

Analysis of retail outlets in Barnham Village

Barnham Village shopping centre is located along Barnham Road (B2233) from the railway bridge to Gospond Road and includes The Square. Within this area (on the ground floor) is the railway station, two car parks, 11 private houses, a block of retirement flats, an industrial business, a wholesale electrical component distributors and about 40 retail outlets.

Only 75% of the retail outlets are actively trading. More than 50% of these could be considered in the service sector and another 30% are food outlets with either a takeaway service or with facilities to eat on the premises as well as a takeaway service.

Within 250 metres of the Shopping Centre there are a butchers, a public house, a convenience store and a specialist shoe maker. About 500 metres along Yapton Road from Barnham shopping Centre is the Windmill Shopping Village, with 18 retail outlets and a free car park. Their retail outlets are smaller units with usually the owner as the only person working on each location.

The only other retail outlet is Elm Tree stores in Eastergate Village, a general store with a post office.

The surrounding villages of Yapton, Walberton and Westergate have only a few retail outlets between them.

Barnham Village Centre

The village centre provides employment for about 220 people, of which half are full time.

Retail outlets. 31 occupied. 4 vacant shops, a vacant public house with outbuildings and an empty site where planning permission has been granted for another shop.

Services: a bank, financial services, estate agent, a veterinary practice, taxi firm, funeral directors; hairdressers, beauty parlour, 3 business dealing with motoring repairs and the church parish office

Shop with services: opticians, cycle shop, post office, pharmacy,

Food outlets: five takeaways, a cafe, a bakery and cafe, a restaurant – all provide a takeaway service.

Shops: independent supermarket, garden buildings supplier, Coop – which is a large convenience store, a second hand shop, gift shop, florist, ironmongers, antique shop and a charity shop.

The villages experiences rather transient retail outlets. Some have opened for a few years before closing once again. Ten new ones have started trading within the last 5 years. The only retail units to have lasted for more than ten years are the Trading Post, Coop, Outside Interests and the Five Villages Pharmacy. Other long term outlets are car repairs, services and catering. At the time of writing there are 4 vacant shops, one vacant public house, one of the shops is advertising the lease for sale and the empty site has planning permission

has been given for a retail outlet. The high proportion of new outlets and vacant units would suggest trading conditions are rather challenging at present. The recession, the rapid increase of on-line shopping and lack of adequate parking certainly seem to be taking their toll.

The overriding questions raised on business plans must be concerned with the viability and profit. The start up costs for retail shops could be considerable and it is difficult to see how the necessary turnover could be generated to make a shop trade successfully – indeed small individual traders have favoured Windmill Shopping Village with its lower rents and free parking. It would seem that only the service sector or shops with services can offer a viable alternative.

Parking

A continual complaint is the lack of parking space in Barnham Village. Barnham Station draws in traffic and people need to park before getting a train. Consequently free parking on the nearby roads are used by daily commuters, the occasional traveller and those parking for several days. The 27 spaces in Barnham Road near the railway station are occupied by 8am with later arrival parking further from the station. This leaves only 22 spaces with restricted waiting times that can be used by customers. The two car parks provide more spaces but at a price. Free parking provided by businesses for both staff and customers is somewhat limited. About 35% of the businesses providing free parking for staff and 20% for customers, albeit it includes the supermarket which has the largest number of employees and the greatest number of customers. The need for the retail outlets staff to find somewhere to park exacerbates the problem especially as some park in spaces with restricted waiting which leaves even fewer available for customers. The surveys of the residents showed that a clear majority of those who replied had concerns about parking and would like more parking space available. Significantly 75% of the respondents wanted additional retail parking to take precedent over commuter parking. This concern was echoed by those interviewed in the businesses as almost everyone asked the question about what could improve business in Barnham gave a reply about dealing with the parking problems. Most wanted more free parking, restricted parking or even some sort of voucher system. There were complaints that the car park in the square, which used to be free, had recently changed to a pay and display. However the businesses seemed unwilling to provide the financial support to enable limited free parking in that car park. A number of firms also stated that lack of free parking was not an issue for them as they had car parking available or accepted that parking came at a cost. However they recognised that greater availability of parking would improve the number of potential customer for Barnham's retail outlets. There were complaints the introduction of charges in the car park in The Square was causing loss of custom but only two firms, both involved with catering, actually stated that takings had reduced since charging started. It is difficult to determine the impact of lack of free parking on the business community apart from those involved in catering. There is a lack of competition from the Six Villages, there are convenience stores, post offices, takeaways and restaurants but little else to provide competition, and most retail businesses did not consider there was competition locally. However passing trade is restricted by lack of spaces for free parking.

The parking issue does seem difficult to be resolved.

The car parks are privately owned and can set their own charges, West Sussex County Council are responsible for the highways and Arun District Council for enforcing waiting restrictions. Eastergate Parish Council, in which the Barnham Shopping Centre is located, has no responsibility regarding parking. The West Sussex County Councillor has stated

that if there were increased parking restrictions it would only relocated the problem so such a proposal would not be supported.

However if councils acted on their policies to increase employment and responded to the concerns of both residents and businesses then dealing with parking would be a priority. Increased free parking would increase the number of people able to use Barnham's shops which would be beneficial to existing and new outlets. One possibility regarding parking is that all the roads in the centre should have restricted waiting that is enforced more effectively, possible by electronic means with CCTV and number plate recognition.

The look of the Village Centre

Barnham Village Centre does not look attractive. Little effort has been made to improve the overall attractiveness of the place. This was noted by a number of resident in the survey and commented upon by a number of businesses.



Driving in from the south there are the advertising hoardings of Trading Post on one side of the road and a steep litter filled embankment of the railway line on the other.



The row of well maintained Victorian terraced Rose Cottages is sandwiched between the car park for Outside Interests and the boarded up empty pub and outbuildings, where people have taken the opportunity to park their cars off road in space in front of the building. The railway station, built about 150 years ago has been redecorated and staff continually clear litter from the area around the entrance. Shrubs have been planted in front of the station car park which do brighten up the outlook. Before leaving the Barnham centre to the west the empty shops,



the wasteland of an empty site does contrast adversely with the view of the thatched cottage opposite.

If Barnham is to become a “community hub” it does need to attract the sort of business that would draw in custom rather than relying on the immediate residents. The suggestions of existing businesses are shown elsewhere. Competition from on-line shopping would restrict new outlets to those that offer a service or goods with a service as well as parking facilities for customers.

It is difficult to see how the village centre can attract passing trade, especially from tourists in the summer, with its “look” and its parking problems. Barnham Village Centre needs to be made aesthetically attractive and parking become more accessible if it is to become a location to shop rather than pass through as quickly as traffic conditions allow.

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