

Charfield Neighbourhood Plan thread - employment:

A bit of a trickier question today. The JSP allows for employment units to be built; the CEG plans suggest space for "Farm Shop / Cafe / Employment"; The S.Glos Local Plan is, so far, silent on employment. My question to you is: What would work in the village as far as employment units are concerned?

I was going to offer suggestions, but let's see what you come up with first.

I would be interested to see how many freelance specialists would welcome a shared office space....

I would suggest there are many people now and many more in the future who will avoid the traffic congestion by working from home. That could be accelerated by having day and or week rented office space in the village, where people could run own business or "work from home" in a fully equipped environment.

I was thinking more about modern, eco friendly spaces that would attract project managers, graphic designers etc that would work together in a shared space with a cafe, WiFi..... A timber, unit where you could rent single offices, meeting rooms or simply a desk....

Bit of a difficult one this. You can 'allow space' for, say, small industrial units like Yate's North Rd. or Thornbury's Cooper Rd. but it doesn't guarantee businesses will take them up unless there is incentive to relocate here. It would require competitive rent and rates, good access and comms. Retail space would seem an obvious choice but when you look at the number of empty shop fronts in Wotton you have to question what caused this once thriving shopping street to struggle.

Absolutely, hence the need for top to bottom planning. All these aspects need to be pulled together at the planning stage; discussions with potential businesses & retailers, access, layout, etc..

A cafe would be nice. I work as a sports and holistic massage therapist at Charfield Chiropractic and there are a few small businesses in the industrial estate there. A nearby cafe would be nice for people after treatment and draw people to the village and make it a destination . Especially if there was free parking!

A selection of small office space would be amazing .. like a hub.. using latest eco tech.. and Wi-Fi etc..

Real high speed broad band is an essential to attract Business

I think it is more important for you to identify how to create the enabling conditions that would generate/enable employment rather than decide what the business will be; that is down to entrepreneurs and investors. What about flexible space coupled with a period of no business rates? This will make it attractive for business leaders to start something for the benefit of others - unless the PC wants to start running a business? based on the poor performance of WCSF I suspect it is best left to professionals.

As a practising counsellor some small office space/consulting rooms would be great to practice from, maybe the suggestions above would be sufficient for this?

Would the Charfield Plan team sponsor a thread of work to identify how many homeworkers, freelancers, small businesses would appreciate an alternative way of working based on a shared workspace, as can be found in major towns such as the Growth Hub (Gloucester and Cirencester) or Hubble in London - maybe we don't need to wait for a building to start to improve local business

collaboration and entrepreneurship? I'm a cyber security professional and would be willing to provide free advice on risk and GDPR (as I do for many organisations in addition to my paid work).

There are already a number of small office spaces in and around the village (e.g the one near renishaw, the buildings at charfield mill etc). How well utilised are these? What would be different about the space discussed in this thread than those premises? Are we talking about some kind of membership based co-working space like Regus / WeWork / OfficeGroup etc? How many people would actually dip their hands in their own pockets to pay for such a membership? Would your employers pay? How much would you pay?

I think the membership based approach would be the best way ahead, like those you mention, Spaces in Bath etc. Although I think the scale would need to be different or perhaps we would need diversification.... a shared area with workspaces one side, cafe on the other for the village's full use, bakery on site, perhaps some stall options for local producers... If it was to be based on the Wotton side of the village we could attract business from our neighbours, without putting more traffic through the village....

With a further convenience store at Warners Court which looks likely to be taken by the Co-op, a further 1200 homes is unlikely to be enough to attract further retailers to the village, it is also unlikely to attract a major employer and the focus would be on small business units such as those run by the Tortworth Estate at Churchend and Woodend also those at Bennets farm at the end of the village, most new homes in the village are being delivered with fibre to the premises and it would be essential for business units also or the take up rate would be negligible. all new developments in the village are being delivered with 35% affordable homes this is a mix of affordable rent (10% below market rent) social rent and shared ownership.

Nothing added for a few days now, so to sum up... A small amount of interest expressed in shared, equipped, rentable office space; Accompanying café (not strictly an employment unit, but required to make these feasible); Affordable business rates for local residents; Car parking facilities (not necessarily for local residents, but also for visiting clients etc); High-speed broadband; Possibly a membership-based scheme; I've noted the comment that some of these already exist and are empty, but as the village grows (assuming it does...) then this is the sort of thing that we may need to incorporate. I'll pick up the retail-based suggestions in a separate thread.

Warehouses. We had the same issue in Lancashire where the council implied one thing but did another. Beware councils and developers bearing gifts

Warehouses are most definitely not wanted in the village. (unless the residents tell us otherwise...). We will be saying as much in the Neighbourhood Plan, and working with the council to make sure this doesn't happen.