

## BUSINESS SURVEY

This survey was undertaken by the NDP Working Group during 2012. It was sent to businesses within Sonning Common. (Note that this excludes Johnson Matthey, the largest local employer, based just into Rotherfield Peppard parish.) 10 completed questionnaires were received. Summary results follow below.

### SECTION A – ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

A1 To help us understand the full range of existing businesses in the Sonning Common area, please tick the box(es) that best describes the nature of your business.

	Agriculture, forestry and fishing
	Mining and quarrying
	Energy and water
	Manufacturing
	Construction
3	Retail and Wholesale trades (including repair of vehicles)
	Transport and storage
1	Accommodation, hotels, restaurants, food services
	Information and communications
1	Finance and insurance activities
	Public administration, education and health
	Real estate activities
1	Professional, scientific and technical activities
	Administration and support service activities
	Arts, entertainment and recreation
4	Other, please specify: electrician, maintenance and plumbing, hair and beauty

A2 What is the nature of your business organisation?

10	Independent
	Branch or subsidiary of a larger commercial group
	Public Sector organisation
	Charity or social enterprise
	Other – please specify. ....

A3 What is the main business activity at your Sonning Common location.

	Agriculture or forestry
	Construction, Builder, Design and Build
4	Retail (incl. hairdressing, beauty, pet shops, charity shop, dry clean, showroom)
	Financial and professional services outlet (Bank, building society, estate agent, recruitment agency betting office etc)
1	Restaurant/Cafe/Pub
1	Hot food take-away
2	Office – please specify main service: building services engineering design consultancy, insurance
	Research
	Manufacturing – please specify type of product.....
	Storage/distribution
	Hotel/Guest House/B&B/ Self-catering
	Tourism (not accommodation or eating house)
	Residential care
	Public administration, education and health centre, clinics, nursery, church hall etc.
	Private healthcare, dentistry, etc
	Private childcare and education
	Assembly and leisure (Gyms, dance + music halls, cinema etc)
1	Petrol station, car showroom, taxi, theatre, hostel, scrap yard, laundrette
3	Other, please specify: head office, maintenance and plumbing, veterinary

(Office will include: Accountancy, financial service, administration and support service, sales office, marketing and PR, graphic design, consultancy, architect and surveyor services etc.)

A4 How many employees do you have? Number

Full-time		25	27	3	1	None	7	2	3	5
Part-time	5	7	4	3			6	0	11	4
Total (headcount)		32	31				13	2	14	9
Full-time equivalent (		29							8	38?

A5 As a percentage, where do your employees live? %

In Sonning Common		16	55	1	100	None	X % not provided	50	5	
Nearby village		6	10	3 Woodley			X			
Reading area (incl. Emmer Green)		28	20				X		90	X we have 2 salons
Henley area		6	5				X			
Elsewhere – locally in South Oxon		6	10	1 Burfield			X	50	5	
Elsewhere	100	38		1 Maidenh ead			X			

A6 How long has your business/operation been here?

	Less than 1 year
1	1-2 years
	3-5 years
2	6-10 years
7	More than 10 years (Caversham)

A7 What is the total area of your overall site?

6	Less than 0.2 hectares (less than half an acre)
1 + car park	From 0.2 to 0.4 hectares (0.5 to 1 acre)
1	From 0.5 to 1.0 hectares (1.25 to 2.5 acres)
	More than 1 hectare

A8 What is the Gross Internal floor Area of your premises? (Note 100 sq m = 1,076 sq ft.)

7	Less than 250 square metres
1	From 250-499 square metres
	From 500-999 square metres
	From 1,000 to 5,000 square metres
1	More than 5,000 square metres

A9 If you have comments about doing business in the Sonning Common area, please write them here:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Our business requires that we frequently travel to meetings. Sonning Common is an ideal location for us to reach motorways and train stations.</li> <li>2) There is a reasonable selection of shops that provide for the day to day needs of our staff.</li> <li>3) Good passing traffic.</li> <li>4) Very loyal customer base.</li> <li>5) Well located to London and South East.</li> <li>6) Local population very wary of any change.</li> <li>7) My work comes from advertising in the village magazine and word of mouth.</li> <li>8) Inconsiderate parking.</li> </ol>
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## SECTION B - JOBS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

B1 What kinds of employment should be encouraged locally? *(Tick any that you would support)*

3	Shops – retail
7	Pubs, restaurants and cafes
3	Offices
3	Financial and professional services
3	Tourism, leisure and crafts
5	Community services
4	Social enterprises
2	Light industrial and manufacturing
2	Transport, storage and distribution
2	Food and drink production
	Other, please give details: any

B2 What are the strengths of Sonning Common as a place for business and trade?

***(1 is highest priority)***

Proximity to the Thames Valley economic zone	1, 2
Good local catchment of customers	1, 1 Affluent customers and 2 Loyal customers, 1, 3, 1
Retail competition from other centres is not too by	3 not much local competition, 2 competition not too close, 1 not many competition salons
Good pool of potential local employees	
Vitality bus service into the centre	3 (bus service)
We avoid wasting time in commuting	
Reasonable choice of local shops	2
On site parking	3
Out of the hustle and bustle of town	2
Good access to national road network and train stations	1, 1, 3
Access to Reading for wholesale suppliers	4
Currently low competitive rental costs	2
Ease of access	1, 1 easy access by car
Available workforce	1

B3 What are the weaknesses of Sonning Common as a place for business and trade?

***(1 is highest priority)***

Congestion in the Village Centre	1, 1
Muddled planning layout	2

Lack of car parking	2 limited car parking, 2 parking in village centre, 4, 2, 3
Congestion to get to or from Reading	
Bus links from surrounding villages	1
Inadequate Broadband speed	1 although we have invested in our own connection, 3 limited broadband 1 broadband could be better
Limited number of premises available	4 limited number of suitable premises, 3 lack of alternative retail premises to move or expand 2 shortage of choice of business premises
Bus link from Reading	3 bus link with Reading, 4 bus links
Traffic	1
Limited developing prospects	1
Bad roads and pavement holes and kerbs. Outside post office - very dangerous.	5
Restaurants – no good. Food mainly restricted to co-op and chippy	1
Could do with a wider variety	2
Maybe a few more retail shops	3

B4 What are the key opportunities to improve Sonning Common as a place for business and trade for the future?

*(1 is highest priority)*

Better broadband and communications	1 better broadband, 5 broadband, 1 broadband, 3 broadband improvements
Third Reading bridge over the Thames	3, 1, 1, 2
Better road links	1
Re-develop the Village Centre to allow it to compete	
Better parking facilities in the Village Centre	2 better parking facilities, 2 better parking, 4 better parking in village, 2 parking
Better office provision outside the centre with dedicated	4, 3 better office provision, 2 more business premises
Encourage home-working	1
Improve village centre	1) get with the honest expectations of a younger and/or modern market

B5 What are the key threats to Sonning Common's future as a place for business and trade?

*(1 is highest priority)*

Internet shopping - taking our business	1 Internet shopping, 1
Loss of our bus service; Nowhere to park	2 Loss of public transport, 1 bus
Too much traffic In the centre	3
Developers and profit from new house-building	
Reading's coming 'Station Hill' development	
Increasing property costs, including rents and rates	5 rents and rates, 1 property rental costs
Limited parking	1, 2, 2
Too many new houses	4
Traffic - but rely on incoming clients	1
Lack of choice of business premises	2
Poor road communication	3
Restrictive planning process	1
Other local villages + towns becoming more popular	

B6 Should the NDP allocate more land for employment purposes? *(Please tick one)*

5	Yes
2	No
3	Not sure: not in its powers?

B7 Which types of site should be allocated for employment uses? *(Tick any applicable)*

6	Existing buildings
6	Previously developed land (termed brownfield sites)
1	Undeveloped land (termed greenfield sites)

B8 Where should employment land be located? *(Tick any applicable)*

3	Build it up in the Village Centre with the shops
3	Outside the centre, on the edges of the village – with parking.
3	Not sure
1	We don't need any more employment land locally.
1	Other, please give details: "employment land" none exists, but add parking

B9 (Presently planning rules prevent employment sites, such as shops and offices, being removed or changed to become housing.) Should existing employment sites be protected from changes of use? *(Please tick one)*

6	Yes
3	No
	Not sure
	Other, please give details

B10 Should the NDP include policies that promote working from home? *(Please tick one)*

4	Yes
1	No
2	Not sure
	Other, please give details

B11 What would encourage businesses to locate in the Sonning Common area?

*(Please list your views - up to five in priority order. First is highest priority)*

1	Suitable employment space with adequate parking. Lower rents. Premises suitable for business type. Lower rents. Opportunities. Knowing that clients can come for other things too, why come to a village when you can go to Henley/Reading & have everything in one place.
2	Good broadband connections. Better road links. Parking if appropriate for deliveries / customers.
3	Relax planning restraints.
4	
5	

B12 What barriers or constraints prevent businesses moving to the Sonning Common area or existing business expanding in the Sonning Common area?

*(Please list your views - up to five in priority order. First is highest priority)*

1	Suitable employment space with adequate parking. Planning restraints. No suitable buildings available. No premises available., Planning policies.
2	Limited broadband speed. Road links. Inadequate infrastructure to support e.g, roads, parking and security.
3	High rents.
4	
5	

B13 Do some of the retail or food outlets in Sonning Common need to be extended to be viable in the future? *(Please tick one)*

3	Yes – why and where?
	No – why not?
4	Not sure
Please expand on your reasons for the answer given: 1) * It depends on how well-used the local shops are when compared to the larger stores in Reading. 2) More people need more room – more parking and more variety. 3) As population increases therefore demand increases. Heath and Watkins – great local DIY service but limited to small premises + therefore limited and smaller stock. 4) Ask the owners. 5) No so much extended – just improved.	

B14 Should there be more retail or food units in Sonning Common? (e.g. gardens/plants, bank/building society, café, Chinese or Italian restaurant, pizza hot food, Other?)

*(Please tick one)*

3	Yes – why and where?
2	1) No – why not? 2) Where?
1 see note above* 1	Not sure
Please expand on your reasons for the answer given: 1) Shame NatWest is closed 2 days a week. Local producers e.g. Deli/Grocer. 2) Business 3) Is there demand? 4) In and around the village centre – residents are so restricted here. It would be nice for them/passers by/workers to have more local amenities.	



B15 If you were trying to improve Sonning Common as a location for business and trade what would you do and how would you go about it? (Priorities and key steps.)

- 1) As before.
- 2) It seems a shame to lose the village atmosphere, but the shops are dotted around.
- 3) Modern retail + service premises in village centre, with safe + adequate convenient delivery points & adequate car parking. Negotiate with a suitable food retailer to buy land in centre and develop a mini "Woodley".
- 4) Business park concept agreeable. Make village centre map user friendly and pastoral – a place to meet, socialise and do business.
- 5) I would first start looking into improving what we already have i.e. the baguette shop, then expand into other business – cafe? Italian? Pizza? Nowhere at all delivers food to Sonning Common, therefore to these residents need it here, a small garden centre would be nice + a pet shop would go down well here too.

## SECTION C - THE FUTURE OF YOUR BUSINESS

C1 What would help your business to develop and thrive in the plan period to 2026?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Suitable business premises.</li> <li>2) If sites become available in the village we need to be able to redevelop.</li> <li>3) More shop space and storage.</li> <li>4) A "support local trades" programme.</li> <li>5) See previous</li> <li>6) Reduction in small business "red tape"</li> <li>7) A more lively village.</li> </ol>
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C2 Are there any planning constraints or other barriers that would or might prevent your business from developing in the plan period to 2026?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) If we are unable to expand in Sonning Common we would either relocate elsewhere or open a second office in another location.</li> <li>2) As above.</li> <li>3) Funding new/other premises if necessary.</li> <li>4) None.</li> <li>5) Yes – planning restrictions</li> <li>6) No</li> </ol>
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C3 In the future 10 years, how would you see the floorspace needs of your local operation changing?

2 (if practical) 4	Expand
4	Stay the same
	Contract
	We will probably relocate away
	Close down

C3 What additional space will your business require over the plan period to 2026?

*(Please tick all that apply. Please note that 100 sq m is equal to 1,076 square feet.)*

	Up to 50m2	50m2 to 100m2	100m2 to 200m2	Over 200m2	None
Retail	2		1	1	
Storage (covered/open)				1	
Office		1	1	1	
Industrial/workshop					
Other					
Please tell us if you will have any additional requirements not covered above: None.					1