

Employment Issues & Possible Solutions

1. ISSUES

For the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is important to base any policies on robust evidence. Stow Town Council has commissioned several surveys in recent years which provide such evidence in relation to businesses and employment in Stow

In 2018, the following facts were reported in relation to businesses in central Stow.

High Proportion of A1 Shops:-

- *64% of the occupied ground floor units in the town centre are shops, noticeably higher than the National Small Towns average of 51%. .*

Independent Traders:-

- *Over three quarters (76%) of the shops in the town centre are unique to Stow on the Wold, considerably higher than the national (65%) averages.*

Food and Accommodation:-

- *10% of the units are restaurants and cafes, which is 2% higher than the national figure.*
- *6% of the units are hotels, which is 5% higher than the National Small Towns average.*

Tourists:-

- *Potential tourist customers (74%) were also classed as a positive aspect of Stow on the Wold, 35% higher than the National Small Towns average.*
- *86% of the post codes gathered by town centre businesses were from non-residents, vastly higher (50%) than the National Small Towns average.*

Business Performance:-

- *Trading conditions and business confidence have declined markedly in the town centre since the 2017 Benchmarking Report.*
- *47% of businesses reported that over the last 12 months turnover had decreased, 17% higher than 2017 average and 15% higher than the National Small Towns average.*
- *44% of businesses reported that profitability had decreased a 9% increase from 2017 and 11% higher than the national average.*
- *In terms of future trading, 40% of businesses reported that over the next 12 months they expected their turnover to decrease, 22% higher than in 2017 and 21% higher than the National Small Towns average.*

Rental Values/ Property Costs:-

- *63% of businesses stated rental values/ property costs were a negative, 35% higher than the national average.*
- *'Reduction in rates' was a theme to emerge from the qualitative comments supplied by businesses.*

Source: People & Places Stow Benchmarking Report October 2018

The average gross salary for retail jobs in Gloucestershire is £23,000. The average gross salary for hospitality jobs is £25,000. In both cases this is below the national average gross salary of £29,600, despite this being a high cost of living area.

Source: Total Jobs Feb 2020 and Jobted.com

Stow's economy is predominantly based on retail and hospitality activities serving the tourism industry. While this makes for an attractive environment for residents, such dependence upon a narrow area of economic activity is a risk to the long-term economic sustainability of Stow. Similarly a predominantly low wage economy may not support the objective of attracting young people and families to live in Stow.

Other sectors that provide employment to Stow residents include building trades and craft workers and increasing numbers of residents work from home. At present there is little if any purpose designed space for such businesses in Stow.

2. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

One option for us to consider in terms of development and land use policy is whether part of the development brief for one of the larger sites should include new employment space. This would have the advantage of possibly providing jobs with higher salaries than those currently on offer and may attract the young people and families that are needed in Stow. Stow Town Council will be working with Cotswold District Council to develop policies in this area.

In establishing policies in relation to both housing and employment, the Neighbourhood Plan will consider the accommodation needs of small building and craft businesses and home workers. In establishing policies on parking, consideration will be given to the needs of those working in local businesses as well as residents and visitors.