car servicing and the village shops, there may be an increase in business.

Woodcote is in the Thames Valley area and the Chilterns, and is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is therefore scope for the development of businesses connected with tourism, which is at present untapped.

PROPOSALS

Aim: Encourage residents to use local shops where possible

Action: Inform residents of the need to support their local shops, or risk losing them.

Owner	Suggested Partner	Timescale	Cost	Priority
D Jones	Awareness will be raised through	Spring	None	High

	publication of Parish Plan	2008		
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Aim: Encourage the growth of local services

Action: Provide information on existing services by encouraging local businesses to advertise regularly in the Correspondent and to inform enterprising residents of the market potential for new services.

Owner	Suggested Partner	Timescale	Cost	Priority
D Jones	Correspondent/Woodcote Welcome Pack	Spring 2008	None	Medium

Aim: Encourage the growth of tourism in Woodcote

Action: Inform residents of the business potential through the Parish Plan.

Owner	Suggested Partner	Timescale	Cost	Priority
D Jones	Awareness will be raised through publication of Parish Plan	Spring 2008	None	Low

Background papers:

1. Full list of businesses in Woodcote.

This includes all major businesses in business premises, and some businesses operated from home. It was not possible to identify businesses operated from home, unless they advertised locally.

2. Relevant statistics from Household/Personal/Youth Questionnaires

3. Forms from consultations with businesses.

4. Figures from 2000 Village Appraisal.

Many of the questions asked were different to those asked in 2006, so comparison is difficult.