

Meldreth Businesses

Meldreth-based businesses were identified from the Yellow Pages, village magazines, walking around and anecdotal evidence. 84 businesses (including the schools and farms) were identified but 8 were found to be no longer trading in Meldreth. The 76 active businesses were sent questionnaires and 62 replied – a response rate of 82%. The process undoubtedly missed several home-based businesses and it is probable there are about 90 active businesses in the village.

12 of the respondents are manufacturers, of which 9 are also distributors. There are a further 12 distributors.

Employment and Turnover

The businesses employ 566 full-time and 204 part-time staff and expect to employ 595 full-time and 268 part-time staff in 5 years' time. Current turnover of the respondents is £42 million/year.

The four largest employers (Eternit, Scope (Meldreth Manor School), E. W. Pepper (Bury Farm) and Gocold) have a combined turnover of £34.5m and employ 585.

Allowing for missed businesses and those that did not reply, estimated numbers for the village are:

90 businesses, turning over £50 million/year from 600 full-time and 300 part-time employees

Travelling to work

Of the respondents' 780 full- and part-time employees:

- 248 were thought to live in Meldreth, of which 104 live on the premises or work from home
- 43 walk to work
- 52 cycle
- 18 use the train and 52 the buses
- 511 drive to work using a car, motorbike or van.

Work Experience Opportunities

13 businesses offer work experience or work shadowing opportunities and a further 6 may be willing to offer opportunities.

Skills Shortages

15 businesses identified skills shortages in the area. These include skilled food services operatives, manual labourers, fruit growing, butchery, livestock, D1 driving license holders, engineers, fitters, qualified accounts staff, care staff, nurses and physiotherapists.

Village Signposting

11 businesses indicated customers, suppliers, visitors or hauliers experience difficulty in finding them. This may be due to businesses needing better signs, the Parish Council needing to give permission, or more signs being needed generally in the village.

Road System

44 find the roads in Meldreth satisfactory, 8 do not. Speeding, poor parking, speed bump design, poor maintenance and street lighting were identified as issues.

Rail System

45 find the rail facility satisfactory, 3 do not. Lack of a full-time ticket office and the need for more trains are issues.

Bus System

18 say the bus system is satisfactory from a business perspective. The 9 who do not all highlight the limited number of buses or routes. For most small businesses the bus service is irrelevant.

Services

Businesses were asked for their opinions on a range of services; their responses where they use the service were:

Service	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Good or satisfactory
Ambulance	10	10	0	100%
Fire brigade	10	9	0	100%
Courier	22	21	1	98%
Telephones	27	21	3	94%
Electricity	21	24	3	94%
Internet connection	21	19	4	91%
Water	22	17	4	91%
Gas	14	5	2	90%
Sewage/foul water drains	11	20	4	89%
Postal	15	28	8	84%
Rubbish disposal	3	25	6	82%
Storm water drains	5	20	13	66%
Police	10	12	15	59%

Generally businesses are satisfied with these services. Echoes of the Household Questionnaire are evident in the indifferent rating of the police and storm water drains.

Specific issues highlighted were:

- length of time to get telephones fixed
- difficulties in disposing of asbestos roofing sheets
- lack of recycling help from South Cambridgeshire District Council
- SG post code and limited post deliveries
- drains in North End and Chiswick End and the sewer in North End
- frequency of power cuts.

Entertainment Facilities

Generally, businesses do not use local pubs or restaurants to entertain. 2 use the British Queen, 20 go elsewhere. 30 responses commented on the British Queen – none of these comments was complimentary and all echo the Household Questionnaire findings.

Is the Ambience/State of Upkeep of Meldreth helpful?

17 businesses say yes and 34 find it neutral; none finds it unhelpful. Several replies said their clients comment favourably and one stressed

"a positive situation is always helpful to a business in giving a good impression to customers".

Dealings with the Parish Council

Of those who have experience of dealing with the Parish Council, 14 always find them helpful, 6 sometimes and 1 never. Comments were *"Clerk is exceptional"* and *"Council should pay attention and act on what's told them"*.

Interest in being listed in a Directory of Village Businesses

About 30 businesses would like to be listed on a village website, a suitable notice board and/or brochure – about 20 do not.

Messages from the Questionnaire about what would help Businesses

- need low-cost office and other facilities
- improve telecom and security
- improve the appearance of access roads to the village
- don't flout planning regulations
- improve the pub, which should serve food
- need a good venue with catering facilities for small meetings
- low-cost housing
- preserve the rail service
- open the post office during lunch hours and provide road tax facility
- CB postcode
- better signposting and village communication
- roads need resurfacing; humps need removing
- clients see Meldreth as a pleasant, quiet and tidy village to visit
- planning issues.

Planning Issues

Planning Constraints

Meldreth is surrounded by high-quality (grade 2) agricultural land and lies in the "Area of Restraint" south of Cambridge. Being in an Area of Restraint means that housing development can only take place within the village envelope as defined in the SCDC Local Plan (see map). Exceptions are made for affordable housing developments that are next to the boundaries of the envelope and sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling showmen which are subject to different planning rules (Policy HG 23 in the SCDC Local Plan).

Meldreth is situated within the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area. The Conservation Area, established in September 1975 and covering North End from Bury Farm southwards past the Stocks and down the High Street to The Gables plus part of Fenny Lane, protects the low-density linear character of this part of Meldreth. Sites of Archaeological Interest include areas at Flambards Close and east of High Street and north of the Sewage Treatment Works.

In the lists of Listed Buildings published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport there are one grade I (Holy Trinity Church) and thirty-eight grade II buildings.

County Structure Plan, South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework and the East of England Plan

The planning system is in a period of change with the County Structure Plan being taken into the East of England Plan covering the whole region.

The Cambridgeshire County Structure Plan wants 20,000 new homes to be built in South Cambridgeshire in the period 1999 to 2016. Cambridge City is to have 12,500 new homes in the same period. The table below shows where the new homes will be.

New Homes to be built:	Cambridge City	South Cambridgeshire
Within the built up area of Cambridge. Including parts of South Cambridgeshire	6,500	2,400
	8,900	
On the edge of Cambridge – needs changes to the Green Belt boundary	6,000	2,000
	8,000	
In the new village of Northstowe (between Longstanton & Oakington)		6,000
Growth of the 5 selected rural centres and “windfall” sites in the villages		9,600
TOTAL	12,500	20,000

There is some bracketing together of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire owing to the number of potential locations close to the city boundary.

The South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) plans that a limited proportion of the overall development will take place at Rural Centres. Melbourn was identified as a potential Rural Centre, but was not selected in the Preferred Options public consultation in October and November 2004. Cambourne, Fulbourn, Great Shelford & Stapleford, Histon & Impington and Sawston were the 5 villages chosen for growth based on the services and facilities they provide. The LDF is due to be adopted in June 2006 following further public consultation and public examination.

Other parts of the housing requirement will be met through “windfall sites in the villages”.

The “East of England Plan” or draft revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England, is produced by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA). It was open for public consultation until 16 March 2005. This plan builds on the LDFs of the whole region and covers the period 2001 to 2021.

Under the plan, South Cambridgeshire is required to provide an average of an extra 1,175 homes a year from 2001 to 2021 - 23,500 extra homes in total. This is the highest total of any district in the East of England.

The first plan (RPG14) was “banked” in February 2004; but an extra 18,000 homes were requested by Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, causing a review. However both the extra 18,000 extra homes and an extra runway at Stansted have been rejected by EERA.

The driving force for this high growth in homes required is that the East of England is the third most prosperous region in the UK (after London and the South East) and homes are expected to be needed for 421,500 new jobs by 2021. 478,000 new homes, of which half are already built or are in plans, are to support these jobs in the East of England. This means an extra 23,900 new houses/year, doubling of the number affordable homes and more sustainable transport.

However the East of England Regional Assembly suspended its endorsement of the plan in December 2004 due to lack of central government funding for essential infrastructure – particularly regarding improved transport – but is committed to the public consultation on the draft plan in order to gauge responses and gather comments on the proposals. Meldreth

Parish Council has put in objections to the plan that question the ability of South Cambridgeshire to take this growth with the existing and planned infrastructure and without encouraging more long-distance commuting – particularly to London.

Planning Policies of SCDC

With the services that we have, Meldreth has been identified in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan as a Group Village. This means residential development and redevelopment up to a maximum scheme size of 8 dwellings will be permitted within the village framework (see map). Development may exceptionally consist of up to 15 dwellings, if this would make the best use of a brown field site.

The village is constrained by surrounding high-grade agricultural land and being in the Area of Restraint, any new residential development can only take place within the village's identified envelope (see map). SCDC say they will resist back land development, particularly in the northern part of the village in order to retain its strong linear character.

The Parish Plan supports the stated SCDC planning policy on Meldreth. This is as follows:

1. The Local Planning Authority will resist strongly any development between the A10 bypass and the built-up area of Melbourn in order to retain high-grade agricultural land, to protect the important open and rural aspect of this area and the shallow valley of the River Mel and to maintain clear separation between Meldreth and Melbourn. They are concerned that Melbourn may “creep” towards Meldreth. Similarly, the District Council will resist any proposals for roadside outlets on the A10 bypass in open countryside.
2. One area (of approximately 1.0 hectares) north of Chiswick End is allocated for residential development (of 30 houses). Planning permission will not be given until an agreement (under Section 106 of the Planning Act) has been signed ensuring that the whole of the site, including the area at present in employment use (by Holland's), will be given over to housing. Development of this site will be subject to affordable housing being included and planning permission will not be granted until a legal agreement has been signed to make this happen. Note: this has been in the LDF since 1989.

Proposed Planning Objectives for the Meldreth Parish Plan

1. To ask the Parish Council to prepare a Village Design Statement to ensure the design and layout of housing schemes should be influenced by the wider character and context of the local village landscape. Schemes should also achieve high-quality design and distinctiveness, avoid inflexible standards and promote energy efficiency. Village Design Statements are important in supporting the village's wishes in planning applications and appeals.
2. Meldreth has grown by 1996 to 270% of its 1951 size. This has been more rapid than the surrounding villages of Shepreth (172%), Whaddon and Orwell (223%). The continuing development of infill sites with up to 8 houses per development, as allowed for Group Villages such as Meldreth, will change the character of Meldreth. Meldreth should seek to limit the growth of residential developments within the village framework to the sustainable recycling of brown-field sites bringing positive overall benefit to the village, in the form of affordable housing.
3. Local landowners and businesses are to be encouraged to consider selling or developing land that would qualify for affordable housing - that is land immediately adjacent to the village framework or brown-field sites. The Parish Council should seek ways to work with SCDC to find ways to encourage this.