Where should Congresbury grow?

This document does not attempt to show where and how Congresbury should grow. It summaries what has been identified through North Somerset Council land assessment and suggests a possible development of a criteria to help select sites for growth.

This report makes several recommendations to Congresbury Parish Council:

- **Recommendation 1** - None of the sites that have been identified within the latest land assessment should be progressed without full assessment through a Neighbourhood plan. The Parish Council should notify North Somerset Council that the current sites identified are outside the settlement boundary and should be rejected.
- **Recommendation 2** – All available land within Congresbury parish should be investigated for potential sites. A list of all land owners should be collated through the Parish Council and made available to the neighbourhood plan project.
- **Recommendation 3** – To review and use the emerging tool being developed by North Somerset Council – ‘sustainability matrix tool’ to assess all sites for future housing developments. This should be used within the development of the neighbourhood plan.

What is a land supply assessment and why is it important?

The National Policy Planning Framework states ‘Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan¹, unless material considerations indicate otherwise’.

North Somerset Council is required to demonstrate it has a 5 year supply for land for development. Without this, developers can submit applications at none identified sites and they maybe successful if they can demonstrate it is a sustainable development.

Each local authority has to undertake a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA) as it is a key component of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing to meet the community’s need for more homes and support the local plan. They are required by national planning policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its supporting guidance (NPPG). These require local planning authorities to prepare such assessments to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the achievability of land to meet the need for housing and economic development over the plan period.

The purposes of the SHLAA are to:

- Identify sites with potential for development
- Assess their development potential (suitability)
- Assess the likelihood of development coming forward (the availability and achievability)

¹ This includes the Local Plan (Core Strategy) and neighbourhood plans which have been made in relation to the area
The role of the assessment is to provide evidence to support plan making but does not in itself determine whether a specific site should be either allocated or granted planning permission for housing or economic development. The assessment does not imply that there is any presumption in favour of any development proposal.

North Somerset Council land supply for development

1.0 North Somerset Council core strategy (local plan)

The Core Strategy is the main planning document/local plan for North Somerset and guides development choices and decisions on development proposals in North Somerset. It was adopted on 10 April 2012.

The Core Strategy is under review following a legal challenge to policy CS13 (scale of new housing) and has been remitted back to the Planning Inspectorate for re-examination. The judgment also required eight other policies CS6, CS14, CS19, CS28 and CS30-33 to be remitted (including CS32, Service Villages) as any change to the housing requirement may have consequences for these other policies. With the exception of these nine policies the plan remains adopted.

North Somerset Council resubmitted new housing numbers and the planning inspector then re-examined the numbers in January 2015 before providing his final report in March 2015. The judgement was North Somerset Council should plan to build a total of 20,985 houses by 2026. In 2012 the core strategy had planned for 14,000. The inspector noted that there is now a backlog of housing. In his view the backlog in the ‘five-year supply’ should be addressed within that time period. North Somerset Council contend that they should be given time to address any backlog (as a result of the new target) within the whole planning period to 2026.

Congresbury is classified as a Service Village under CS32. Regardless of re-examination, the National Planning Policy Framework presumes that any new planning application will meet the requirement for ‘sustainable development’, even outside settlement boundaries.

2.0 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

To support the core strategy and revised numbers, North Somerset Council has conducted three land assessments:

- 2014 Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment
- 2013 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
- 2011 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

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https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Environment/Planning_policy_and-research/localplanning/Pages/Strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-FAQs.aspx
2.1 Identification of sites

The sites considered through the housing assessments are considered potentially suitable for residential development by 2026. The starting point was to identify sites which were broadly consistent with the Core Strategy spatial strategy (ie they were within or adjacent to Weston, Clevedon, Nailsea, Portishead or the service villages, or within an infill village, but excluding Green Belt or AONB). The housing assessments have been a general call to land owners and developers to identify potential sites within the area, rather than a list put forward by Parish Councils or local people on which they were consulted, agreed or disagreed.

The housing assessments make an initial assessment of the suitability, availability and achievability of a site at a level which will enable a judgement to be made in the plan-making process as to whether a site can be considered deliverable or developable in the plan period. In taking forward any site within the schedule the normal plan making procedures will apply and any potential site will be subject to more detailed examination, sustainability appraisal, public consultation and independent examination.

The identification of a site does not imply that there is any presumption in favour of any development proposal or that planning permission will be granted should an application be submitted. Aside from the sites already within the planning process, this schedule illustrates the range of opportunities which could be assessed, along with other sites, should additional housing sites be required as part of the plan-making process in the future. Congresbury Parish Council was invited to comment on only the 2011 land assessment and has had no input to the 2013 or 2014 land assessment.

The latest assessment ‘Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)’ was published in December 2014. For Congresbury figure 1 and 2 shows sites that have been assessed/identified from previous surveys or response from North Somerset Council ‘call for sites’.

Figure 1 – Sites that have been assessed for Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment – December 2014

Figure 2 – Further details of sites identified around Congresbury

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site index</th>
<th>Brief description</th>
<th>Area (gross) Hectares</th>
<th>Dwelling yield</th>
<th>Suitable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE14121</td>
<td>Wrington Road, Congresbury</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Unsuitable 2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE14178</td>
<td>Old Weston Road, Congresbury</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Unsuitable 2A</td>
</tr>
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<td>HE14181</td>
<td>Cobthorn Farm, west of Wrington Road, Congresbury</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Potential</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE14191</td>
<td>Land at Park Farm, Congresbury</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE1422</td>
<td>Cobthorn Way, Congresbury</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE14351</td>
<td>Land east of Park Road, Congresbury</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Potential</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE1425</td>
<td>Land south of Cadbury Garden Centre, Congresbury</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE14227</td>
<td>Land east of Brinsea Road, Congresbury</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE14352</td>
<td>Land south of Silver Street, Congresbury</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Potential</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE14353</td>
<td>Land south of Rookery Farm, Congresbury</td>
<td>1.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE14354</td>
<td>Land south of Cobthorn Farm, Congresbury</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE1443</td>
<td>Land south of Park Farm, Congresbury</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE1444</td>
<td>Venus Street, Congresbury</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE1464</td>
<td>Church Drive, Congresbury</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unsuitable 2A</td>
</tr>
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<td>HE1487</td>
<td>Station Road, Congresbury</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Unsuitable 2A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suitability rating:
- Potential: Site maybe suitable for development. However this assessment is only to provide evidence to support plan making but does not in itself determine whether a specific site should be either allocated or granted planning permission for housing or economic development.
- 2A: Sites broadly consistent with the spatial strategy but assessed as having significant constraints
- 2B: Sites that are incompatible with the existing spatial strategy such as non-previously developed Green Belt or countryside locations.

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6 Latest interactive map of the sites - [http://map.n-somerset.gov.uk/HousingandEconomicLandAvailability.html](http://map.n-somerset.gov.uk/HousingandEconomicLandAvailability.html)
2.2 Identification of sites

North Somerset Council has used a method outlined in the National Planning Policy Guidance\(^7\) but has been clear that the ‘Assessment does not allocate sites; neither does it constitute planning policy. It is an evidence source providing an overall assessment of housing supply including detailed appraisal of specific sites. The identification of particular sites does not imply that there is a presumption in favour of any development proposal or that planning permission will be granted should an application be submitted. All such proposals will be considered through the normal development management process. “The Assessment is an important evidence source to inform plan-making but does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development” (National Planning Policy Guidance).’

How was the assessment formed?

1. **Desktop review of existing information**

   The review of existing information looked at:
   
   a. Sites in the planning process and key sources of information were
      
      - Residential Land Survey 2014 – to identify dwellings with permission, under construction or other firm commitments.
      - Existing Replacement Local Plan allocations including both housing and employment
      - Draft Sites and Policies allocations
      - Weston Villages SPD.
   
   b. Sites outside the planning process the sources include:
      
      - Review of 2013 SHLAA sites.
      - Sites submitted for consideration through the 2014 ‘call for sites’ - including sites submitted for both residential and economic uses. Sites proposed by landowners/developers in response to the Sites and Policies Plan consultation process.
      - Other known opportunities promoted by landowners/developers such as through pre-application discussions, refused applications or proposals to extend the developable area at Weston Villages.
      - Redevelopment of sites or buildings in non-residential use – such as permitted development changes to allow employment to residential.
      - Empty homes data.
      - Actively identified sites for both residential and economic uses.

2. **Broad constraints**

   North Somerset Council applied three broad constraints flood zone 3b, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB) and Green Belt. Figure 3 shows the current constraints of flood zone 3b and Green Belt in relation to Congresbury. Congresbury does not have any land identified as AONB.

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\(^7\) National Planning Policy Guidance - Housing and economic land availability assessment
3. Site Survey

All sites were assessed using a common assessment template. This included the following:

- **Site reference**: Each site has a unique ‘HE’ reference number which can be identified on the site mapping and cross-referred to the schedules.
- **Site location and character**: Location and brief description of the site.
- **Site size**: The gross site area in hectares. In some cases a smaller potential developable area has been assessed e.g. if a site has been submitted as a mixed use site.
- **Density**: A density of either 30 or 40 dwellings/ha (broadly depending on whether rural or urban) has been used unless specific information is known about a site to justify an alternative.
- **Dwellings**: Depending on the potential uses confirmed for each site either a dwelling figure or economic floor space figure is calculated.
- **Broad geographic area**: Indicates the geographical location in relation to the spatial strategy which are described as:
  - Weston-super-Mare
  - Towns (Clevedon, Portishead, Nailsea)
  - Service Villages (Congresbury)
  - Infill Villages
  - Countryside
- **Brief description**: Provides a short description of the site.
- **Surrounding uses**: A description of adjacent land uses.
- **Assessment summary**: An overview of the initial assessment of the site’s potential. Each site assessment includes an initial consideration of the suitability, availability and achievability.
- **Likely timeframe**: An indication is given as to when the site may be developed within two timeframes - 2014-19 (short term) and 2020-2026 (medium to long term). Sites identified for years 2014-19 provide a range of opportunities that could be considered for the 5 year supply although it should be noted that many will be subject to planning consent.
- **Identified constraints**: This is an initial assessment of key constraints where these have been identified. However this is not likely to be exhaustive so further detailed assessment will be required. This more detailed site analysis may subsequently conclude that a site is not appropriate for further consideration.
- **Possible actions**: These are a list of possible actions that may be available to address any identified constraints. They are not exhaustive but serve to demonstrate possible options in bringing forward a site through the plan-making stages.
Possible criteria for selecting housing development in Congresbury

Any development within Congresbury will be subject to both national and local planning policies. These policies must be at the heart of any criteria for selecting sites for future development.

3.1 National policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (foreword) states that:

‘The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development. Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for us don’t mean worse lives for future generations. Development means growth. We must house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices. We must respond to the changes that new technologies offer us. Our lives, and the places in which we live them, can be better, but they will certainly be worse if things stagnate.

Sustainable development is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations.’

At paragraph 7, the NPPF sets out the three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.’
3.2 Local policy

Housing developments in North Somerset should take account of the NPPF and the requirements for sustainable developments. Identifying areas for development will need to take account of local policies delivered through North Somerset Council. These include:

The Core Strategy is the main planning document for North Somerset and guides development choices and decisions on development proposals in North Somerset.

It was adopted on 10 April 2012. Following a legal challenge policy CS13 (scale of new housing) has been remitted back to the Planning Inspectorate for re-examination. The judgment also required eight other policies to be remitted as any change to the housing requirement may have consequences for these other policies. With the exception of these nine policies the plan remains adopted. Further re-examination hearings were held on the 5 and 6 January 2015. The Inspector has provided a final report in respect of Policy CS13 on 11 March 2015. North Somerset Council have asked the Secretary of State to intervene in this decision (27 March 2015).

Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) and provide greater detail on policies in the Local Plan and support decisions on planning applications. Adopted SPDs carry more weight than other guidance. A selection are shown here:

- affordable housing supplementary planning document (pdf)
- biodiversity and trees supplementary planning document (pdf)
- creating sustainable buildings and places (pdf); adoption statement (pdf); consultation statement (pdf)
- development contributions principles and operational guidance supplementary planning document (pdf); adoption statement (pdf); consultation statement (pdf)
- landscape character assessment supplementary planning document (pdf)
- parking standards supplementary planning document (pdf)
- residential design guide supplementary planning document part 1 living conditions of neighbours (pdf)
- residential design guide part 2 design and appearance (pdf)
- travel plans supplementary planning document (pdf)
North Somerset Council is currently developing a sustainability matrix tool’ to ‘Assess the sustainability of settlements and development proposals in North Somerset’.

This is currently in draft and the purpose of this assessment is to provide a practical tool to measure the relative sustainability of settlements and locations which can be applied in a consistent and rigorous way to assist with both decision-making on development proposals and through the plan making process.

3.3 Developing a criteria for selecting sites in Congresbury

Any criteria for selecting sites for Congresbury must complement national and local planning policies. The criteria must ensure developments are ‘sustainable’. The recommendation would be to use the emerging tool being developed by North Somerset Council – ‘sustainability matrix tool’ as outlined above. This should be used within the development of the neighbourhood plan.
Get in contact

If you want to know more or want to get involved in Neighbourhood planning, please contact the Clerk at Congresbury Parish Council:

The Old School Rooms
Station Road
Congresbury
BS49 5DX

Email: Clerk@Congresbury-pc.gov.uk
Telephone: 01934-838802
Web-site: www.congresbury-pc.gov.uk