

LAMBERHURST PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN



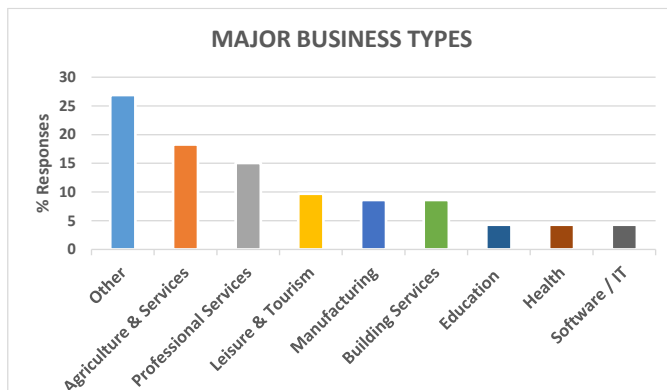
FINDINGS OF LAMBERHURST BUSINESS SURVEY

Introduction

The Business sub-group identified over 90 businesses in the parish of Lamberhurst. This database excluded individuals home-working on a full or part-time basis for organisations outside the parish. The businesses were approached over a period of weeks on an individual basis and invited to complete the 'Lamberhurst Business and Commercial Survey' on-line (wherever possible). A total of 59 surveys were completed, a small number of which were partially completed by members of the sub-group based on information gleaned through informal interviews.

Types of Business

The mix of businesses in the parish is very diverse as illustrated in the following table:



Business Location.

Businesses are distributed widely around the parish with over 1/3 (35 in total) located in buildings previously used for agricultural purposes. These 35 businesses are located on 9 sites around the parish most in excess of a mile from the village centre. Of those who responded to the survey, a further 19 businesses were outside the village curtilage and only 12 within the village itself.

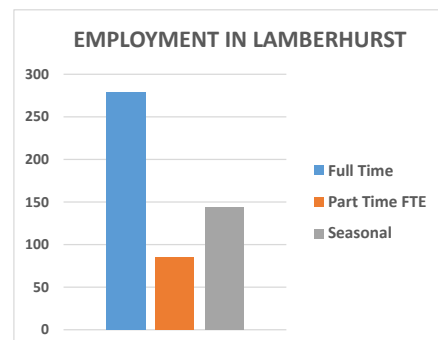
Employment

The best estimate of employment in the parish is 414 full time and part time (FTE) employees. There are an additional (estimated) 144 seasonal workers.

Amongst those who completed the survey the largest employer had 44 employees on an FTE basis and there were 13 businesses with more than 10 employees on an FTE basis. There were 18 businesses with only 1 employee.

Over 30% of respondents said they expected to increase numbers employed over the next 5 years.

Respondents were asked whether or not their employees lived in the parish. In the case of full time employees, 20% lived in the parish; for part-time employees the proportion rose to over 30%.



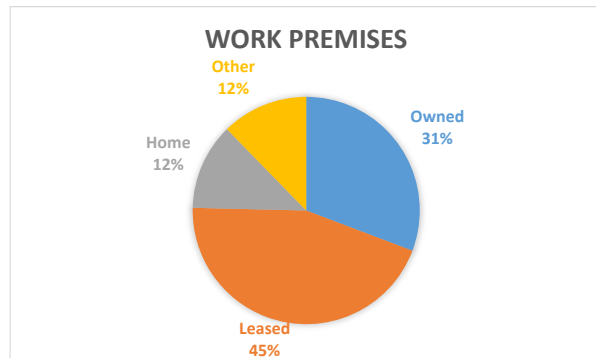
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Business Property Arrangements

About 50% of respondents owned their property including 14% who ran their businesses from home.

This proportion matched almost exactly the number of respondents who gave 'because I lived in the parish' as the reason why they located in the parish.

The other 50% mostly leased or rented property from a landlord. The 3 key reasons these respondents gave for locating in the parish were availability of suitable premises, cost of rent, and good parking facilities



Respondents were asked (on a multiple choice basis) what type of development sites

(for businesses) should be included in the Neighbourhood Development Plan. There was very little demand for a new dedicated business park (11%). The respondents wanted to see the conversion of existing agricultural buildings (66%); development on brownfield sites (70%); and change of existing use (63%).

Business Infrastructure

Mobile Communications.

There was an overwhelming view (90%+) that it was important to improve broadband and mobile communications.

Whilst the centre of the village has acceptable access to broadband in most cases, many of the outlying business locations have serious issues.

Mobile communications are generally very poor throughout most of the parish.

Transport Links

50% of respondents thought it was important to have improved (public) transport links.

Housing

25% of respondents believed better availability of housing for employees was important.

Local Business Directory

There was strong support (> 35%) for the creation of a Local Business Directory.

Conclusions.

The scale of business and other workplace activity (i.e. including education and health) in the Parish of Lamberhurst is much greater than it appears at first sight. This is because many of the outlying farmsteads have converted former farm buildings to property suitable for renting for commercial purposes. Many of these sites provide an agreeable working environment with good parking and competitive rents. Whilst a number of commercial activities are (not surprisingly) agri-related, there is a very broad range of business types many in the service sector but including some manufacturing. There is some demand from existing employers for more space but it seems likely that any incremental business property expansion would quickly attract demand from new businesses. The main negative issue for businesses is the quality of broadband and mobile communications. This is already problematic for a number of existing business and will, unless addressed with some urgency, potentially cause some existing businesses to leave the parish.