

# Kington St. Michael Neighbourhood Plan Economy and Enterprise Report

Updated December 2025

## Introduction

Supporting a strong, responsive and competitive economy is one of the three main objectives of sustainable development as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024, para. 8<sup>1</sup>).

This report sets out local information about the economy in Kington St. Michael Parish, including a summary of existing economic activity and a summary of a local business survey undertaken throughout 2021. The local business survey related particularly to home working in the Parish.

This report supports related policies in the Kington St. Michael Neighbourhood Plan.



Some of the Parish's key employers  
Clockwise from left: Kington Kids,  
Matinai, Leigh Delamere service  
station

<sup>1</sup> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>

## Summary of Economic Activity in Kington St Michael

During the second half of the last century, Kington St. Michael was very much focused on an agricultural economy. Today however the situation is much more diverse.

There has been a consolidation of farms, with owners located within and outside of the parish owning one, or in many cases, more tracts of land within the Parish and elsewhere, providing economies of scale. Two farms now focus on livery services and there are also a limited number of small holdings.

For its size, the village is well served with hospitality facilities. Available accommodation ranges from a large one-star hotel located in the Leigh Delamere Westbound Services on the M4 at the north end of the parish, the village pub, several holiday rental cottages, and Bed & Breakfast accommodation. As well as the large selection of food outlets at the Motorway Services area, food and drink is also available at the centrally located cluster of the Jolly Huntsman village pub (currently for sale), Kington Café and Kington St Michael village social club. There is also a community owned and principally volunteer run village shop, which provides valuable top-up goods, supplementing supplies from local supermarkets and home delivery services.

Other than the Motorway Services area, which attracts employees from a wide area, there is no dominant employer in the parish. There are no other significant sites offering large employment opportunities. The next largest being the village primary school, the nursery and kids club (run from the village hall).

During the last twenty years the number of home-based enterprises in the parish has increased significantly, driven in part by the availability of broadband and mobile phone infrastructure. As well as the expected building, and other general services; several entrepreneurs have established their own businesses offering IT services and e-commerce opportunities. These range from full to part time employment. These services are wide ranging, and include software development, consultancy, entertainment, and media. A number of these businesses have been established as limited companies, and others as sole traders. The employees per organisation within this sector tend to be limited in number, usually one or two people.

Whilst a majority of working residents commute out of the village, during the recent Covid pandemic, the number of people working from home on a full time basis has increased significantly. This has been facilitated by the availability of high-speed broadband and the mobile networks within the village. Home working is anticipated to continue to be popular for many in the post pandemic environment, supported by conversations with business owners in 2022. There is a lack of provision for drop-in office accommodation and hot-desking in the village, although there are many community facilities and privately owned spaces vacant during normal office hours that could potentially be reviewed. Whilst fibre-to-the-house broadband is now available to much of the village; the mobile phone network needs strengthening, as

several networks do not provide adequate coverage in many locations within the parish.

Figure A (below): Business identified within the parish of Kington St Michael

<b>Prime area of activity</b>	<b>Number of businesses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agricultural	14	13.6
IT related	11	10.7
Hospitality	9	8.7
School/Pre-school	3	2.9
Other (based in village)	51	49.5
Other (activity based outside village).	15	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It is anticipated that several of these businesses are inactive and therefore these figures are not definitive. This information has been collected from public records, including web based information and Company House records.

## Summary of Local Business Survey

The Covid epidemic prompted a large increase in numbers of people working from their home (WFH) in 2020 and 2021. At the time of preparing this document, it is estimated that there are over forty people in the parish who run a business from home or who undertake some or all their full or part-time employment from their home.

### Business Feedback

To determine the attitude of businesses based in Kington St Michael and those working from home, a cross section of people from 16 businesses were interviewed to receive feedback to three questions:

- a. ***What do you like about the village from a business viewpoint?***
  - The overwhelming comment was that the strong internet connectivity was a big bonus for operating within the parish. As the internet and the Cloud were now vital to operate a business, without this, most operations would have to seek an alternative location. For a small percentage, specifically those situated in more rural areas of the parish, there was dissatisfaction with the speed of the internet links and these commented that this was negatively impacting their businesses.
  - The attractive location of the village was also seen as being a big positive by the vast majority of those interviewed. The M4 offers excellent road links to the Bristol, Reading, London and Heathrow corridor. The close location of Chippenham station and electrification upgrade through to London, was also mentioned, allowing fast access to the East / West rail system, e.g. for London and Bristol for business related meetings.
  - Several interviewees commented that there was a great community spirit within the parish and that this was reflected in the use of social media by residents (Facebook, WhatsApp groups, etc.). These networks are also used by the business community, e.g. to promote local events and at times to highlight business opportunities.
  - Many felt that the village offered good community services such as the shop, café, village hall, club, currently for sale pub, church, and school, and these were at times used by the business community and reinforced networking opportunities. There was also the feeling that these facilities contributed to the parish being a pleasant community in which they were able to obtain a good work-life balance.
- b. ***What could be improved in the parish to better support your and other business activities (inc. working from home, if relevant)?***
  - In all but one interview, the response was that, at best, the mobile telephone service was poor. In a situation where many people are moving away from land-line links, this is seen as having a negative

impact on local business activity. Many were looking for this to be rectified.

- It was noted that several people worked from home for a good deal of their time, but many of these had to work from improvised offices in their kitchen or spare bedroom. This was not ideal, but there is only very limited office space to rent in the parish. One interviewee, who was renting office space within the parish, had to reluctantly move away to a larger facility to expand his business as no suitable premises existed within the parish.
- A number thought that the reintroduction of business breakfast meetings, similar to those held over ten years ago, would be worthwhile for networking and also to better understand what was on offer in the village economy.
- Several of the businesses were concerned about the difficulty in transiting the village due to the large number of parked cars in the main village street. This caused significant issues for vehicles such as tractors, horseboxes, and large delivery vehicles, (this could include emergency vehicles). So much so that many located in the northern part of the village now cut through the Leigh Delamere Services to reach the M4, so that they do not have to drive down the main street. It was suggested by one that a “no parking safe area” be provided in the village so that large vehicles could pull into this to allow other vehicles to pass, and not have to drive on the pavement, as happens now. The suggestion was that this could be opposite the Alms Houses, this would break the long line of parked cars which at times stretched for 0.5 km, from opposite the Ham down to Tor Hill. Between 07.30 and 08.30 on workday mornings, a large portion of traffic heading for the M4 Exit 17 appeared to be using the village as a cut through to the motorway via Leigh Delamere, avoiding the frequent tailbacks and associated delays at the junction.
- The village is not well served for those who cannot, or do not wish to drive. The availability and reliability of local taxi services is poor, and the provision for cyclists in the area is poor, (e.g. no exclusive cycleways, etc).
- Agricultural related businesses noted that they were frequently targeted with rural crime (incl. vandalism, hare coursing and fly-tipping), this possibly being one of the downsides of the parish being well located with many access and exit points to major traffic routes.

c. ***How has Covid impacted on your business and working habits, both good and bad?***

The Office for National Statistics\* reports that almost half of working adults were working from home at times during the Covid pandemic. Their more recent study (February 2022) highlighted that most people who took up home working during the lockdown, now plan a mix of work from home and in the workplace. (“hybrid work”), and a number planned to spend their working life exclusively based at home.

The feedback from those in the parish questioned was varied. Some businesses had not been changed too much by Covid, whilst others had managed to survive due to Government support, and others suffered and just managed to pull through. For a number, their business model changed dramatically, with the increased usage of technology; for example, switching business activities online, e.g., communications and for meetings, etc, and increased usage of online networking tools (such as Zoom and MStTeams), social media, and online marketplaces (for buying and selling goods).

The replies from interviewees can be summarised as follows:

- Covid changed the way many people worked. Post Covid this has continued for many as captured in autumn 2022, a large portion of those interviewed have seen their work patterns change significantly. For example, one interviewee, who pre-Covid spent no time at all working from home, now only visited his office less than once a month. Another had changed from 40% WFH pre-Covid to 90+% post-Covid.
- In this environment many of the interviewees noted that their work-life balance had improved, especially as they were now in control of how they scheduled their time. For example, with minimal commuting to the office, they were able to enjoy more time with the family, to socialise, exercise and enjoy the countryside. Also, they were able to reschedule their timetable to better fit their lifestyle.
- Many considered that the services offered by the village, such as the shop, café, club, and pub reinforced the improved work-life balance both directly, by providing useful goods and services; as well as indirectly by offering opportunities to socialise and meet with other like-minded people.
- Some businesses were able to grow during Covid, for example one digitally based company benefited from the increased demand for their services and increased its workforce from one to four in 2020. Unfortunately, this required moving their office out of the village as no space was available to meet their requirements. The office they vacated was filled immediately, highlighting the demand for office space in the new post Covid business environment.
- Some in the hospitality business, especially those offering accommodation, have suffered in particular during the week, as the number of people travelling for work purposes reduced, as many meetings and conferences moved online.

\*<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/ishybridworkingheretostay/2022-05-23>