

SOMPTING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

STATE OF THE PARISH ASSESSMENT

ISSUES ARISING FROM SURVEY EXERCISE: Businesses / employment / retail

The survey requested responses on these sections on pages 24 to 32 in the AIRS report with detailed responses reported on pages 88 to 94 of the appendices.

Would you like to see more – employment opportunities in Sompting the responses showed a large proportion indicating “yes”. On reading the detailed comments, it is shown there is a shortage of employment for the young with a mixture of retail, blue collar and agriculture being the basis of the opportunities listed. However, many respondents pointed out that due to the size and type of retail available in Sompting this choice of employment would be very limited. The requirement for training opportunities appeared often although referring to the question 29 later in the document.

Issues

There is a lack of employment opportunities in Sompting, these being in Worthing, Brighton and Hove and possibly in Shoreham. Although retail was listed unless new facilities are created this type of employment is very limited. This situation will be more obvious if housing development is completed at a large scale.

One of the issues therefore for the Neighbourhood Plan is whether the Plan should concentrate on having a policy that encourages the development or expansion of employment opportunities by working with Adur District Council and West Sussex County Council but located at the existing locations such as Lancing Business Park and Rectory Road Industrial estate.

Would you like to see more shops and retail facilities in Sompting.

Half of the responses stated - yes. This could reflect the responses above and those in response to question 23 on what type of employment in Sompting. On questioning what type of retail for Sompting, the group that had the highest responses was for traditional fresh local trade provision possibly evoking the “Sompting village” concept. However, there was quite a good request for larger retail facilities in Sompting in the appendices – mainly for the lack of employment opportunities issue.

It is understandable that the respondents would like to see more shops in Sompting especially as there is a large aged population. The style of shops currently provided is termed “parade” and that reflects the size of Sompting and perhaps the resident’s shopping habits. Traditional local shops say for bakers, butchers, greengrocers appear to be required but due to the closeness of Lancing and Lyons Farm Retail Park it is questioned whether this style of shop provision would be sustainable especially on their own without the other shops giving the consumer the opportunity

to shop at one location . The diversity of existing provision is limited with the Co-Op taking the largest space in two of the four parades. It is also noted that commercial provision in some of the shop units has occurred which unless these are sited at a different location, has removed any food shopping provision improvement opportunity.

The Parish Council has noted that through the planning applications process there has been several “change of use” submissions to “hot food take-away” facilities which is of concern as it reduces the diversity of the shopping provision to encourage residents to shop locally. Also noted is the time taken for empty shops to be reopened which again makes the shopping areas unattractive to shoppers.

Issues for the Neighbourhood Plan are:

Depending where new housing development occurs, should the Plan demand that new shopping facilities are within the development which would satisfy the local shop desire and a policy made to secure that provision.

Should the Plan produce a policy to manage the number of take-away establishments within the parades and to secure the use of empty shop units for say community run shops (not charity but traditional) and should the Parish Council assist in the ventures.

Since there are a number of commercial units within the parades, should the Plan have a policy on re-siting these to a better location, such as small units at Rectory Road Ind Estate and substitute the use of those shop units for the more traditional.

What will make you shop more locally in Sompting

The question concentrated on parking at the shopping areas and the attractiveness of the shop fronts. Nearly 70% of respondents stated Yes for better parking and free parking in the shopping areas. This response should be questioned since currently all parking around the shopping areas is already free and the areas have lay-by parking by the shops albeit one is limited parking. The question is perhaps whether there is enough of this provision and where.

The Parish Council is aware that the shop fronts would benefit from improvement as would the shopping areas and 50% of respondents agree.

Issues for the Neighbourhood Plan are:

Where new shopping facilities are provided there is enough free and short period limited parking at that location either on or off street to encourage local shopping and should it have policies to ensure this occurs.

Should the Plan indicate that only free albeit limited in certain locations is acceptable at existing shopping areas

The existing areas are tired and need to be revitalised. A question could be whether the Plan should include a “design” for the shop front and the immediate area outside the shops for new provision and encourage a working partnership with existing shop keepers and Councils to improve existing parades.

Do you run a business from home and if you do, what factors would benefit you

The responses to these two questions indicate that only 7% run a business from home with an improved broadband speed and mobile reception being the top response by those who do work from home. Low cost premises and shared work/office space with wi-fi coming second and third.

West Sussex County Council is currently running a campaign for improved broadband across the county and the Plan should support that campaign.

On the issue of premises, these are limited if not non-existent in Sompting and unless support is given to this issue by Central Government, banks etc and small units provided it is doubtful whether the Plan should include this issue other than simply supporting and encouraging this provision when possible and in suitable areas.

Issues for the Neighbourhood Plan are:

Should the Neighbourhood Plan identify suitable locations for small units to be used by residents instead of working at home and what other role other than pure support can it offer through its policies. The group should recognise against the number of residents, the number of people affected is small.

Should the Plan include policies on the change of use of the units in the Rectory Farm Ind Estate from commercial to small business units.

How many people in your household hold any of the following qualifications and would anyone in the household wish to undertake new training or gain new skills

The table for question 28 page 31 of the report shows that the majority of households have one person having a qualification ranging from O levels to Degree. This and perhaps the aged population could reflect the lack of enthusiasm to undertake new training. 75% of respondents stating that they would not undertake new training.

Issues for the Neighbourhood Plan are:

From the responses above does the Plan need to address this issue.

Comment

The responses received on business / retail / employment issues have raised a number of matters for focussing work on the Neighbourhood Plan. However, a lot of the responses cannot be managed through this Plan alone and thus if included should be as a general support policy working with other organisations.