

▶ Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan Report on Woolpit Businesses

Initial Questionnaire Results

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Initial Questionnaire Results

Terms of Reference

In early 2016 prior to the creation of the Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) Steering Group, there were several groups of volunteers created to concentrate on how to consult various stakeholders in Woolpit. One of these groups focused on how to make the initial contact with businesses in Woolpit to advertise the creation of the WNP, request contact details and see if any businesses wanted to put forward individuals to stand on the Steering Group.

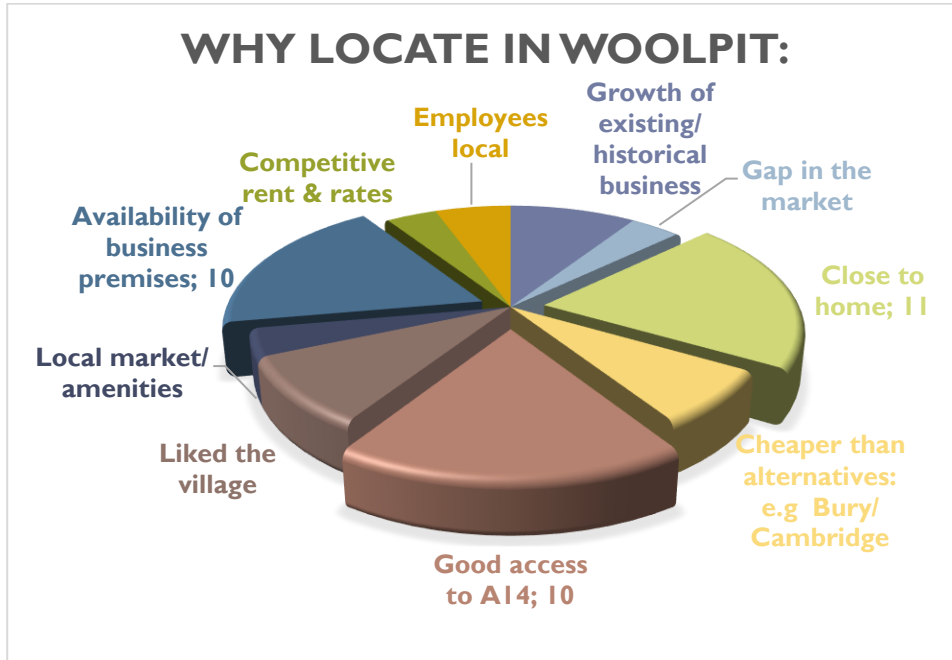
A list of known businesses located in Woolpit was collated and a standard letter/email to send out to businesses was drafted. The initial list consisted of 86 businesses of various types and sizes and attempts were made in February and March 2016 to make contact and gain a rough guide as to which businesses were happy to be contacted again in the future.

After the official designation of the WNP in May 2016, the data previously gathered was reviewed and a list of 54 businesses was created, selected on the basis of known information regarding their size and relative importance to the village economy.

Over the following months 5 volunteers carried out face to face interviews with the representatives of the 37 businesses who agreed to talk to us. Each answered a standard set of 15 questions that were designed to gather information on their reasons for locating within Woolpit, business statistics and their opinions regarding the future development of Woolpit. This report is based on the responses we received and provides an overall picture without identifying those businesses individually, maintaining confidentiality where necessary.

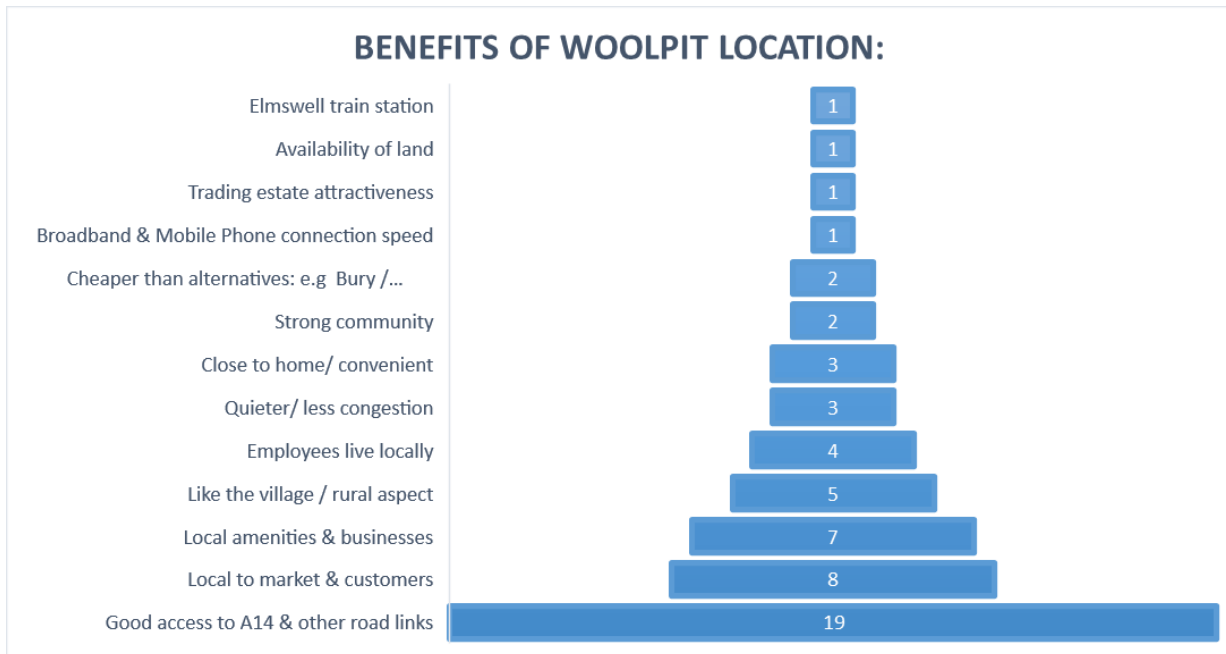
Questionnaire Responses

Q1. What attracted your business to Woolpit initially?



Q2. What are the benefits of being located in Woolpit, what does it bring to your business?

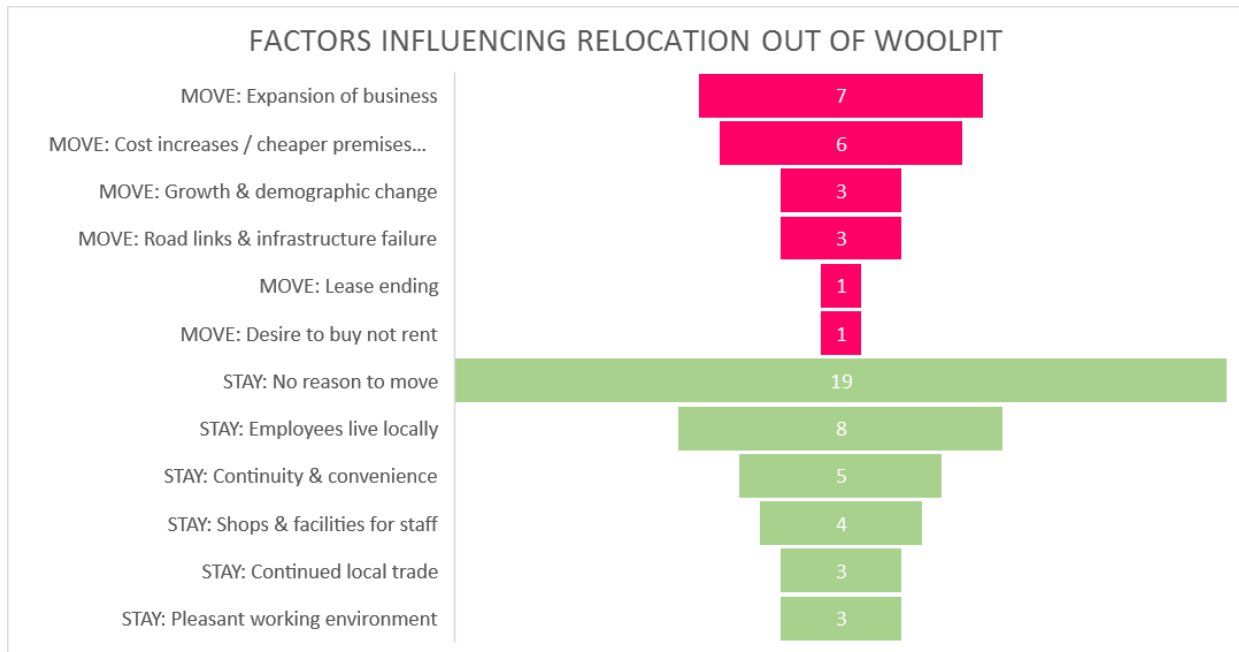
There were similarities in these answers to Q1 but enough differences to be shown separately here.



Q3. What factors would influence the decision of your business to remain in Woolpit?

Q4. What factors would influence the decision of your business to relocate away from Woolpit?

The responses to both questions were combined to give a fuller picture of the influences that would determine whether or not a business already located in Woolpit remained sited in the village. 51% of the businesses questioned had no current reason to move location.

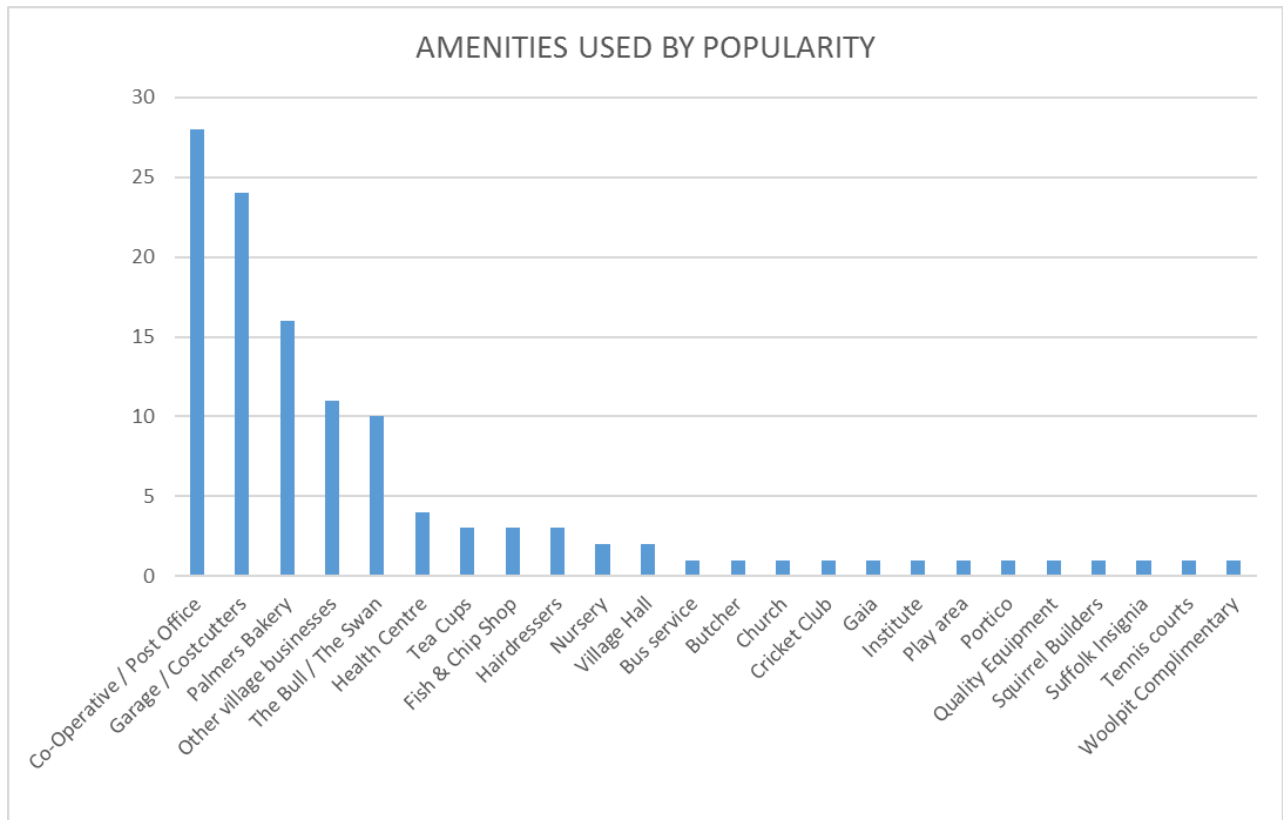


Q5. What village amenities does your business currently use?

The answers often included not just the amenities the business used but also more frequently the amenities that staff used.

Due to their combined locations and activities it was difficult to separate out the use of the Post Office and the Co-Op as well as the Garage and Costcutters so the results for these were combined in each case.

The responses shown under 'Other village businesses' were non-specific replies.



Q6. What other businesses would you like to see in Woolpit?

These responses were obviously dependent on the type of business that answered the question and sometimes were the views of an individual. No opinion was repeated more than once.

- Precision engineering
- Cleaning
- An interior design company
- General design company
- Small independent stores
- Boutique - nice, original clothing
- Ironmongery as a section of larger shop
- Deli counter
- Greengrocer
- Bank
- More businesses, more people - especially young people

Others were happy with the current situation:

- Got a nice selection at the moment
- No! Bury is close enough for needs

Q7. If you own land in the village do you have plans for future development?

There were 10 businesses that own land in the village, of these 4 are willing to discuss their plans for development.

Q8. How many people are employed at your Woolpit premises currently?

The businesses questioned employ over 1100 people, the vast majority in full-time roles. The businesses also support over 50 self-employed contractors. The majority (73%) of businesses employ between 6 and 25 people.

No. Businesses	No. Employees per Business
5	1-5
15	6-10
12	11-25
3	26-50
1	51-100
0	101-200
2	200+

Q9. How do you project your staffing needs (in Woolpit) changing over time?

Half the respondents said that there would be no change to their staffing needs. The other half said that they would be increasing their staff.

The largest employer with over 400 staff currently, Brookfield Utilities, also predicts the largest increase in staff numbers of 270 in the next 5 years and 2-300 in the following 5 years.

Q10. What are the barriers to growth of your business in Woolpit?

40% of businesses felt that there were either no barriers to growth or they did not expect to grow their businesses any further.

Barrier to Growth	No. of Businesses
None	15
Current capacity /space	11
External to Woolpit factors	4
Lack of land	2
Parish council	2
Car parking spaces	2
Planning policy	1
Listing	1
Competition	1
Ability to locally recruit	1
	40

Q11. Are there any specific improvements in the village transport links you would like to see? E.g. Cycling, public transport, footpath & parking in particular locations.

Opinions varied widely, they have been analysed by topic and the number of respondents in agreement with a point added in brackets. The text in brackets afterwards is one suggestion made to resolve the issue, not the choice of all respondents. Please also refer to the similar responses to Question 15.

Old Stowmarket Road

- Poor quality of road
- Less/No parking on the road (5) (double yellows)
- Improved junction with Heath Road (4) (roundabout)

Transport Links

- Buses
 - Elmswell/Norton bus route in working hours
 - Public transport links not exploited enough, especially between villages
 - More buses & routes, (8) (early am) (late pm) (incl Borley Green) (to Elmswell station)
 - Better public transport
 - Buses are good, lots of clients come from Elmswell therefore keep as they are
 - Install shelters at bus stops
- Cycling
 - Cycle route to Elmswell train station
 - Cycling is fine (2)
 - Cycling to work is hazardous so improving cycle routes might help
- Roads
 - Road infrastructure is a concern already and further cars from new housing increases concern
 - Concerned about access for agricultural equipment
 - A14 concrete vibration
- Footpaths
 - Improve/extend/widen footpaths in village (4)
 - Footpath access from garage to village
 - Footpath access past and beyond Ladyswell

Village Centre

- Congestion through village centre (2)
- Extension of car park (3)
- Improvement/more of car parking (9)
- One-way road system or pedestrianisation

Miscellaneous

- Get rid of neighbourhood speed cameras
- Improved parking on business parks/industrial sites
- No room for village to grow
- There is no street lighting in Borley Green
- All pretty good/OK (2)
- Speed limits if adhered to should be safe

Q12. Which sustainable projects would you like to see as part of our neighbourhood plan?

PROJECT	No. of Suggestions
Solar	5
Wind turbines	4

Energy recycling/renewables	3
Sustainable homes	2
Community food waste	2
Rainwater collection	2
Bio-wash facilities	1
Business waste management	1
Eco-lighting	1
Ground heat source	1
Projects to maintain farming in the area	1
Woolpit white brick	1
Homes spread apart	1
Apartments for older residents	1
Increased mix of housing	1
Car park extension	1
Cycle paths	1
Footpaths	1
Schools	1
Health Centre	1
More businesses	1
Don't know/none	10
Stay the same	2
No more houses to keep centre	1
Against renewables detracting from environment	1

Q13. What is the turnover of your business?

Some businesses declined to answer this question however the total turnover of all those who did reply exceeds £350million.

Q14. Would you be willing to allow us to issue a survey to your staff at a future date?

31 businesses agreed to allow us to issue another questionnaire to staff, if required. This would canvass the opinions of around 1000 people, the majority of whom are likely to live outside of the village.

Q15. Is there anything else you think we ought to be considering in our neighbourhood plan? E.g. issues, potential infrastructure changes.

These are the comments we received, summarised by topic:

Heath Road

- Better through road outside school and health centre
- Parking around primary school & surgery, due to traffic
- Medical centre - difficult to get an appointment and parking.
- Access to school. Good option for new school

Old Stowmarket Road

- Improved access at the top of Old Stowmarket Road for new developments
- Better access out of Old Stowmarket Road
- Crossroad with Old Stowmarket Road needs improvement
- Better junction at the end of Old Stowmarket Road
- Traffic should be carefully considered, with lorries and buses, parking in Old Stowmarket Road, another primary school

Village centre

- Pedestrianise the high street or one way system
- Parking lines to make it sensible in the centre
- Village centre can get congested, but the village is of a size where it can still grow.
- Through route bottleneck at lunchtime
- Parking mainly OK - but suggest connecting village hall & main carpark. Concerned about zoning carpark in village centre¹

Public transport

- Improving public transport would be good as the buses are rare - if no car, it is difficult to get around

Infrastructure

- Broomhill Lane behind new Rags Lane estate would need improvement, for access to A14 avoiding the village centre
- More recreation, a pool? More play equipment for kids, bigger & better village hall facilities?
- Access to end of village further from A14

Elmswell

- Roundabout off A14 - two incidents where exiting off A14 drivers have turned right to Elmswell
- Elmswell, its facilities and development

Miscellaneous

- Mobile phone signal for clients
- The Woolpit Website could be better & contain more up to date info on business as it is very out of date. They would like to use local services and did not find the website useful.

Housing development

- Who's coming into the village? What type of person - keep a good balance
- Growth is OK as long as the infrastructure can cope
- It would be great to attract more young people & need more affordable homes
- More houses would increase pool of local staff
- Existing staff would like to move to village but cannot
- The need for a range of housing of all sizes, to attract potential workers to live here of all grades.
- As a village we are fortunate with what we have but change is required to include progression. As a village we need to progress & respect the village we have. Adopt people into the village and keep village character.
- Number of houses and where to put them. Plan it properly.

Other Relevant Comments

These comments were made during discussions and were prompted by the questionnaire but were not part of the questions above.

- The recruiting of young staff is difficult; most live outside Woolpit

SUMMARY

Woolpit has a vibrant business base which is growing; there is an expectation that there will be a significant increase in the number of people employed in the village over the next 5 years. It is a reasonable assumption to make that there will be a consequent increase in the requirement for local housing.

The transport links to get to and from Woolpit along the A14 are key to business success and access to markets. Improvements in bus numbers and links around the village and other villages e.g. Elmswell would benefit employees and customers of businesses.

On a local basis there is a need to improve footpaths around the village so more people could walk to work or shop. Additionally, there is concern over the congestion in the centre of the village and a requirement for an increase in parking provision. For the Brickfields Business Park the junction and removal of parking at the top of Old Stowmarket Road are two major improvements that would be welcomed.

There is some interest in sustainable projects that is worth pursuing.

A survey of 1000 staff may be of benefit in gaining a wider point of view about the village with a greater range of ideas being produced. The people who work in Woolpit are obviously vitally important to the economy of the village, its future sustainability and growth.

Consideration should be given to contacting those businesses willing to discuss the future development of their land.

Notes

¹ This was a comment in answer to Q2 but was relevant to Q15