

EUREKA PLACE: SURVEY OF BUSINESS NEEDS

A survey was conducted on 29 November and 2 December 2019 by Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish Council to explore the views of businesses and services in Eureka Place about current and future needs for space and facilities. This followed up on a previous survey in March 2018, this time aiming for an improved participation rate and more comprehensive recording. The previous survey had indicated a generally positive attitude to the planned further development of Eureka Park, with some interest in expansion of several businesses, and marked concern about car parking.

Methodology

A brief structured interview schedule (see Appendix 1) was designed in order to ask the 13 businesses/services based at Eureka Place about their needs for building space and parking. In each case the interviewer asked to speak to 'the most senior person available', introduced himself, recorded the job title of the interviewee, gave the brief rationale for the survey indicated in the interview schedule, and recorded the answers to the questions. He also gave the short rationale for the survey indicated in the interview schedule, and between questions 2 and 3 provided the schedule's information about the Borough Council's plans for further development of Eureka Park. In 5 cases the interviewer postponed the interview until the following week in order to talk to someone more senior than the employees available on the first occasion.

Using this method of personal approach and brief structured interview, an overall response rate of 85% (11 out of 13) was achieved (see Appendix 2). The job titles of interviewees included 'manager' (64% of respondents), senior clinician (18%), and receptionist (also 18%).

The responses are reported collectively rather than identified with individual respondents, in order to ensure commercial confidentiality.

Results

1. Does your business currently have enough space to operate fully?

Yes - 91%

No – 9%

2. Do your customers experience problems parking in Eureka Place?

Yes – 73%

No – 27%

3. With the additional population close by, would you envisage the need for extra space for your business over the next 5 or more years?

Yes – 55%

No – 27%

There were two further responses here:

Maybe

Unsure – it would be up to Head Office

4. As Eureka Park is further developed, do you think current car parking at Eureka Place will be adequate?

Yes – 18%

No – 82%

5. Are there any further comments you would like to make?

It's going to be very busy – with traffic, the road can be a nightmare

If we get more people, good – only issue is traffic

Parking!!

More houses – need better GP service

There were also many comments about the difficulties of car parking for staff. Although there is parking space allocated for staff at the back of the buildings, this is often insufficient (eg, *we've got 100 staff, but only 25 staff parking spaces*) especially with delivery lorries occupying space, and occasional customers intruding there. Staff were reported as sometimes resorting to using customer car parking spaces, but then falling foul of the 3-hour parking restriction, and the £60 penalty for overstaying.

Summary of Results

At present almost all businesses and services at Eureka Place regard their premises as adequate, although the majority have concerns about parking. However, a majority see a need for expansion of their premises in the face of development that is planned for the foreseeable future in Eureka Park. It is difficult to see scope for this within the confines of Eureka Place – all the more so given the very clearly expressed concerns about parking.

2 December 2019

APPENDIX 1

BOUGHTON ALUPH & EASTWELL PARISH COUNCIL

EUREKA PLACE SURVEY – NOVEMBER 2019

Business:

Interviewee: (Job title)

This brief survey is being conducted by Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish Council as part of the process of formulating a Neighbourhood Plan for the area. When completed the Neighbourhood Plan will guide local planning decisions – including those for Eureka Place - for the next ten years.

Firstly, we would like to ask a couple of questions about the current situation:

1. Does your business currently have enough space to operate fully?
2. Do your customers experience parking problems parking in Eureka Place?

Ashford Borough Council [Local Plan, 2019, p.111] has plans for *a mix of commercial (around 20 ha) and residential development (indicative capacity of 375 dwellings)*. These plans suggest approximately 1000 new local residents, together with an increase in employees based in neighbouring businesses.

In the light of this, we would like to ask a couple of questions about the future:

3. With the additional population close by, would you envisage the need for extra space for your business over the next 5 or more years?
4. As Eureka Park is further developed, do you think current car parking at Eureka Place will be adequate?
5. Are there any further comments you would like to make?

APPENDIX 2

PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

Eureka Place 1-Stop Shop

Delmergate Pharmacy

Catch (Fish and Chips)

Eureka Café

Pizza Hut

Sunkissed (Tanning and Beauty Salon)

Eureka Veterinary Centre

The Pheasant

BusyBees Nursery

EasySmile Dental Practice

Ashford Community Mental Health Services