

Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

Information for voters

About this document

On Thursday 19 September 2019, there will be a referendum on a neighbourhood plan for the Congresbury neighbourhood area. This document explains the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part in it. It explains:-

- why we have neighbourhood plans and other development plans
- the referendum and how you can take part

Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan

A referendum asks you to vote yes or no to a question. For this referendum you will receive a ballot paper with this question:

“Do you want North Somerset Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Congresbury to help it decide planning applications in the Congresbury neighbourhood area?”

What does my vote mean?

You show your choice by putting a cross (X) in the ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ box on your ballot paper.

Put a cross in only **one** box or your vote will not be counted.

If more people vote ‘yes’ than ‘no’ in this referendum, then North Somerset Council will use the Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the Congresbury Neighbourhood Area.

The Neighbourhood Plan will then become part of the Development Plan. This is a set of documents which set out planning policies to guide development in North Somerset.

If more people vote ‘no’ than ‘yes’, then planning applications will be decided without using the Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Development Plan for the local area. See later in this document for information on making sure you are able to vote.

Planning and neighbourhood plans

What is neighbourhood planning?

Neighbourhood planning aims to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. A community can prepare a neighbourhood

plan. This plan can show how the community wants land to be used and developed in its area.

What is a neighbourhood area?

A neighbourhood area can cover single streets or large urban or rural areas. In North Somerset the boundaries of a neighbourhood area are put forward by town or parish councils.

The boundary of the neighbourhood area was approved by North Somerset Council on 28 August 2015. The Congresbury Neighbourhood Area is shown on the map on p7.

Who can prepare a neighbourhood plan?

Neighbourhood plans in North Somerset can be prepared by town or parish councils. Normally, planning is the responsibility of the local planning authority (North Somerset Council). In this case, the Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan was prepared under the authority of Congresbury Parish Council.

Why do we need neighbourhood plans and other development plans?

Most new buildings, major changes to existing buildings or major changes to the local environment (including building work, engineering work and mining work) need consent - known as planning permission. Without a planning system everyone could construct buildings or use land in any way they wanted, no matter what effect this would have on other people who live and work in their area.

Planning involves making decisions about the future of our towns, villages and countryside and considering the future sustainable needs of communities. Decisions on planning applications are based on national planning policy guidance, any local plans and any relevant neighbourhood plan. Together local plans and neighbourhood plans make up what is known collectively as the development plan.

North Somerset Council is responsible for deciding whether any development which needs planning permission - anything from an extension on a house to a new shopping centre - should go ahead within the district, using national planning policy and the development plan policies for guidance.

What is a development plan?

In England, planning applications are determined by local planning authorities in accordance with the development plan.

A development plan is a set of documents that set out the policies for the development and use of land across the entire local authority area. If the Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan passes the referendum vote then it will become

part of the development plan for North Somerset. It will then be used along with the other development plan documents for making decisions on planning applications within the neighbourhood area of Congresbury.

In North Somerset the development plan consists of the following documents

- North Somerset Core Strategy (2017)
- Proposals map
- Sites and Policies Plan: Part 1 Development Management policies (2016)
- Sites and Policies Plan: Part 2 Site Allocations Plan (2018)
- Waste Local Plan (2002)
- Joint Waste Core Strategy (2011)
- Mineral Working in Avon Local Plan (1993)

How is a neighbourhood plan prepared?

There is a statutory process that must be followed for the making of a neighbourhood plan. This is the process which the Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan has followed. The neighbourhood area (area to which the plan relates) must be designated and there can only be one neighbourhood plan for each neighbourhood area. The neighbourhood plan must also specify a period for which it is to have effect. The Congresbury plan would be effective to 2036.

The local community can decide what to include in a neighbourhood plan, but it must meet the following 'basic conditions':

- Must have regard to national planning policy and advice contained in any other guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- Must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- Must be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area (i.e. the Local Plan)
- Must be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.

Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

The draft plan must be prepared through a process of consultation with local residents and businesses and the final draft plan must be subject to a set 'publicity period', where people are given an opportunity to submit comments. An independent examiner then reviews these comments and checks whether the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and other requirements set out in the regulations. This is to make sure that referendums only take place when proposals are workable and meet planning rules. The examiner then reports whether any modifications need be made so that the plan meets the basic conditions and whether it should proceed to a referendum. The Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan examiner concluded that a number of modifications were necessary to the plan in order to meet the basic conditions.

The Council then decide, having regard to the statutory criteria, whether to accept the examiners recommendations and proceed to organise a referendum. North Somerset Council decided at Executive on 25 June 2019 that the Congresbury plan with modifications would meet the necessary tests. The referendum will consider whether the local planning authority should use the neighbourhood plan for the area concerned to help it decide planning applications. All those registered to vote within the neighbourhood area are entitled to vote in the referendum.

North Somerset Council must “make” the neighbourhood plan (i.e. make it part of the development plan) if more than half of those voting in the referendum vote in favour of the plan.

Once made and adopted the neighbourhood plan will be part of the statutory development plan and will be used in determining decisions on planning applications.

Voting in the referendum

The referendum area

The referendum area is identified on the map shown on page 7 at the end of this document. It is the parish of Congresbury. The Neighbourhood Area was proposed by the Parish Council and agreed by North Somerset Council on 28 August 2015.

Referendum expenses

The referendum expenses limit that will apply in relation to the referendum is **£2530.80**. The number of persons entitled to vote in the Referendum by reference to which the limit has been calculated is **2861**.

Specified documents

A copy of the specified documents, that is the documents listed below, may be inspected at the following

- www.n-somerset.gov.uk/congresburyplan
- **Congresbury Community Library**, Station Road, Congresbury, BS49 5DX (Monday 2-5pm; Wednesday 10am-1pm; Friday 10am-1pm and 2-5pm; Saturday 10am-1pm).
- **North Somerset Council offices at Castlewood**, Tickenham Road, Clevedon, BS21 6FW and the **Town Hall**, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ.

The specified documents are:

- The referendum version of the Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan;
- Report of the independent examiner;
- Summary of the representations submitted to the independent examiner

- Statement by the local planning authority that the draft plan meets the basic conditions;
- A statement that sets out general information as to town and country planning including neighbourhood planning and the referendum (this document).

Can I vote?

You can vote in the referendum if you live within the Congresbury Neighbourhood Area and:

- You are registered to vote in local council elections, and
- You are 18 years of age or over on

You have to be registered to vote by **midnight on Tuesday 3rd September 2019** to vote in the referendum. You can check if you are registered to vote by calling **01934 634909**.

The referendum will be conducted in accordance with procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections.

Ways of voting

There are three ways of voting:

- **In person on Thursday 19 September 2019:** Most people vote in person at their local polling station. It is easy and a member of staff will always help if you are not sure what to do.

The polling station will be at **Old School Rooms (Congresbury), Jubilee Hall, Station Road, BS49 5DX**.

You will receive a poll card confirming the location of your polling station. Contact the elections team on 01934 634909 if you do not receive a polling card.

Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm. If you have not been given our ballot papers by 10pm you won't be able to vote, so make sure you arrive in plenty of time.

- **By post:** To vote by post, fill in an application form and send it to Electoral Registration Officer, Town hall, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ, to arrive by **5pm Wednesday 4th September 2019**. Ballot papers can be sent overseas, but you need to think about whether you will have time to receive and return your ballot papers by **10pm on Thursday 19th September 2019**.

You should receive your postal vote about a week before polling day. If it doesn't arrive in time, you can get a replacement from North Somerset

Council Offices in Weston-super-Mare up to **5pm on Thursday 19th September 2019.**

- **By proxy:** If you can't go to the polling station and don't wish to vote by post, you may be able to vote by proxy. This means allowing somebody you trust to vote on your behalf.

To vote by proxy, fill in an application form and send it to Electoral Registration Officer, Town hall, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ to arrive by **5pm on Wednesday 11th September 2019.**

When you apply for a proxy vote you must say why you cannot vote in person.

Anyone can be your proxy as long as they are eligible to vote and are willing to vote on your behalf. You will have to tell them how you want to vote.

Postal and proxy vote application forms are available from the elections team on 01934 634909 or for downloading from the Electoral Commission's website at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/how-do-i-vote

Am I registered to vote?

If you're not registered, you won't be able to vote.

Most people register to vote using the form that local councils send to each household each year. If you are not on the electoral register, you will need to complete a voter registration form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer, Town hall, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ to arrive no later than **midnight Tuesday 3rd September 2019.**

Registration forms are available from the elections team on **01934 634909** or for downloading from the Electoral Commission's website at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote

How to find out more

Further general information on neighbourhood planning is available on the following website www.mycommunity.org.uk/take-action/neighbourhood-planning

You can find Congresbury specific documents including the:

- Referendum Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan
- Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan Examiners report
- Summary of representations submitted to the independent examiner
- North Somerset Councils decision statement

On North Somerset Council's website at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/congresburyplan.

For queries about planning issues and the neighbourhood plan contact North Somerset Planning Policy Team on 01934 426816.

For queries about the referendum and voting please contact Electoral Services on 01934 634909.

Congresbury Neighbourhood Plan Area.



