

Better Broadband for Wealden

Broadband demand registration survey report

During 2011, the Wealden Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) ran a high speed broadband demand registration website, in tandem with infrastructure delivery projects that won funding through the Rural Development Programme for England¹.

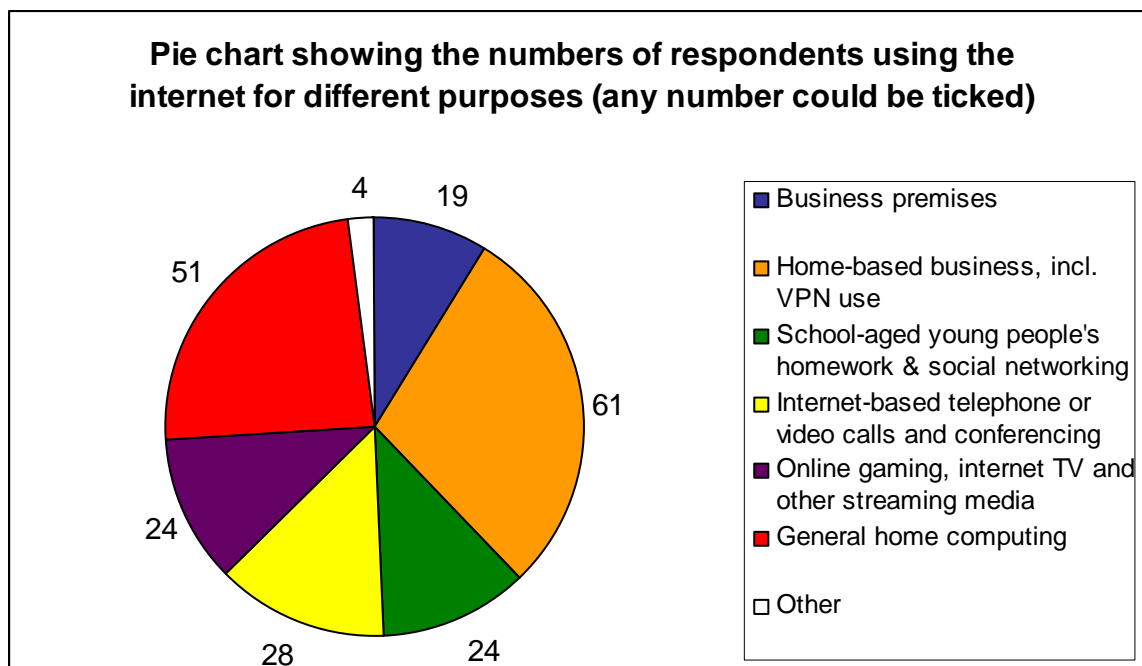
Demonstrating the demand for high speed broadband is one of the key actions local authorities can organise to improve the chances of Next Generation broadband infrastructure being installed in the local area.

However, the pace of change in the development of national programmes to deliver high speed broadband and the need to overcome unavoidable delays in the delivery of the local infrastructure projects has meant that the Wealden survey was not marketed as widely as it would otherwise have been. A county-wide demand registration programme has been being planned over recent months, so Wealden is now encouraging interested residents and businesses to register through the website being developed at the time of writing by East Sussex County Council. This will be accessible from www.eastsussex.gov.uk/business/broadband/.

In the light of this, the majority of the respondents were those contacted during piloting. The Crowborough Partnership (a local business network) were kind enough to circulate it to their members for us.

Results

We received responses from 84 premises in Wealden. This included: nine homes where no business uses were undertaken, 19 Business premises and a further 56 home-based businesses or homes where people logged onto work through a Virtual Private Network (VPN). Among the non-business users, three accessed the internet for online gaming and/or internet-based telephone/video calls or conferencing.



¹ The Rural Development Programme is partly funded by the European Union, through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and partly by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

For all 84 responses, the pie chart above shows the numbers of respondents ticking each of the uses for the internet given.

The table below shows that most respondents that use their connection at least partially for business want faster broadband than they currently have, but not necessarily a step change to very high speed broadband. That said, 5 of the 19 business-only respondents would like Next Generation speeds (above 20 Megabits per second), rising to 21 of 74 when home-based businesses are included. Note that the questionnaire stated: "Bear in mind that the highest speeds are not currently needed for most uses and obviously cost significantly more than slower broadband packages, e.g. between twice and six times the monthly cost".

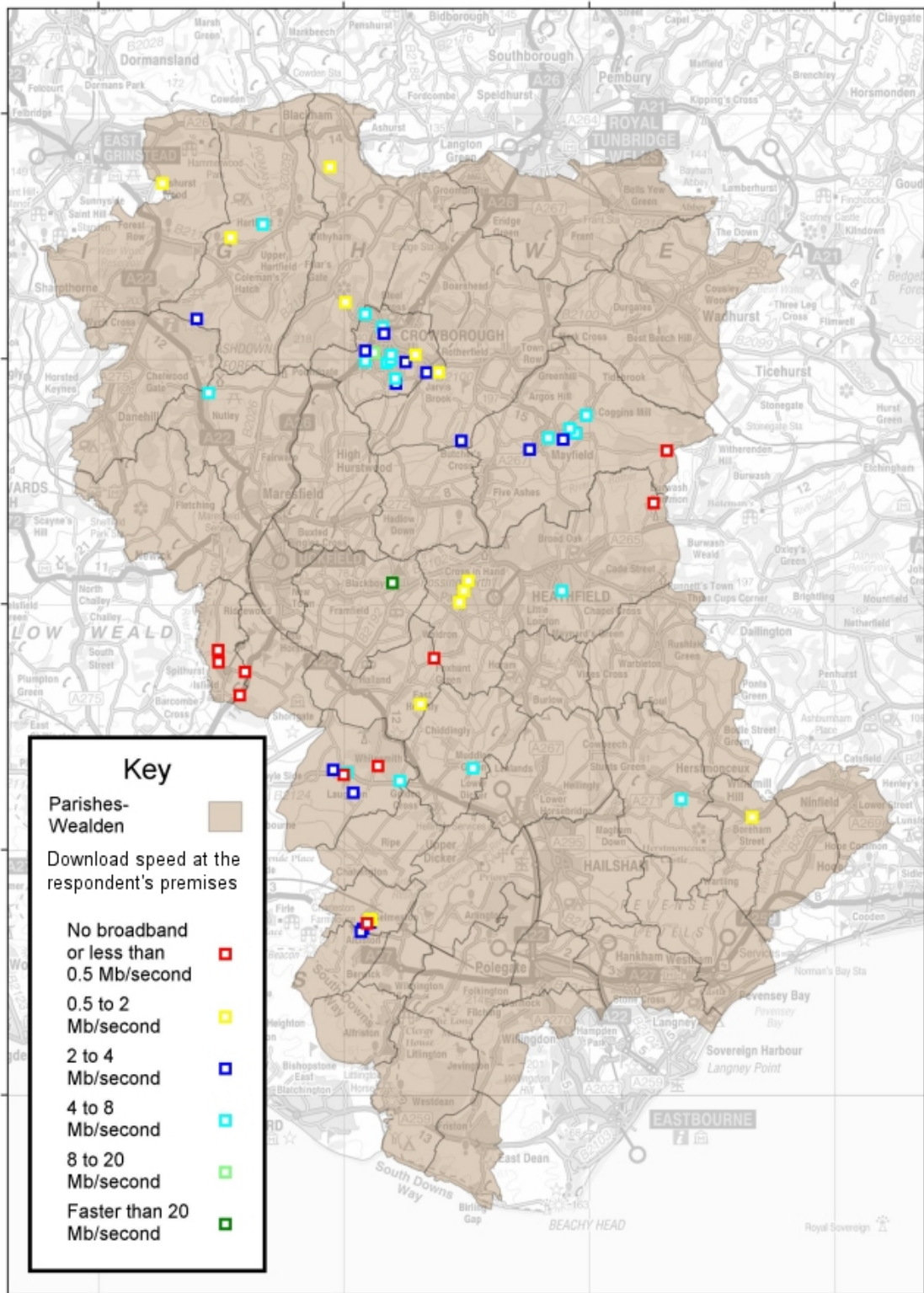
Only one of the respondents, a home-based business or VPN user, was content with the speed of service they received (4–8 Mbps).

Pivot table showing the number of respondents receiving broadband in each different speed category and the download speed they would like to receive, divided between business premises and home-based business uses							
		What actual broadband speed would you like to be able to achieve over course of the next year?					
Type of use	What is the actual download speed at your location at the time of day you most frequently use the internet?						Grand Total
		Less than 4 Mbps	4 to 9 Mbps	10 to 19 Mbps	20 to 50 Mbps	Faster than 50 Mbps	
Home-based business, incl. login to work through a VPN	No broadband or less than 0.5 Mbps	2	4	2		2	10
	0.5 to 2 Mbps	1	3	7			11
	2 to 4 Mbps		2	6	3		11
	4 to 8 Mbps		1	9	6		16
	Faster than 20 Mbps					1	1
	Don't know			1	3		4
	(blank)		1		1		2
HBB & VPN Total		3	11	25	13	3	55
Business premises	No broadband or less than 0.5 Mbps	1	3				4
	0.5 to 2 Mbps		3	2			5
	2 to 4 Mbps			3	1		4
	4 to 8 Mbps			2	1	1	4
	8 to 20 Mbps					1	1
	Don't know				1		1
Business Total		1	6	7	3	2	19
Grand Total		4	17	32	16	5	74

Mbps: Megabits per second

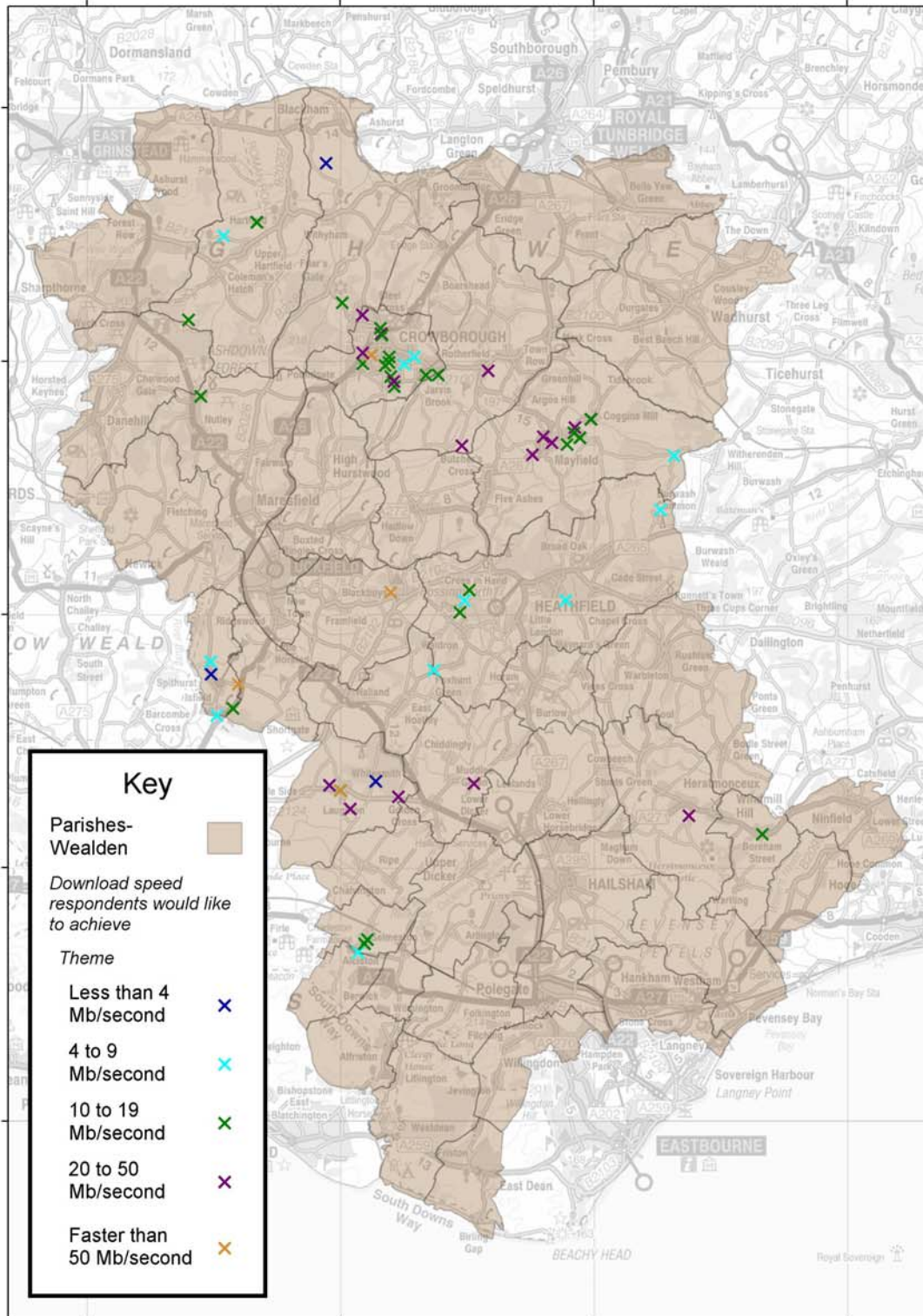
Two maps have been produced. These show the locations of all respondents and the download speeds they currently achieve and secondly, the desired download speeds of business or home-based business users over the next year.

Broadband speeds reported at business and residential premises in response to the Wealden LSP demand registration website (2011)



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Broadband download speeds business respondents would like to achieve over the course of the next year (2012)



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We also asked about willingness to help in the development of high speed broadband. Very encouragingly, almost half (40) of respondents were interested in helping one way or another.

Next steps

East Sussex County Council are leading the rollout of a countywide strategy for Next Generation broadband delivery. They are proposing to more than match the £10.64 million that central government (BDUK) have earmarked for the County's programme. Wealden District Council (WDC) and the Wealden LSP have been taking supportive action on this front. Further funding needs to be generated in order to extend the reach of the County programme further into the 'final 10%' - hardest to reach locations. Our pilot project aiming to bring broadband to three Wealden communities with no, or very poor, service enables us to offer advice to local communities seeking to fund their own projects. This is primarily being achieved through the case study available on the [Wealden LSP website](#).

Where permission was given to do so, we will also forward the responses of people who registered on the Wealden demand registration page to local parish councils and/or East Sussex County Council.

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