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For and on behalf of  
**Whitchurch Parish Council**

## **Employment, Skills and Commuting Evidence Report**

**Whitchurch Parish Council**

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## **0.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.0 In addition to considering open spaces, DLP have gathered evidence on the current employment and commuting profile of Whitchurch in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES).
- 2.0 This information is set out to help Whitchurch Parish Council highlight any employment related issues which could be considered reflected in the Neighbourhood Planning process. The report will also contribute towards a growing evidence base which can be used to support the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.0 The main focus of this report is to present existing evidence such as Census data and background evidence published to support the B&NES Local Plan Core Strategy, to begin to build a picture of the employment profile of Whitchurch Parish. The report also includes some initial thinking into the type of employment related policies which the Parish Council may wish to consider including in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.0 Following reviewing this profile and/or if specific employment related issues emerge through consultation, the Parish Council may wish to identify whether further employment/ commuting related evidence is required to support the Neighbourhood Plan

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND AREA BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction**

- 1.1 In terms of administrative boundaries, the Parish of Whitchurch is located in the North West fringe of Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES), adjacent to the southern boundary of the Bristol Local Authority and urban area.
- 1.2 The village lies around the often busy A37 (Bristol Road) which provides a direct link to Bristol city centre. Off this main route there are a number of narrow lanes which permeate through the surrounding countryside. The designated village centre follows part of the A37, and provides a limited retail offer or focus in terms of being a destination within the village.
- 1.3 In terms of residential development Whitchurch has/ is expanding with two large sites being released from the Green Belt for housing development in recent years. Land at Sleep Lane, released through the Local Plan has now been built out consisting of 47 new dwellings (Imperial Court). B&NES Core Strategy Policy RA5 (adopted in July 2014) allocated Land at Whitchurch (known as 'Horseworld') as a strategic site allocation. When built this will provide around a further 200 dwellings within the Parish boundary. The development of these two sites will have implications in terms of the employment profile and level of out commuters from the Parish, but could also offer advantages in terms of a higher critical mass required to sustain further village services.
- 1.4 The decision to choose Whitchurch as a strategic housing allocation was based on its sustainable location arising from its close proximity to the city of Bristol. With this in mind it is also key to consider current commuting patterns, including where local residents work and how they get there and the future outcomes of the emerging Joint Strategy Plan being produced by the four former Avon Authorities.

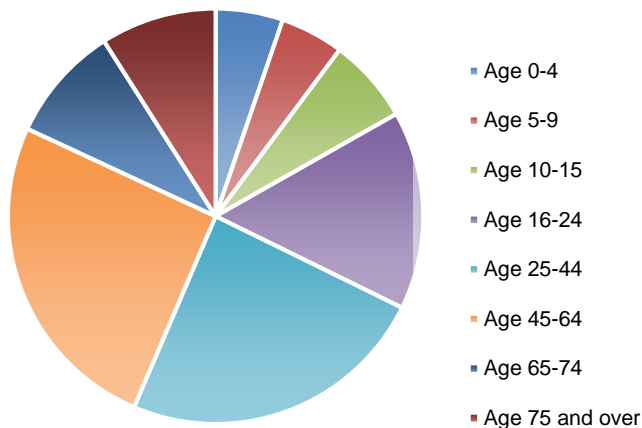
### **Population**

- 1.5 Whitchurch Parish has a usual resident population of around 1,350 people (2011 Census Profile). To understand the employment profile and consider future needs (i.e. employment, services, etc.), it is helpful to understand the local age structure of Whitchurch's residents. Based on the villages location comparisons have been made

with both B&NES (as the village lies within its administrative boundaries) and Bristol (due to the close proximity).

- 1.6 In terms of initial observations when comparing Whitchurch to both Bristol and Bath, it is apparent that Whitchurch has a slightly older age profile. The parish has a higher proportion of 45 - 64 yr. olds at around 31% (25.5%: Bath. Bristol: 21.2%) and grouped together a lower proportion of 16 - 44 yr. olds accounting for around 30% of the population (Bath: 39.7%. Bristol: 47.3%). Whitchurch also has a higher proportion of those aged 75+ (11% compared to 9% in Bath and 6.6% in Bristol) and therefore not surprisingly a higher retired population at 16.4% (B&NES: 13.7%. Bristol: 9.8%).

**Figure 1: Whitchurch Population Structure**



2011 Census Profile (ONS © Crown Copyright 2013)

- 1.7 In Whitchurch, the total number of those people aged 16 – 74 is 982, of which 723 are economically active (73.6%). 368 residents are employed full time (37.5%), 168 part-time (17.1%), 128 are self-employed (13%), 23 unemployed (2.3%) and 36 full time students (3.7%).
- 1.8 As stated above, unemployment within the Whitchurch Parish is low at 2.3%. The average rate of unemployment for B&NES is marginally higher at 2.7% and Bristol higher again at 4.3%.
- 1.9 The number of those qualified to level 4 and above (degree equivalent), is significantly less than the average for the larger surrounding authorities at 18.5% of those residents aged 16+ (B&NES: 33.4%, Bristol: 32.8%). However, this does vary significantly across

wards in both Local Authorities and can depend on which areas are more popular to students. Adjoining wards in Bristol for example such as Stockwood and Hengrove also rate considerably lower than the local authority average at 13.7% and 14.6% respectively.

- 1.10 In terms of the top four types of employment undertaken by residents of Whitchurch 17.8% of the working age population are employed within in the wholesale and retail trade/ repair of motor vehicles, 14.4% are employed in construction (notably higher than B&NES: 7.3% and Bristol: 7.7%), 13.2% in human health and social work and 9.9% in manufacturing related jobs (Whitchurch 2011 Census profile).
- 1.11 When considering the Census National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification, as with both Bristol and Bath, the highest proportion of Whitchurch residents fall within Category 2: Lower managerial and professional occupations at 21.5% - see below.

**Figure 2: Socio-Economic Classification**



Whitchurch 2011 Census Profile

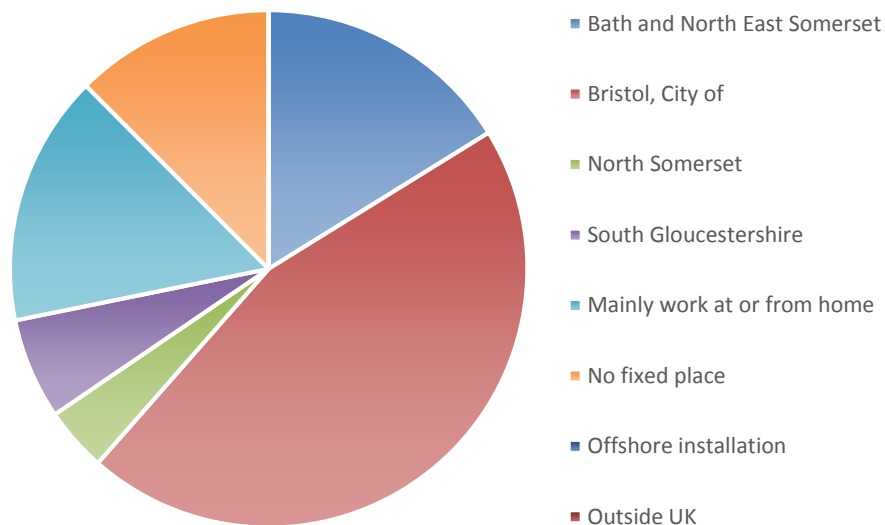
## COMMUTING

- 1.12 Due to a limited source of local employment, the Parish of Whitchurch experiences high levels of out-commuting. According to census travel to work data (covering the larger Publow and Whitchurch ward) the majority of residents work in Bristol with around 52% of all journeys going into the City of Bristol.

1.13 This in itself could be seen as a relatively minor concern based on the proximity, size and employment profile of Bristol, however the issue being that despite this close proximity those commuting into Bristol are generally doing so by van or car adding to local congestion. According to Census data only 14% of the Publow and Whitchurch ward's working residents use a non-car mode of transport to get to work. (Census Mode Share Review). Also when considering the number of cars/ vans per household, 57.8% of households have 2 or more cars, compared to just 35.8% in B&NES and 26% in Bristol.

1.14 Figure 3 below, shows the distribution of those residents and where they commute to in terms of authority boundaries in the South West.

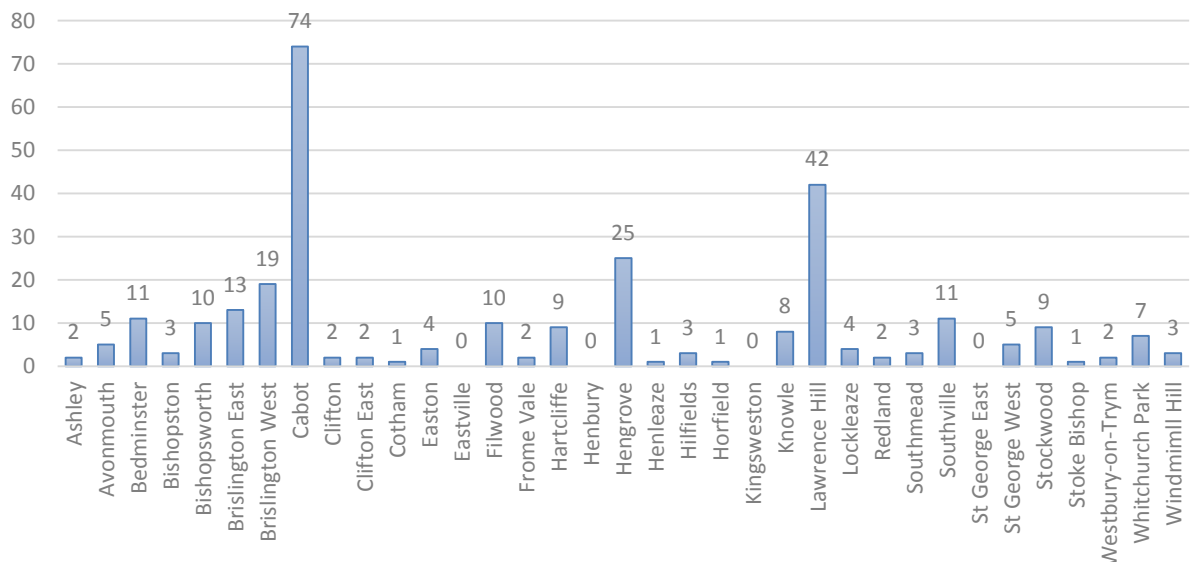
**Figure 3: Place of work for usual Whitchurch residents**



1.15 Figure 4 shown on the following page indicates the wards within Bristol, which those from Whitchurch are commuting to. Not surprisingly the most common source of employment is within the Cabot Ward, which covers a large proportion of central Bristol. Following that comes Lawrence Weston also within the centre of Bristol and including employment areas such as St Phillips. Significant in terms of its location near to Whitchurch, the next highest destination is Hengrove located directly north of Whitchurch.



**Figure 4: Usual residents of Whitchurch/ Place of work in Bristol (Census Travel to work data)**



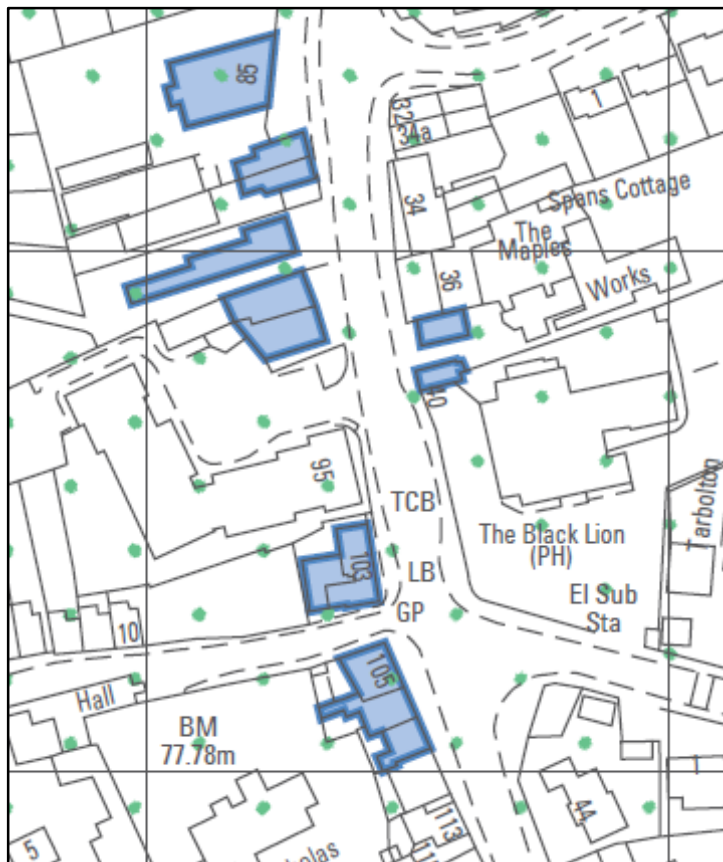
1.16 According to the 2011 Whitchurch Parish Census Profile around 71% of commuters drive a car or van to their place of work which is significantly higher than B&NES at 55.4% and Bristol at 49.9%. Although It is acknowledged that a greater proportion of residents of Bristol and Bath are likely to live closer to the main hubs of employment, the area does also rate poorly against wards of a similar location. In a Strategic Allocation transport evaluation study undertaken by B&NES relating to Land at Whitchurch (Horseworld), of the 7 other B&NES wards they included in their study Publow and Whitchurch was considered the least sustainable (in terms of travel to work) and also one of the least sustainable in the authority.

1.17 In terms of more sustainable travel options, only 6.9% of those residing in the Whitchurch Parish walk to work (compared to an average of 17.2% in B&NES and 19.3% in Bristol. Again, it has been acknowledged that the residential properties of Whitchurch are often too far from both existing and future employment centres for walking to be a major mode of commuter travel. Nevertheless, based on the location of the A37, linking Whitchurch to Bristol City Centre, Public transport usage could be improved. Despite being directly linked via the A37 running through the village there is limited public transport take up at around 8%. Residents are often said to be put off using buses as they are slow due to the highly congested route.

- 1.18 Improvements to cycle infrastructure around the Whitchurch locality could also encourage more sustainable transport choices. B&NES Accession data undertaken for the Core Strategy indicated it is possible to cycle from Whitchurch to edge of Bristol city centre and the edge of Keynsham town centre in approximately 20 minutes. Despite this only 1.1% travel to work by bicycle.
- 1.19 The nearest railway station to Whitchurch is at Keynsham (4.3km) with the main hub at Bristol Temple Meads a short distance further (5.5km).

### Employment, Retail and Community Uses

- 1.20 As previously discussed the residential properties of Whitchurch are built up on either side of the A37. The relatively disjointed village retail strip follows part of the A37, however the limited retail offer means the village centre lacks focus in terms of being a destination within the village.



Extract taken from B&NES Local Plan Proposals Map (Inset 10)

1.21 According to the B&NES Rural Facilities Audit 2013 along with convenience retail (which has since gone), there are five other A class units located in the Whitchurch Parish, including two estate agents (A2), a musical instrument shop (A1), a hairdressers (A1) and a Toby Carvery public house/ restaurant (A4). When considering the village centre as a day to day destination, the area falls short in terms of its primary retail offer. Further providing services such a local convenience retail or a café in the village could enhance the community vitality of the centre and encourage local spending.

1.22 According to the B&NES Rural Facilities Audit 2013, the following key services exist in Whitchurch. However, as mentioned at the point of this study there were no convenience retail units located within the Parish.

Facility	No.
Convenience Shop	1
Post Office	0
Primary School	1
Community Meeting Place	3
At least a daily Monday to Saturday public transport service to main centres	Yes

1.23 In terms of local B1/B2/B8 category employment opportunities Whitchurch has several smaller light industrial units including eight industrial/ workshop spaces and two garage repairs and/or MOT Centres. Niche light industrial uses include a musical instrument manufacturer/ repair unit also attached to the music shop. Consideration may be required to further understand the local need and supply of such uses including the quality and vacancy rates etc. to consider whether further provision might be required and could be accommodated in the Parish.

1.24 In terms of community space Whitchurch has two churches, a community hall attached to a church and three Community Centres/ Village Halls. There are however no local health services provided in the village with the majority of residents required to attend services provided in the Bristol administrative area.

1.25 In terms of educational facilities there is one local primary school and one nursery/play group. There are however plans to increase the size of the existing primary school based

on the increase in population from the two housing developments. The nearest secondary school is Broadlands Academy in Keynsham.

- 1.26 A popular response in terms of the Parishes Initial Neighbourhood Plan consultation, again highlighted the need for a village shop, a café and further health and care facilities. There was also highlighted support to encourage local businesses within the locality enabling them to flourish and inspiring new businesses to locate here.

### **Strategic Employment Growth**

- 1.27 According to the West of England Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) undertaken to inform the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP); Whitchurch falls within the ‘South Bristol and Fringe’ Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) sub-area.

*“South Bristol and Fringe – South Bristol and Fringe is a relatively deprived area within the WoE context and has a relative dearth of employment space, despite being well located near the Bristol urban area and close to Bristol Airport. This situation represents a degree of market failure. To address this issue there is potential to stimulate demand through investment in key infrastructure and planning policy support for additional employment land provision”.*

- 1.28 As mentioned above the South Bristol FEMA does not currently contain significant employment areas but it has the potential to in the future if infrastructure such as the South Bristol link road is built and major housing and employment growth is realised. This then offers a more conveniently located source of employment to encourage more sustainable transport choices.

### **Neighbourhood Plan Considerations**

- 1.29 As stated in the B&NES Core Strategy, planning should help to provide conditions for which a more environmentally sustainable economy can develop with increased local employment, less overall commuting and a strong low-carbon business sector (B&NES Core Strategy).
- 1.30 Delivering further employment opportunities in this locality could go some way to addressing this potential. As part of the Neighbourhood Plan it may be appropriate to

set out planning policies which support any potential for economic growth in the area e.g. home working and internet provision, in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to the new development.

- 1.31 As mentioned the increase in population associated with the new housing developments could allow for the increased viability of local services and facilities e.g. new retail provision. It is understood that the Parish Council has already considered what facilities are available, what are required and are there further sites/ land which might be available to allocate in the future.
- 1.32 As mentioned there may be a requirement to further understand the level, quality and function of both formal e.g. office/workshop and informal (home working) workspace available in Whitchurch. Is there an identified local need for industrial/ office space in Whitchurch? Should existing provision be safeguarded, Could a potential Neighbourhood Plan policy encourage the delivery of managed workspace providing flexible space for new and growing businesses in the area? Is there any demand for small flexible units or increased home working?
- 1.33 Based on the size of the Parish, Whitchurch is very likely to continue to experience high levels of out commuting into neighbouring employment centres. It would therefore be beneficial to consider how to encourage more sustainable commuting patterns through improvements to public transport, cycling and pedestrian routes.
- 1.34 The 'Horseworld' indicative masterplan showing the future proposals at this residential development will hopefully see the introduction of a number of improvements in terms of local connectivity both out of and within the Parish including the potential introduction of a bus route through the development site and more accessible pedestrian routes allowing greater connectivity between the village and new development.
- 1.35 To encourage some future residents to take advantage of the reasonably distanced cycle route connection to Bristol, further improvements to the cycle infrastructure may be required to improve the strategic cycle connectivity. Whitchurch Parish may wish to consider current routes and whether any future improvements could require safeguarding of land.

- 1.36 In terms of public realm and traffic measures, some funding has been made available for certain improvements through the planning obligations associated with Sleep Lane, e.g. the Woollard Lane junction with the A37.
- 1.37 However further consideration may be required in terms of how best to use future finance made available through CIL, Planning Obligations and other available funding streams to improve the public transport offer, and pedestrian / cycle improvements.

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