

# Edenbridge Neighbourhood Plan

## Business Survey Report



### **1. Introduction**

The Business survey was conducted over a 3 month period between 1 April and 30 June 2015

The information contained in this report is based on the results of this survey which was distributed to all known business premises in Edenbridge Parish. The survey recipients were sourced from information supplied by Sevenoaks District Council (Business Rates addresses) and Edenbridge Chamber of Commerce. It was also accessible on-line through Survey Monkey.

The survey was distributed to approximately 250 businesses: 38 responses were received, giving an approx. 15% return.

### **2. Overview of businesses in Edenbridge**

#### **2.1 How does Edenbridge rate as a place to do business**

The findings show companies consider Edenbridge is either a good or reasonable place in which to run a business. 32 (84%) responded. 2 respondents (6.25%) felt it was very good, 16 (50%) good, 13 (40.63%) Neither good nor bad and 1 (3.13%) bad. No business felt it was very bad.

#### **2.2 How reliant are the respondents on local demand**

Just over half (56%) of the responding businesses rely on a local client/customer base. 43% responded their client base is within the UK, 32% within a 10 mile radius of Edenbridge and 24% that their customers are based in Edenbridge.

#### **2.3 Number of staff employed**

The majority of businesses within the parish (78%) are small businesses and 22% medium size businesses. 40% of respondents employ between one and five members of staff, 22% are self-employed with no employees, 16% employ between six and ten people, 11% between 11 & 20, 11% between 21 and 50. One large business employing in excess of 50 people responded (over 100 staff).

#### **2.4 Location of staff**

Responses revealed that businesses did not have a high rate of local employment. The majority (57%) had a quarter or less staff resident in Edenbridge. In 22% of businesses all their staff live in Edenbridge Parish, in 30% of businesses this figure was less than a quarter and in 27% of instances no staff live within the parish.

## 2.5 Location of respondent

Of the actual respondents, 50% live at least five miles away from their business premises. The main responses show that 21% live in Edenbridge, 18% live less than a mile away, 26% travel between 10-25 miles and 24% between 5-10 miles.

## 2.6 Potential to work from home

The overriding response to this question was that the responding businesses could not operate from their home, and the main constraint for those that would be able to, was the quality of the broadband.

## 2.7 Should Edenbridge aim to be a leading centre for a particular industry

79.5% responded that it shouldn't, and 21.5% that it should, the suggested industries being construction, IT, manufacture, restaurants and tourism.

# 3 Policy related responses to be considered for the Local Economy Task Group

## 3.1 What type of additional sites should be allocated as suitable for business purposes

There is a clear majority 88% who would like to see existing unused business premises being utilised, the second preference 68% would condone the redevelopment of Brownfield sites, then 36% existing agricultural buildings, 25% existing houses suitable for business use. *(respondents could make more than one choice)*

## 3.2 What factors would constrain the expansion of their business in the next 20 years

One third responded lack of availability of suitable office and retail space, 20% lack of available workshop space, 25% lack of available land and over half (54%) lack of suitable buildings would be something of a constraint. A small number felt the above would be a serious constraint. The remaining respondents either had no knowledge or didn't think there was a lack of availability issue. *(respondents could make more than one choice)*.

## 3.3 Planning regime in Sevenoaks

Businesses had concerns about the planning regime in Sevenoaks District Council: 19% found it a serious constraint and 25% felt these something of a constraint. One respondent is constrained by regulations regarding noise and working hours

## 3.4 Signage

30% find the ability to put up adequate signage a constraint.

## 3.5 The High Street

The appearance and functionality of the High Street is commented on throughout the survey: some feel it is outdated and in need of redevelopment and expansion, others that the character is an important aspect of Edenbridge and should be preserved.

### 3.5.1 Leathermarket area of Edenbridge High Street

Respondents felt that redevelopment of The Leathermarket area of the High Street should be encouraged as it is currently detrimental to the appearance and attraction of the High Street.

### 3.6 Type of businesses to be encouraged by Neighbourhood Plan

Given a list of different business and industry types they would like to see encouraged (*respondents could select all that applied*) it was again apparent that all business types should be encouraged. The full list is available to view within the survey see **Appendix** but for the purposes of this report the top five percentages have been selected as follows: retail with 97%, then tourism 87%, manufacturing 81.5%, hotel & accommodation 76%, and finally transport, storage and distribution; pubs, restaurants and cafes; medical services; IT & communication all with 71%.

## 4 Potential Local Economy policies

### 4.1 Availability of suitable buildings/space for business expansion

There is a clear majority 88% who would like to see existing unused business premises being used, the second preference 68% would condone the redevelopment of Brownfield sites, then 36% existing agricultural buildings, 25% existing houses suitable for business use.

### 4.2 Development of The Leathermarket area

4.3 The High Street is a very important aspect of the town which respondents are adamant they wish to retain. They would like the buildings to be better maintained and units occupied with interesting and functional individual shops.

4.4 Promote tourism – shortage of accommodation – The importance of retail and the High Street having already been mentioned above, a possible policy to be drawn here would encompass the need for accommodation, pubs, restaurants and cafes to service and facilitate this.

Evidence supporting the need for development to support tourism is contained in Sevenoaks district Council's Economic Development Strategy (September 2015), including the shortage of overnight accommodation.

## 5 Planning related responses relating to other task groups within the Neighbourhood Plan

### 5.1 Housing

5.1.1 The survey revealed that constraints likely to restrict business expansion during the next 20 years are: shortage of skilled staff – 57%, shortage of unskilled staff - 38%. Half of respondents felt this is due to a lack of suitable housing

5.1.2 One subjective comment was that we require more local housing for local people, more local jobs. Less commuters, as this is making the town very quiet.

### 5.2 Infrastructure

5.2.1 Parking - 30% of respondents find availability of parking a constraint

5.2.2 Road network - 53% find the quality of the road network a constraint to expansion including the low bridges

5.2.3 53% are concerned over the reliability of the sewage and storm drainage system in Edenbridge.

5.2.4 It was suggested we should implement speed controls/restricted vehicular access to the High Street, possibly turning the High Street into shared space with more cafes and trees.

## **6 Non-planning related responses to be addressed**

Set out below are the subjective concerns raised, as made, not addressed elsewhere

### **6.1 Local economy**

6.1.1 A lot of comments were made about the current High Street. These include:

The need for more interesting shops and eating places incl. clothes shops, not charity shops, to encourage more footfall. Without footfall more interesting shops are unlikely to come – Catch 22. No more fast food or betting shops

The High Street needs to be bigger and more diverse – falls short of a High Street

More variety of retail shops – better quality facilities for businesses to move into.

A good variety of shops, festivities in the town.

The appearance of the town and industrial areas.

The number of empty shops is off putting to both potential retailers looking to locate to or start up in Edenbridge and also to the shoppers.

Better housing and a vibrant High Street.

Smartening up appearance of the High Street

Serviced office space.

Modern refurbished premises.

6.1.2 44% have an issue with the cost of the council tax and business rates, seeing these as a constraint to expansion.

Money for initial business set-up, better business rates

6.1.3 Engage the Chamber of Commerce and encourage collaborative working

6.1.4 A craft based workshop centre for art based crafts/products.

### **6.2 Housing**

60% feel the cost of housing and 50% the cost of renting is a constraint in the expansion of their business.

One respondent would like to see self-build, both as individuals and groups, encouraged

### 6.3 Infrastructure

60% have a problem with the quality of broadband in Edenbridge

46% are concerned about the reliability of the power supply in Edenbridge

### 6.4 Other

- Youth employment
- More policing – concerns over vandalism, drugs and theft, actionable CCTV
- Lack of Sainsbury's

Address the problem of cars parked on double yellow lines in the High Street.

Parking by food outlets evenings and weekends unacceptable.

## 7 Suggested marketing strategies

Below are subjective responses, as made, to the question regarding proposed marketing strategies to promote the town:

Proactive social media and website

Encourage people to work together

Working jointly with Surrey & Sussex to increase the marketing budget

Use successful businesses to promote the town

Start marketing Edenbridge as a bigger town e.g. Tunbridge Wells as opposed to a small country town with too many pubs

Invest in retail development

Liaise with the landlords

Edenbridge should aim to be the Hebden Bridge of the south

Don't wait for businesses to come to Edenbridge, proactively encourage specific businesses to set up here

## 8 SWOT analysis

### Strengths

The majority of businesses trading in Edenbridge find it a good place in which to operate their business.

Free parking in Town Centre

### Weaknesses

33% lack of suitable office space, 27% lack of suitable retail space, 54% lack of availability of suitable buildings are likely constrain their business expansion over the next 20 years.

Quality of broadband – 60% of businesses find this a constraint.

30% availability of skilled staff a serious constraint, 27% found this something of a constraint re expansion of business

Quality of road network in and around Edenbridge

Quality of public transport system serving Edenbridge

The Leathermarket, the empty shops in the High Street, and the appearance of both the town and the industrial areas

### Opportunities

Encourage more skilled & unskilled staff into the area - ? an affordable housing issue

Erection of additional signage promoting local businesses,

To implement an improved marketing strategy

Increase Tourism profile

### Threats

Drainage/flooding - 53% are concerned over the reliability of the sewage and storm drainage system in Edenbridge.





## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROJECT – EDENBRIDGE 2030**

**APRIL – 2015**

**Edenbridge is taking advantage of legislation to put together a Neighbourhood Plan. This plan will form part of the planning framework governing all new development in Edenbridge between now and 2030. To ensure that the plan really reflects the needs of both residents and businesses, the Steering Group has commissioned a survey to provide the evidence to underpin the plan. This survey covers the needs of businesses within Edenbridge and that the plan should aim to address, including issues such as what are the key local constraints to expansion.**

**Your views really matter, so we would be very grateful if you could take the time to fill in this survey. It should only take a short time and will help shape the future of Edenbridge.**

Please complete this survey by 29 May 2015 either online by following this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2D72X8L> or by using this form and returning it to your local Neighbourhood Plan co-ordinator Kathy Staff, **see back page.**

If you have any questions do contact [kathy@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:kathy@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk)





# BUSINESS SURVEY

1. How would you rate Edenbridge as a place to do business? Please circle one

**(WHERE 5 is VERY GOOD and 1 is VERY BAD)**

5	4	3	2	1
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2. If you were to expand your business operation in Edenbridge in the next 20 years, which local factors would you see as a constraint to this expansion?

**(Tick one option for each possible constraint)**

	A serious constraint	Something of a constraint	Not a Constraint at all	Don't know
Availability of suitable office space in Edenbridge				
Availability of suitable retail space in Edenbridge				
Availability of suitable workshops in Edenbridge				
Availability of suitable buildings in Edenbridge				
Availability of suitable land in Edenbridge				
The planning regime in Sevenoaks D.C.				
Availability of qualified/skilled staff in Edenbridge				
Availability of unskilled staff in Edenbridge				
Availability of suitable housing in Edenbridge				

Cost of property in Edenbridge				
Cost of renting in Edenbridge				
Quality of broadband in Edenbridge				
Availability of parking in Edenbridge				
Quality of the road network in and around Edenbridge				
Quality of public transport system serving Edenbridge				
Ability to put up adequate signage in Edenbridge				
Reliability of the sewage and storm drainage system in Edenbridge				
Reliability of the power supply in Edenbridge				
Cost of council tax and business Sevenoaks D.C.				

3. Are there any other serious constraints that you would like to be addressed as part of the Neighbourhood plan?

**(Write in the box below)**

4. What would encourage businesses to locate in the Edenbridge area?

**(List up to three options)**

5. What sort of marketing strategy (if any) should Edenbridge employ to do this?

**(Write in the box below)**

6. What type of additional sites, if any, should be allocated as suitable for business purposes as part of the Neighbourhood plan?

**(Tick all that apply)**

- None – there is already enough land for business purposes in Edenbridge
- Existing unused business premises
- Existing agricultural buildings, suitable for business use
- Existing houses, suitable for business use
- Brownfield land (i.e. land previously developed)

7. Should existing sites with planning permission or established use for business purposes be prevented from change of use?

**(Tick one)**

- Yes
- No

8. Are there any Planning constraints or barriers that will prevent your business from developing in the plan period to 2030?

**(Write in the box below)**

9. What improvements could be made to the High Street more generally, to encourage growth and demand for your business?

**(Write in box below)**

10. How reliant are you on local demand for your business?

**(Please tick the closest option)**

- Over half of my customers/clients are based in Edenbridge
- Over half of my customers/clients are based in a 10 mile radius of Edenbridge
- Over half of my customers/clients of my customers are based in Kent
- Over half of my customers/clients are based in the UK
- Over half of my customers/clients are based outside of the UK

11. In addition to yourself, how many staff do you currently employ in Edenbridge parish?

**(Please tick one)**

- None
- 1 to 5
- 6 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 50
- 51 to 100
- Over 100

12. How many of your staff live in Edenbridge?

**(Please tick one)**

- All of them (100%)
- At least three quarters of them (75%)
- At least half of them (50%)
- At least quarter of them (25%)
- Less than a quarter (25%)
- None

13. How far do you personally commute to work?

**(Please tick one)**

- I don't – live in Edenbridge
- Less than a mile

- Between 1 and 5 miles
- Between 5 and 10 miles
- Between 10 and 25 miles
- More than 25 miles

14. How could the Neighbourhood Plan promote working from home?

**(Write in the box below)**

15. Should Edenbridge aim to be a leading centre for a particular industry?

**(Please tick one)**

- Yes
- No

16. If yes to question 15 please specify for what type of industry should Edenbridge should aim to be a leading centre?

**(Write in the box below)**

17. What kind of businesses should the Neighbourhood Plan encourage?

**(Tick all that apply)**

- Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- Building & construction
- Community services
- Energy and water
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade – shops
- Manufacturing
- Transport, storage and distribution
- Tourism, leisure and crafts
- Hotel and accommodation
- Pubs, restaurants and cafes
- Food and drink manufacture
- Real estate activities
- Medical services
- Information technology and communication
- Admin and support services
- Motor trading and vehicle repair
- Financial services

Professional, scientific and technical

All of the above

Other, please specify

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Individual responses are confidential. However, it may be helpful to talk to you about some of the answers in your survey. If you would be happy for someone to do this please provide:

Name of your business.....

Your name.....

Your phone number.....

And an email address.....

All individual data and information collected using this survey will be treated confidentially and will not be passed to any third party.

Please fold your completed survey and return in the envelope provided, with the address showing in the window

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Neighbourhood Plan  
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