

Is uncontrolled housing growth causing economic decline*

*A case study for Congleton

Briefing Document.

The proposed growth in housing for Congleton needs to be aligned to the growth of the local economy. This can only be achieved by bringing forward sufficient employment land at commercial rates for employment use. Without this, the trend of businesses being forced to relocate outside of Congleton to achieve their growth potential will continue and the likelihood of inward investment into commerce and industry is unlikely.

For Congleton to become more sustainable it needs to improve both the quantity and quality of jobs available to residents of working age, this cannot be done without sufficient land being allocated and developed. The aspiration is for Congleton to have the same ratio of jobs, referred to in this report as job density, as is the average across Cheshire East which is currently 76%.

Key Issues

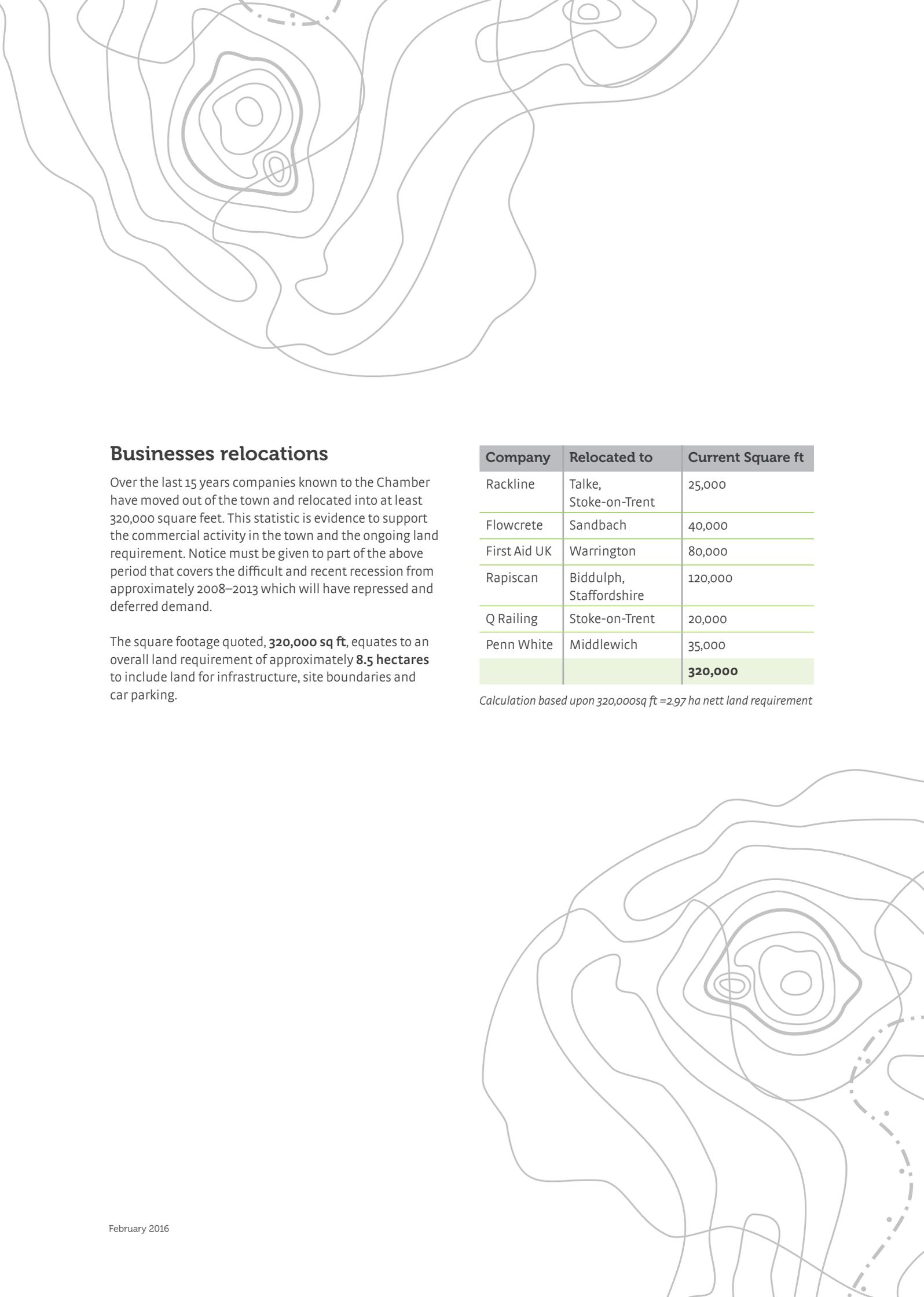
- Currently Congleton's job density is **62.2%**
- To achieve Cheshire East's average of **76%** an additional **2,200 jobs are needed** now this equates to **13 hectares of land** - the size of Radnor Park
- With proposed housing allocation of **4150 units** to retain current job density **3,804 jobs** - **26 hectares required**
- To achieve Cheshire East's job density **will require 47 hectares**
- Current allocation of **17 hectares** job density will fall to **56.2%**

Allocations	Hectares
To achieve Cheshire East average	13 hectares
Retain current job density	26 hectares
To achieve Cheshire East job density	47 hectares
Current allocation	17 hectares
Shortfall total	30 hectares
Jobs	K
To achieve Cheshire East average	2,200
Retain current job density	3,804
Housing	Units
Proposed housing allocation	4,150
Job density	%
Currently	62.2%
Cheshire East	76%
Allocation will fall	56.2%

Demand Summary

The challenge is to find and protect sufficient land for employment use. Whilst it is recognised that housing development is needed to contribute towards the delivery of the Congleton Link Road. Additional provision needs to be considered to maximise the benefits of HS2 in Crewe.

Summary	Land
Known businesses relocated from Congleton to facilitate growth	8.5 hectares
Known current demand	9.3 hectares
Enquiries	8.1 hectares
Total	25.9 hectares

A decorative background consisting of a topographic map with contour lines, rendered in a light grey color. The map shows various elevation levels and geographical features, with some areas highlighted in a light green color.

Businesses relocations

Over the last 15 years companies known to the Chamber have moved out of the town and relocated into at least 320,000 square feet. This statistic is evidence to support the commercial activity in the town and the ongoing land requirement. Notice must be given to part of the above period that covers the difficult and recent recession from approximately 2008–2013 which will have repressed and deferred demand.

The square footage quoted, **320,000 sq ft**, equates to an overall land requirement of approximately **8.5 hectares** to include land for infrastructure, site boundaries and car parking.

Company	Relocated to	Current Square ft
Rackline	Talke, Stoke-on-Trent	25,000
Flowcrete	Sandbach	40,000
First Aid UK	Warrington	80,000
Rapiscan	Biddulph, Staffordshire	120,000
Q Railing	Stoke-on-Trent	20,000
Penn White	Middlewich	35,000
		320,000

Calculation based upon 320,000sq ft = 2.97 ha nett land requirement

Immediate employment threat to Congleton by companies relocating overseas*

**Congleton businesses are under threat to relocate overseas due to lack of suitable locations to expand into.*

Reliance Medical

No room for expansion, leading to potential relocation to China.

Which would be a loss of

47 current jobs

42 new jobs

30 supply chain jobs

Senior Aerospace

Expansion requirement, pressure from board, potential relocation to Thailand unless immediate requirements are met.

Which would be a loss of

235 current jobs

180 new jobs

63 supply chain jobs

Total 597**

**This is based on two local companies prepared to be included in this document



Land Requirements

Land owners quite understandably are looking to maximise the value of their land and developers are pushing forward planning applications for housing across the town citing that there is no demand for employment land. This brief report provides information from known local businesses to counter that claim - more detailed research will only increase the figures that have been detailed within the report.

- The indicative amount of land required to achieve the jobs growth of **3,804** to retain the current job density of **62.2%** - equates to 26 hectares based upon the calculations tabled below and on the assumption **60%** of the jobs will be B2 industrial and **40%** B1 office
- To achieve the CEC average job density of **76%** (**6,804 jobs**) based on the same assumptions would equate to a requirement of 47 hectares

Potential jobs generated based on current allocations

Location	Planning classification	Hectares allocated	Jobs per ha	Total jobs	Job density
Back Lane Radnor Park	B2 Industrial	6	117	702	
Back Lane Radnor Park	B8 warehousing & distribution	0		0	
Back Lane Radnor Park	Retail	1	100	100	
Business Park	B1 office	5	218	1090	
Business Park	B2 industrial	5	117	585	
		17	Total new jobs	2,477	56.2%

Based upon the current allocations and jobs potentially generated the job density will drop from the current level of 62% to 56.2%

Current demand through growth and development led growth

Without extensive research there is a known requirement for at least **350,000** net square feet of industrial accommodation from three current Congleton-based employers, two of whom have submitted letters as attached within the appendices, the other being a significant local business with a 100,000 sq ft requirement. This equates to a gross requirement of **9.3 hectares**.

There is a strong risk that these businesses maybe forced to relocate outside of Congleton and even the borough should land not be made available for development at commercial values.

Current enquiries

Roman Lodge Estates recently acquired the former Boalloy Site and following investment have now achieved an occupancy rate of 80%, furthermore they have had additional enquiries which they have not been able to support equating to a further 8 hectares of land.

Current availability

On the 23rd of November 2015 a survey was undertaken to establish the level of available land and vacant industrial and office units on the main employment sites in Congleton.

Area	Unit	Square ft	Land	Agent
Greenfield Industrial Park	11, 12	7,371	–	Timothy A Brown
Congleton Retail Business Park	20	10,070		Timothy A Brown
Congleton Retail Business Park	GF Unit 2	1,035		Gladman Developments
Congleton Retail Business Park	Land		3.5 acres	Gladman Developments
Eaton Bank - River Dane Road	1 – 10, Holland House Ground First floor Offices	22,312		Butters John Bee
Eaton Bank - River Dane Road	Unit 1	3,577		Greenham Commercial
Congleton Business Centre (Spindle Street)	Ground / First / Second Floor Mill Premises	12,422		Butters John Bee
Total		56,787	3.5 acres	

Sustainability statistics

- Congleton is a town of **10,793 households** with a **current population of 26,580** set to become circa **37,000** during the plan period
- **48.6%** of residents both live and work in the town, **51.4%** commute out the town each day
- **60%** of residents are of working age, unemployment is **2.6%**
- Job density in Congleton at **0.62** is well below Cheshire East average of **0.76** through a long term chronic lack of employment investment

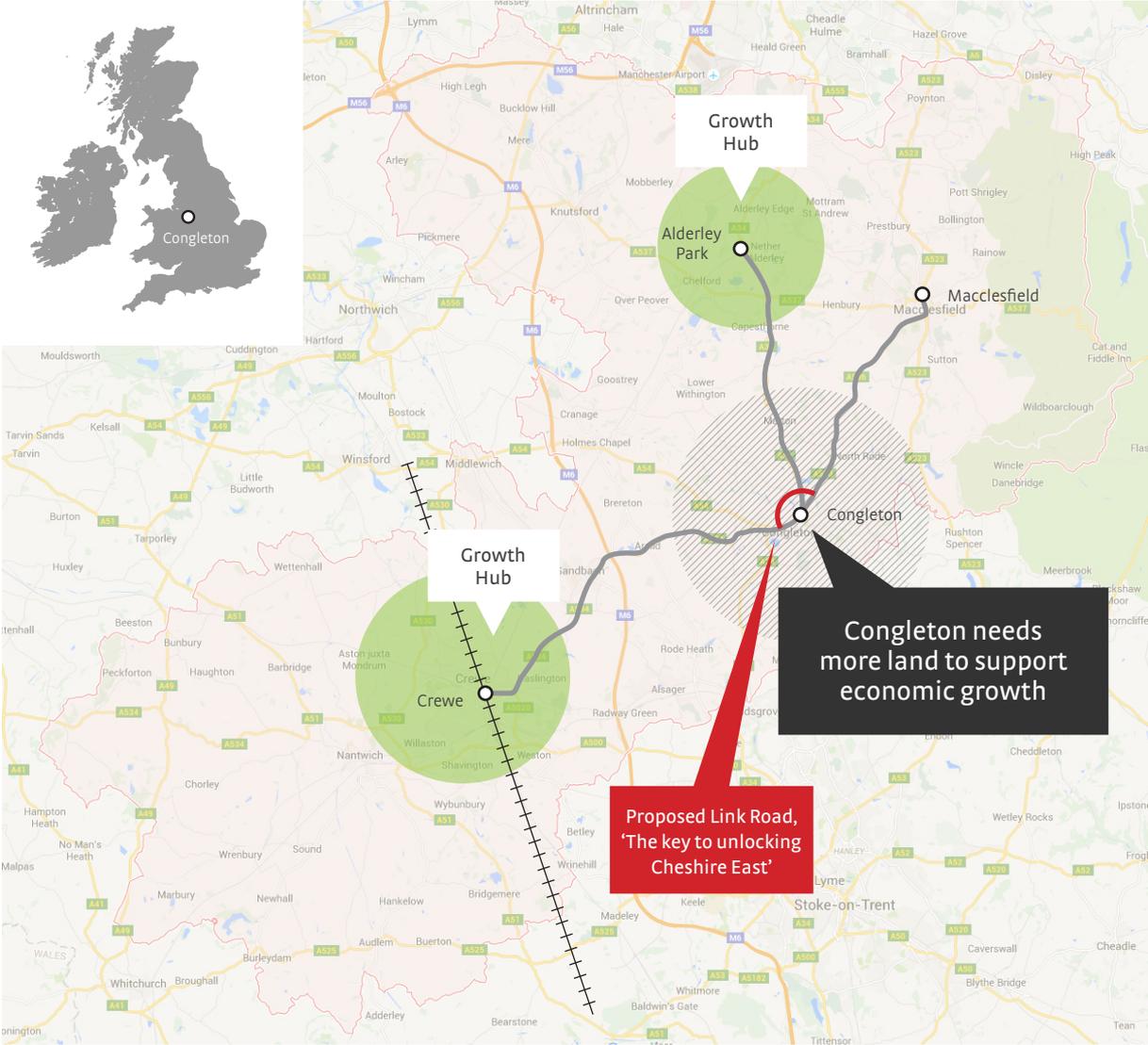
Job density	
Cheshire East average	0.76
Congleton current Job density	0.62
Crewe	0.86
Macclesfield	0.82
Wilmslow	0.78
Knutsford	0.95
Nantwich	0.68

- These statistics are unsustainable: commuting gets ever more irksome, expensive and unhealthy, the town needs to reduce the number of commutes out of the town by increasing employment levels in the town
- To just retain commuting out at current levels we need **3,804 more jobs**, however, **to achieve the Cheshire East average of 76%** there would need to be an **increase of 6,840 jobs** from the current position of 9,900 jobs i.e. a total of 16,740 jobs

	Households	Population	Working age population	Jobs	Job density
2015	10,793	26,580	15,910	9,900	62.2%
Additions during plan period -2030	4,150	10,220*	6,117*	3,804*	62.2%
Totals	14,943	36,800*	22,027*	13,704*	62.2%
Cheshire East average job density			22,027	16,740	76.0%

Don't cut out Congleton!

We have a proven track record of developing and growing quality businesses. We need more land to retain them, in order to support the economic growth in the town.





Context

As the third largest town in Cheshire East the growth and regeneration of Congleton is key to the economic prosperity of the borough, within the current plan period the housing growth for Congleton is planned to be an additional 4,150 units, a large proportion of this growth will be underpinned by the delivery of the Congleton Link Road.

The economic growth of Congleton is currently restricted by the shortage of employment land with the current key sites either having restricted access or are landlocked, this position provides very limited opportunity for existing business growth or inward investment.

The arrival of the HS2 NW Hub in Crewe would provide many opportunities for both the immediate area of Crewe as well as the wider area, the prospect of a “development corridor” from Northwich down to Stoke-on-Trent could be delivered by the introduction of HS2 and the NW Hub which would generate additional employment sites within that corridor.

Congleton would be one of the towns within the corridor that would benefit from the HS2 NW Hub, the forthcoming Congleton Link Road is part of a wider infrastructure programme designed to unlock additional development sites across the borough. However, immediate concerns centre on the current allocations within the Local Plan where identified employment land is being subjected to housing applications with representatives of landowners laying claim to the fact that there is no evidence of employment demand.

Conclusion

Congleton's Economic Growth

- There is an immediate need for employment land to allow for economic growth in Congleton.
- We have international businesses that want to expand and can't because of land blocking by developers.
- With no local plan employment sites cannot be allocated.
- Businesses will be lost out of the area and relocate overseas.
- There is currently no incentive or instruction for developers to put forward land for economic growth.
- It is in the developers interest not to build out but keep below the 5 year required supply, in order to secure additional land and planning.
- There needs to be a balance between future housing and the local economic requirements.

Congleton needs your help

Congleton Neighbourhood Plan
Congleton Town Council
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www.mycongleton.org
Email: talk@mycongleton.org Twitter: [@mycongleton](https://twitter.com/mycongleton) Facebook: My Congleton