



## **Colerne Business Survey**

Version 2

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Objects of the survey**

The objects of the survey were:

1. To identify what employment there is in the parish of Colerne, what opportunities there are for employment to increase and what constraints there are on existing and future employment.
2. To identify the business premises there are within the parish and the need for expansion or creation of new premises.
3. To list all businesses carried on within the parish to provide background data for the NP.

### **1.2 Scope**

The survey was only concerned with businesses actually conducted within the parish i.e. operating from premises or homes here. It did not include either businesses carried on outside the parish by people who happen to live in Colerne, or businesses based outside the parish which employ people who live here (even if they are just over the boundary e.g. Shoe Garage). The NP cannot influence what goes on outside its boundary.

Property letting, either rented housing, holiday lets or Airbnb, was excluded. This is more a subject for the housing research.

Individuals living in Colerne but working elsewhere, either as employees or as self-employed sub-contractors or workers, were excluded from the survey. However, in some cases it was a fine distinction from those smaller businesses run from home.

### **1.3 Categories of Business**

Initially the list of businesses was broken down into three categories so that the questions could be tailored appropriately. The categories were defined as follows:

1. Large Organisations. Employing 10 or more Full Time Equivalent (FTE) people at a site within the parish. E.g. Lucknam Park Hotel, Azimghur Barracks, Octavian Wine, schools.
2. Medium Organisations. Either employing between 2 and 10 FTE or using specific premises within the parish other than private houses. E.g. The Six Bells, Premium Stores, doctors' surgeries, farms.
3. Home Based. Employing 1 or 2 people in a residential property. Many internet based businesses fall into this category.

For analysis the results from categories 1 and 2 were combined into Major Businesses and the remainder were treated as Minor Businesses.

## **2 Creating the List of Businesses**

The list of businesses was created initially from the records of the survey carried out for the Parish Plan in 2011. Others were added as a result of searches of the internet, the Companies House database and advertisers in the parish magazine.

Requests for businesses to contact the Steering Group were published in the parish magazine (nil response) and by the Facebook Colerne page (a good response from minor businesses).

The list was then purged of those businesses that had either apparently ceased trading or specifically did not want to take part. Attempts were made to contact doubtful candidates and if no response was received they were removed from the list.

The final list identified 7 businesses in category 1, 37 category 2 and 42 category 3. A total of 86. Of this total only two businesses specifically asked not to be included in the survey.

### **3 Collecting Information**

Three methods of information collection were used.

For the category 1 businesses the ideal was to hold a meeting so that any relevant issues could be discussed in addition to the topics on the survey form. However, the majority of the businesses contacted did not wish to meet but offered to complete the long survey form. (In fact few of them did).

For category 2 a long survey form was used. The topics addressed were:

- The nature of the business and contact details;
- Advantages and disadvantages of Colerne as a location;
- Employment - number of staff, recruitment, employees' housing and transport issues;
- Premises - adequacy and availability of premises, future needs;
- Previous involvement with the planning process;
- The airfield sale, comments and concerns;
- Willingness to take an active part in the neighbourhood plan.

For the category 3 minor businesses a short version was used with a few simple questions covering the nature of the business, whether run from home or from specific premises, number of staff and accommodation needs in the village, need for different premises.

None of the surveys asked about operational aspects of the business and users were assured that their individual responses would not be published.

The survey forms were set up in Google Forms which allowed them to be distributed with a covering email from the NP Secretary. They could then be completed on line and the results were collected in Google Forms. The surveys were sent out on 30 January with a response requested by 18 February. A further email was sent out on 11 February as a reminder.

Paper copies of the survey form were sent to four businesses who did not have an email address, with return envelopes. None of these responded.

#### **3.1 Response Rate**

A total of 42 long survey forms were sent out and replies were received from 18, a response rate of 43%.

42 Short survey forms were sent out and replies were received from 19, a response rate of 45%.

Interviews were held with Colerne School, Calder House School and survey forms were completed with the results of the interview.

No response was received from the civilian contractors working at Azimghur Barracks, one of the largest employers in the parish. The aims of the NP were

explained to the military authorities but they were unable to give access to their contractors for confidentiality reasons. This is of little importance as far as the premises questions are concerned since the barracks is unlikely to expand outside its current boundary. However, an employer's perspective on staff housing needs would have been most useful to supplement the information collected from individuals by the housing needs survey and the general residents consultation.

## **4 Responses from Major Businesses**

### **4.1 Size and Nature of the Major Businesses**

This group comprised categories 1 and 2 described above, all of which were invited to complete the long survey form. 44 businesses were identified in this group, of whom two declined to take part.

It is estimated that there are only seven businesses or organisations in the parish that employ more than 20 people (total of full and part time): Azimghur Barracks (civilian employees), Lucknam Park Hotel, Colerne Primary School, Calder House School, Octavian Wine, Jetway Associates, and Carpenter Oak.

Table 1 below shows the breakdown of major businesses by size and number. An estimate has been made in the case of those businesses that did not respond to the survey.

<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Responded</b>	<b>Estimated</b>	<b>Total</b>
More than 20	4	3	7
6 to 20	4	3	7
5 or less	11	17	28
Total			42

**Table 1 Major Business by Number of Employees**

### **4.2 Responses Received to Survey Questions**

The following are the summarised results from the 18 responses received.

#### **4.2.1 Location of the Business**

The survey asked for the reasons why the business is located in Colerne.

1 is here because the property from which the service is provided is located in the parish.

7 are service providers who are located in Colerne because they serve Colerne. School, doctor, shops etc.

7 are based at the owner's home.

2 considered the location cheap.

1 is here because the location is close to other parts of their business.

#### **4.2.2 Advantages of Colerne**

Other than service organisations and those working from home the only commonly stated advantage was the village setting and rural location. Only two responded that there was no advantage.

### **4.2.3 Disadvantages of Colerne**

Vehicle Access 7.

Internet 5.

Limited customer base 2.

Local services 2.

Available premises 2.

Parking 2.

Poor public transport 2.

Inadequate paths and cycle-ways 2.

Phone signal 1.

Lack of Post Office 1.

None 3.

### **4.2.4 Special skills, accommodation and transport**

Respondents did not identify any significant shortage of skills in the parish as different to shortages nationally.

3 of the smaller businesses specifically mentioned a need for low cost housing for staff and 9 felt that they had staff who would want to move into the village if space was available. In most cases they only identified one staff member rather than a large general demand, or admitted that although demand existed it was hard to quantify. It would seem that employment is not limited by availability of housing (although it should be noted that one of the biggest employers has not taken part).

1 business acknowledged that their staff like living in rooms within local family accommodation, and that they are always seeking more homes to offer this.

7 employers identified travel to and from the village as a problem when recruiting, and 1 of the largest employers stated that this was a key reason why staff leave and work elsewhere.

### **4.2.5 Premises**

14 of the 18 respondents were happy with their current premises. Of the others the requirements were split:

one industrial unit;

one larger surgery;

one house with barn;

one more secure location for children.

There were no major expansion plans over the next ten years but 7 did say they might want to move.

No significant interactions between local businesses were identified other than general use of local services.

### **4.2.6 Local Planning**

Most businesses had not had any significant interaction with planning authorities. One large employer had an application for expansion turned down which could lead them to look elsewhere, another explained that it was difficult to expand and grow facilities which would generate more employment.

The school is concerned about the likelihood of their travel plan being implemented. There is a need for better pedestrian crossings and parking.

#### **4.2.7 Airfield Sale**

Few comments were received. One large employer expressed concern that there would be a reduction in security of existing sites along the airfield perimeter if the barracks close.

There were some positive views concerning the increased number of customers locally and the opportunity for additional housing.

#### **4.2.8 Involvement**

Seven responders said they would be interested in participation in the NP process. Three were willing to provide services.

### **5 Responses from Minor Businesses**

Surveys were sent out to 42 minor businesses (Category 3 as described above).

Of the 19 who responded, 12 of the businesses had only one employee either full or part time and all of these were carried out from home. The other seven had a mixture of full and part time between 2 and 6. Only two made use of premises other than the family home.

#### **5.1.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Colerne**

The survey asked for comments on the advantages and disadvantages of Colerne as a base for small businesses. The responses are summarised in Table 2 below.

<b>Advantage</b>		<b>Disadvantage</b>	
Availability of customers locally or the ability to travel easily to customers	9	Lack of space or land such as commercial space or meeting rooms	3
Close to home	4	Small customer base	2
Broadband Speed	2	Broadband Speed	2
		Lack of Post Office	2
No Advantage	3	No disadvantages	10

**Table 2 Advantages and Disadvantages for Small Businesses**

#### **5.1.2 Staff wishing to move into Colerne**

Only one response identified a need for staff to move into the parish.

#### **5.1.3 Business Expansion Over 10 years**

7 thought they would want more staff or bigger premises, 6 said maybe, 6 no.

#### **5.1.4 Type of new premises**

12 did not identify any requirement for new premises. Of those wanting more space there were a number of requirements, most only mentioned by one responder:

Storage or garaging;

Light industrial unit;

Yard;  
Meeting rooms;  
Combined work and living space (2 replies).

## **6 Conclusions from the Survey**

### **6.1 The Nature of Business in Colerne**

Colerne is not an area that attracts new business. Of the larger businesses, most are here for historical reasons (Azimghur Barracks, Lucknam Park) or because they serve the local community (schools, doctors, shops). The minor businesses are here, almost without exception, because they are home based.

One major business makes use of redundant hangars from the airfield. There are two small 'business parks' using farm buildings and a derelict mill, amounting to no more than a dozen units, primarily attracted by the low cost. Otherwise there are, at present, no premises or facilities in the parish that would attract a significant increase in business activity.

### **6.2 Employment**

There are only about seven businesses that employ more than 20 people, of which two have more than 100 employees. (Azimghur Barracks, which did not respond to the survey, is assumed to employ more than 100). From the replies received it is estimated that a significant proportion of the employees of this group are from outside the parish either as daily commuters or live-in staff.

The majority of people owning or employed by the smaller firms live in the parish.

### **6.3 Housing Needs**

There is a clear desire for additional low cost housing to enable some current employees to move into the parish and to improve recruitment. However there does not appear to be a need for large numbers of houses or evidence that the lack of them is holding back existing businesses.

### **6.4 Requirement for Business Premises**

None of the existing major businesses expressed a need for expansion of their premises or interest in moving to a more modern facility if this was created. A few of the smaller concerns would like more space and two were interested in live-work units but demand does not appear to be high.

### **6.5 Business Facilities**

A number of issues were raised about the facilities for business in the parish.

The most common concerns were poor access to the area for goods vehicles and commuting, lack of parking, and limited public transport.

The broadband service was quoted as a disadvantage by several and as an advantage by an almost equal number. This probably reflects major differences in the quality of service in different areas of the parish at the time of the survey.