

Woodford Business Survey

Introduction

Woodford is a rural community on the southern tip of a major conurbation surrounded on three sides by Cheshire countryside. 78% of the Neighbourhood Area is not built on, the majority being farmland plus a small amount of recreational land. In area terms, the larger businesses are rural, including farming, horse riding and livery establishments, nurseries and a major national chain garden centre. There are also a range of businesses that service the local area, such as shops, hairdressers, beauty salon, pub, restaurant, garage and car servicing and several cattery and kennels. Finally, there is a broad collection of one- and two-person businesses, such as architects, dressmakers, craftsmen and professional consultants. Overall, some 110 businesses have been identified in Woodford, spread through the whole community. Woodford does not have a business park or multi-occupancy office building that provides an employment centre.

Methods

As part of evidence gathering to support the Neighbourhood Plan, a survey of business was conducted in 2015.

A survey of what were judged to be the top twenty businesses in Woodford was carried out by interview and questionnaire. Of these, 85% were standalone businesses, two a branch of a larger organisation and one a subsidiary. Only one company employed more than 25 people. During this survey period one company closed down and moved away from Woodford, although this was initiated by the redevelopment of the BAe site.

The data capture forms shown in Tables 1 and 2 below were used. Appointments were made with a representative of each of the twenty selected businesses, who was interviewed by a representative of WNF, who completed the forms during the interview.

Table 1: Information gathering from businesses and employers in Woodford

1	Working Group member	
2	Date	
3	Name of organisation	
4	Type of business	
5	Postcode & type of premises	
6	Name and position of business representative	
7	Brief history of organisation (start-up, move to Woodford, change in premises & staff numbers)	
8	Is this part of a larger organisation with facilities outside Woodford? If so, where is Head Office and where does Woodford unit fit in?	
9	Total employed in Woodford today (full / part time?)	
10	Can you say how many live outside Woodford and how they travel in?	
11	If business is operated from home, did this require a different type of house (more rooms or a garage, for example)?	
12	Are there any short-term plans to change (employment numbers, location, etc.)? If so, what is planned and when is this likely?	

13	Longer term (up to 2030), are further changes expected? If so, what and when?	
14	If changing premises, do you expect to find new premises in Woodford? If so, where? If not, why not?	
15	Do you think being based in Woodford (rather than somewhere else within about 20 miles) makes it easier or harder for your business to operate? Why is that?	
16	Is there anything that could be done locally to make Woodford a better place for your business? Any other information to record?	

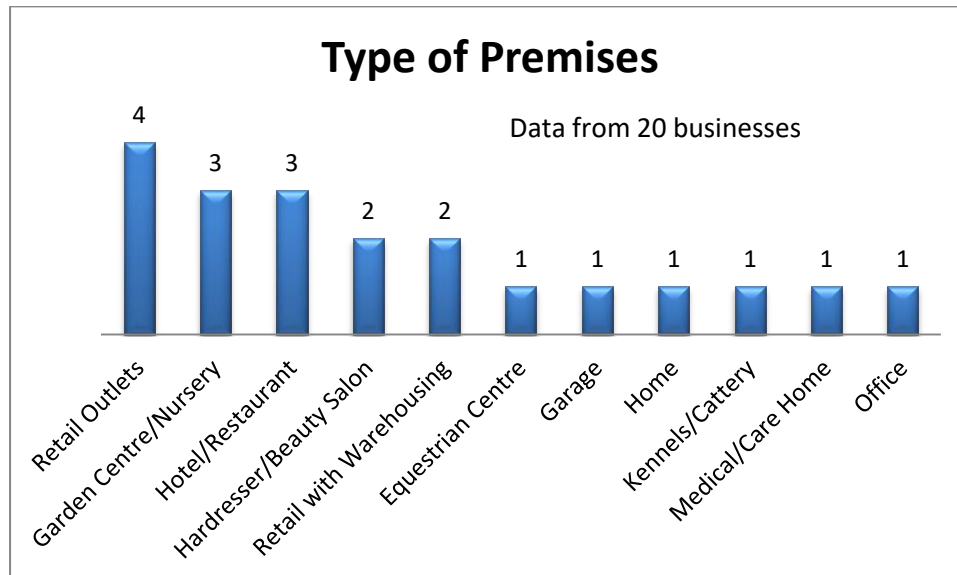
Table 2: Information gathering from businesses and employers in Woodford

Q7 – Brief history of business:	
Start-up year	
No. employed at start-up	
First year in Woodford	
No. employed on move	
Q8 – Organisation structure	
Stand alone	
Part of a chain	
Q9 – Total employed	
Full time	
Part time	
Q10 – Employees living outside Woodford and travelling in	
Total	
Cycle / walk	
Motorbike	
Car	
Public transport:	
Q12 – Short-term plans to change	
Q13 – Long-term plans to change	
Approximate year	
Location	
Change in employment numbers:	
Q15 – Advantages & disadvantages of Woodford	
Advantages	
Disadvantages	
Q16 – Any potential business improvements Woodford Neighbourhood Forum could influence	

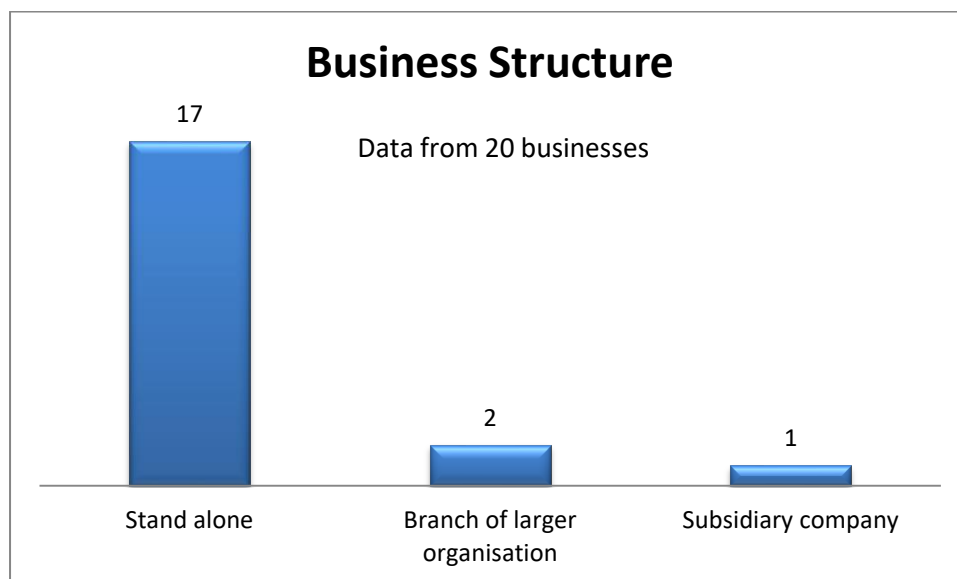
Results

The data were entered into a spreadsheet for analysis, which revealed the following information about the twenty businesses which were surveyed.

A spread of different types of business in Woodford was represented in the survey.



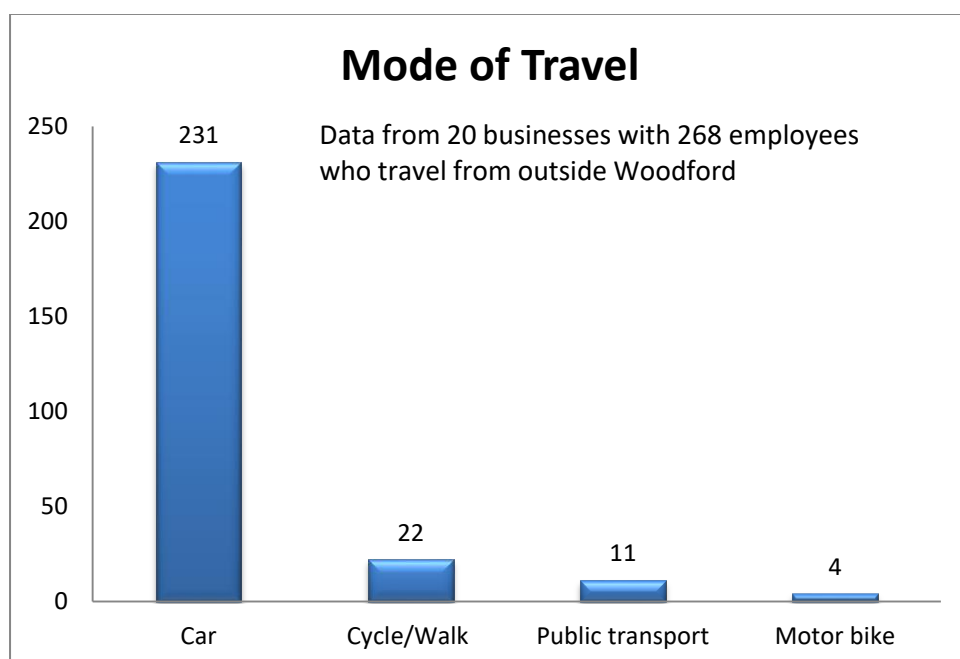
Of those surveyed, the majority were stand-alone businesses, rather than part of a chain.



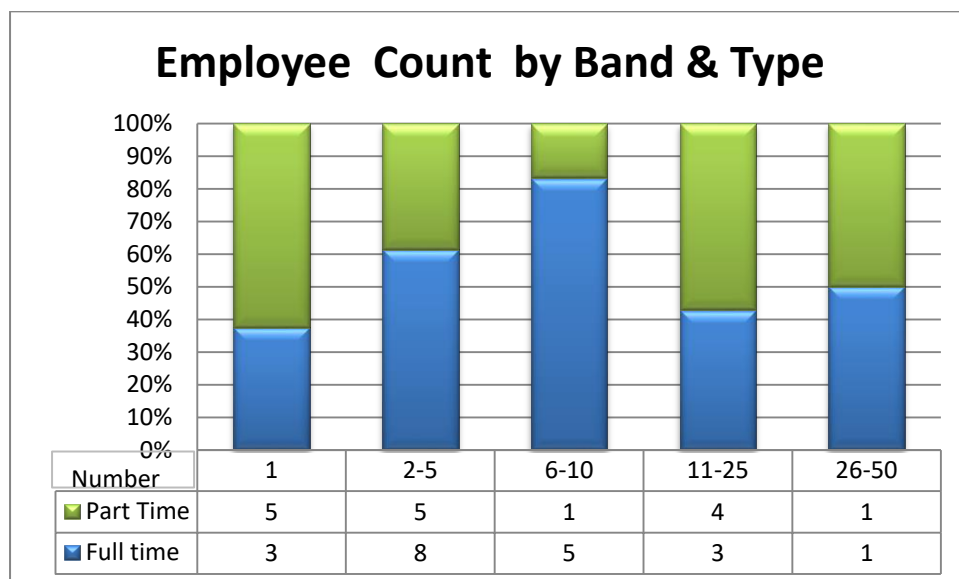
Of those surveyed, the majority had employees who did not live in Woodford, but travelled in from outside.



Of those employees who travelled in from outside Woodford, the majority did so by car.

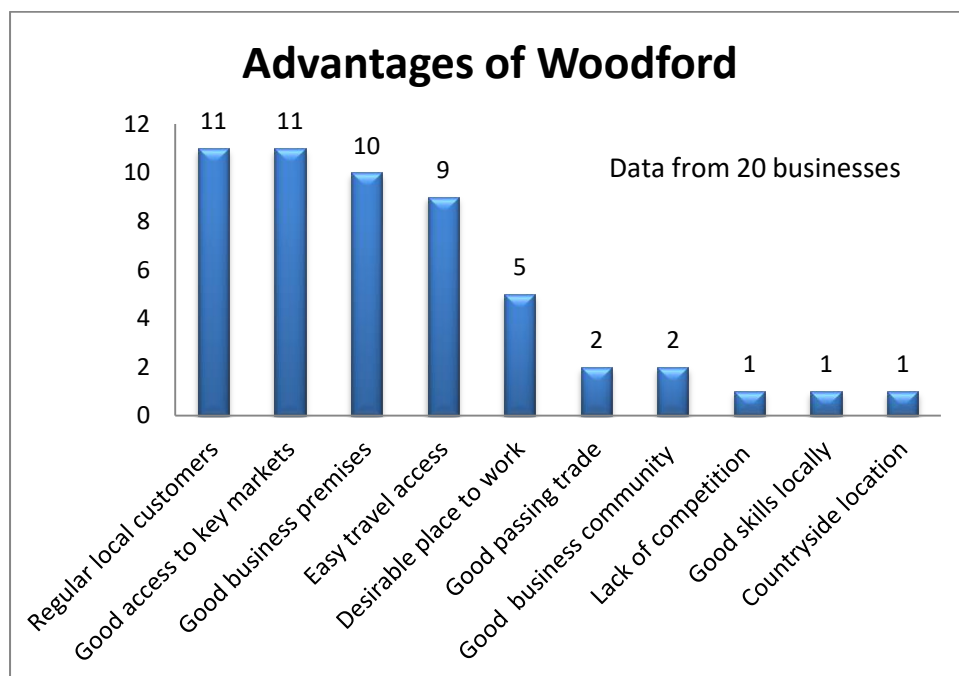


There was a mix of full-time and part-time employees among the businesses surveyed, with a greater proportion of full-time workers within the businesses with 6-10 employees. In a small survey of twenty businesses any correlation is unlikely to be significant.

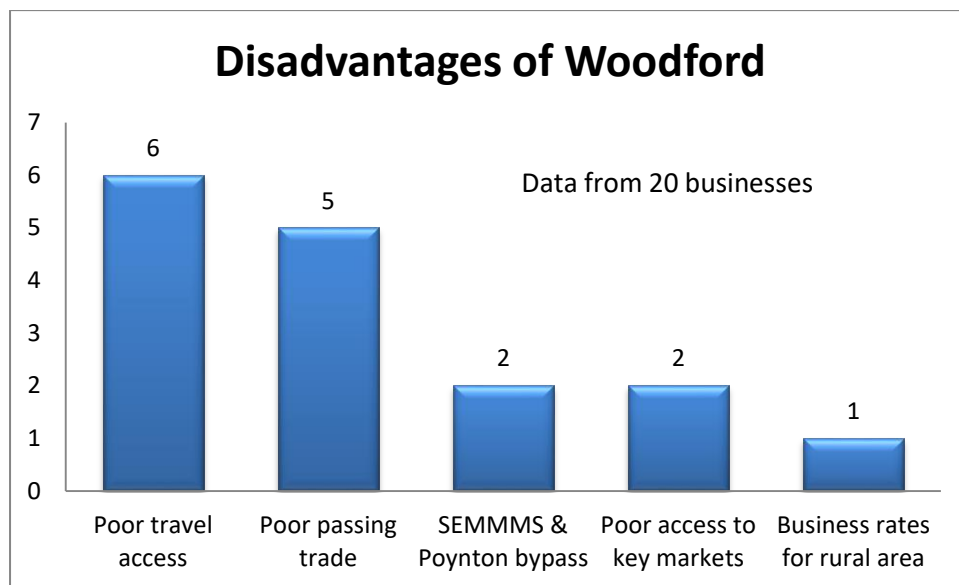


Data from 20 businesses, sorted by number of employees

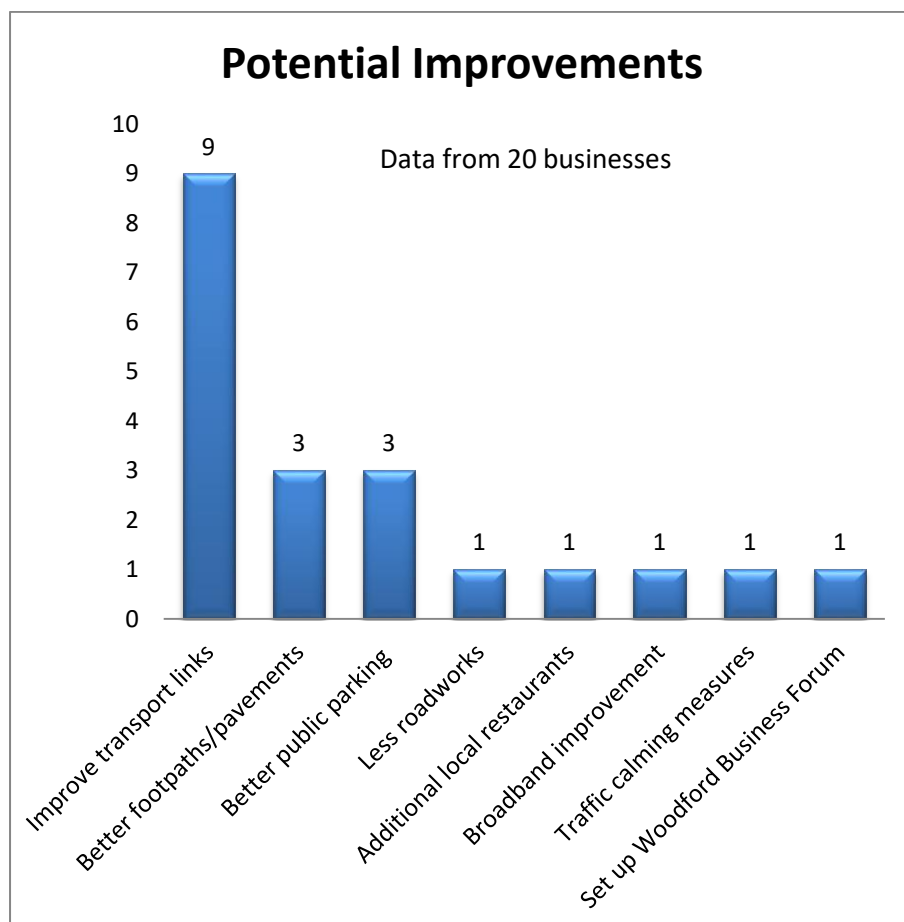
The most frequently cited advantages of Woodford as a business location were regular local customers, good access to key markets and good business premises (mentioned by half of those surveyed). Ease of travel access and a desirable place to work were also noted.



The most frequently cited disadvantages of Woodford as a business location were poor travel access and poor passing trade (mentioned by around one quarter of those surveyed).



When asked what improvements might help Woodford as a business location, the most frequently cited was improved transport links (mentioned by just under half those surveyed). Improved pavements and public parking facilities were mentioned by three out of twenty. Improved eating out, improved broadband, fewer roadworks, traffic calming measures and a Woodford Business Forum each got one mention.



There were few plans for any change. Two plans to move within Woodford were mentioned, one in the short-term and one in the long-term. One long-term plan to move out of Woodford was also mentioned.

Conclusions

No significant un-met needs were identified apart from those that would shortly be completed – the A6MARR, Poynton Relief Road and completion of the high speed broadband implementation. Therefore, no specific action for employment is planned, but policy will aim to support local business initiatives, such as farm diversification, the addition of an office or small workshop to a residential property, provided that they are compliant with Green Belt policy, other planning requirements and consistent with the character and style of the existing development.