

Comprehensive Treatment Area 4:
Peel Road (West)



Feasibility Study and Treatment Plan

Cabinet Office

11th August 2021

Site Context

CTA 4 occupies a riverside setting, to the east of the River Dhoo and the River Glass confluence. It is linear in nature stretching southwards from its narrowest point at Quarterbridge roundabout to the junction of Peel Road and Pulrose Road. The area benefits from easy access to the following key destinations/land uses within Douglas:-

- The National Sports Centre (situated to the west of the CTA);
- Ballakermeen High School and high quality residential areas are situated to the east of the CTA (accessed via Ballakermeen Drive);
- The Middle River Industrial Estate and the business district is located within 1km of the southern extent of the CTA, providing good employment opportunities;
- The CTA is adjacent to the Quarterbridge roundabout, providing good transport linkages to the wider Island.

The location has good accessibility to housing and employment opportunities, with excellent access to health and fitness facilities within commuting distance of Douglas town centre. The Heritage Trail (former rail route) bounds the south western boundary of the CTA, and further north re-appears near to the north western extent of the CTA, providing sustainable commuting links.

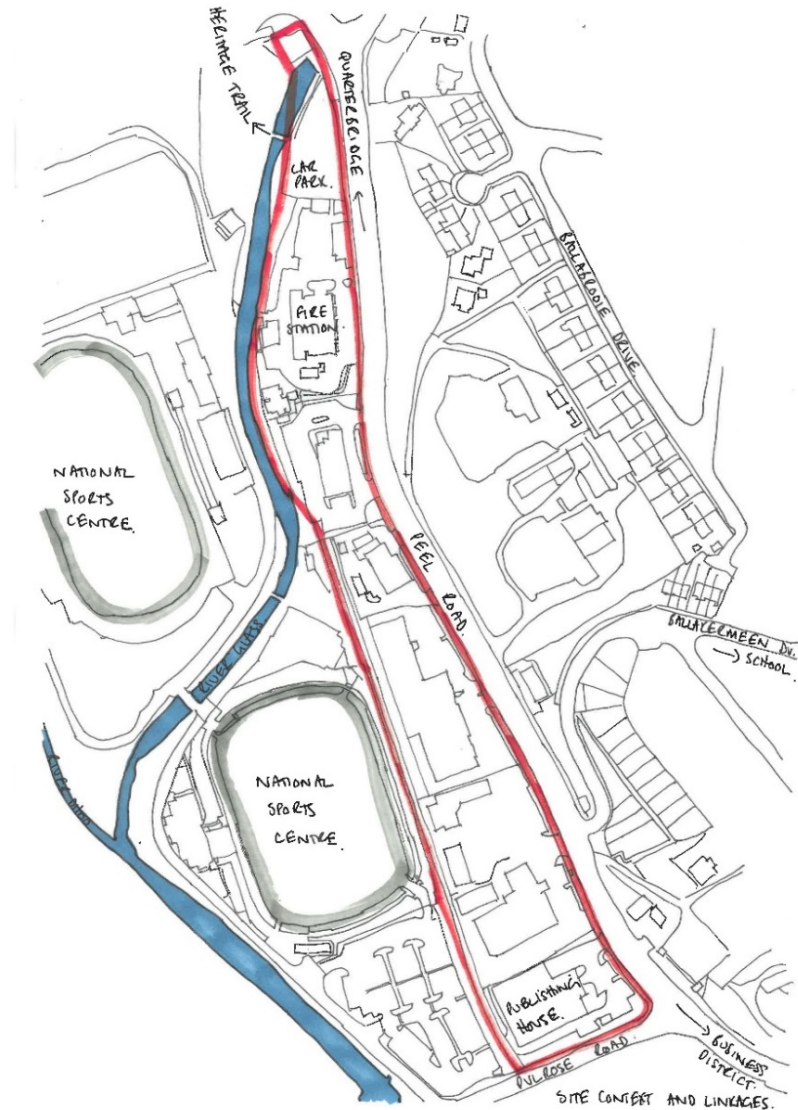


Fig 1: Illustrative Plan to show site context and linkages

Historic Townscape Evolution

Traditionally, land on the Isle of Man was divided into 'Treens', with each Treen consisting of four 'Quarterlands', hence the name. Each Quarterland was farmed individually, and rent was paid to a landowner, who themselves farmed one of the Quarterlands.

The proximity to the Quarterbridge gives an indication as to its historical land use, as the Quarterbridge forms the boundary between the Quarterlands of Ballabrooie and Ballaquayle. The low lying nature of the land and proximity to the River Glass further suggests that the most likely historical use in this area was for agricultural land, in particular for sheep and cattle grazing.

More recently, development within the CTA has been strongly influenced by shifts in transport.

The first major change in land use was the railway link between Douglas and Peel. This opened in 1873 and carried passengers and freight between Douglas and Peel (and the west) for just shy of 100 years. It was still operational at the time of the 1960 OS map. Industrial uses sprang up in the area and some industrial development is still evident. It was also during this time that the Douglas fire station relocated to its current position, introducing civic uses and taking advantage of quick access to main highway routes close by. The Quarterbridge Pub, once a popular haunt, lies empty but is strategically located, possibly required for future highway improvements.

As the rail line fell into disuse, car ownership increased and the Milestone Petrol Station was developed in the 1960's.

The 1980 historic map shows that considerable development has taken place in this area over recent decades, including development of a large garage, several industrial units, car sales show rooms and a bakery within the site's boundary. The site has become home to European House, a sizable office development.

By the late 1990's, the development of McDonald's drive-through provided further hospitality use within this CTA, prompting the addition of a pedestrian crossing across Peel Road. The Milestone building (also formerly a car garage and showroom) is now home to an electronics retail store and gym.

In terms of more recent approvals within the CTA, two further drive-through restaurants are planned, along with two smaller retail units. These follow the demolition of a car dealership in 2018. The early stages of construction have temporarily halted.

Historic Townscape Evolution (cont...)

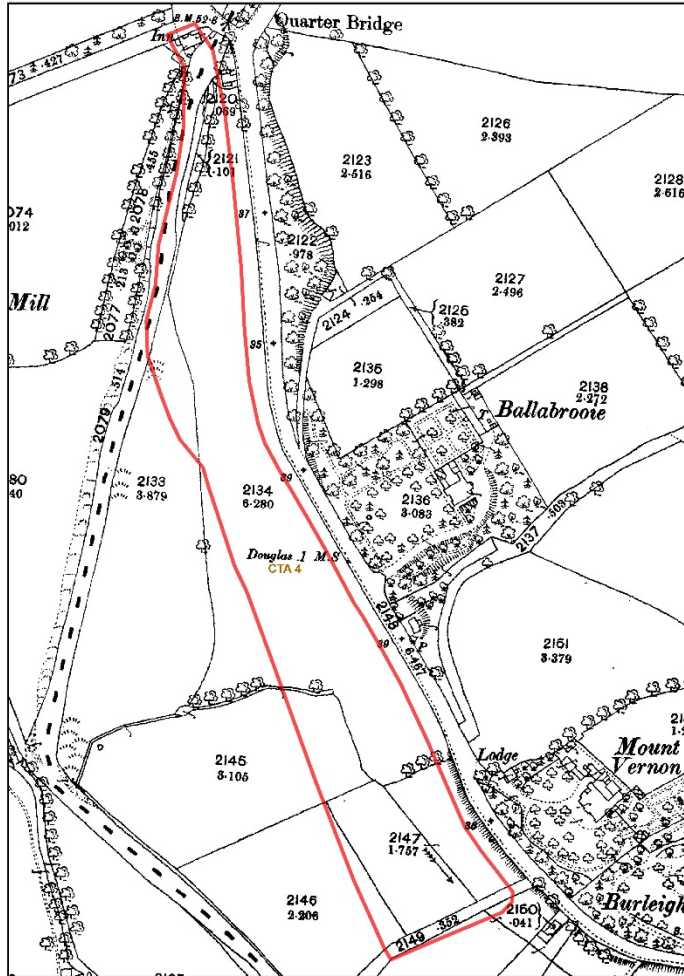


Fig. 2: 1869 Map

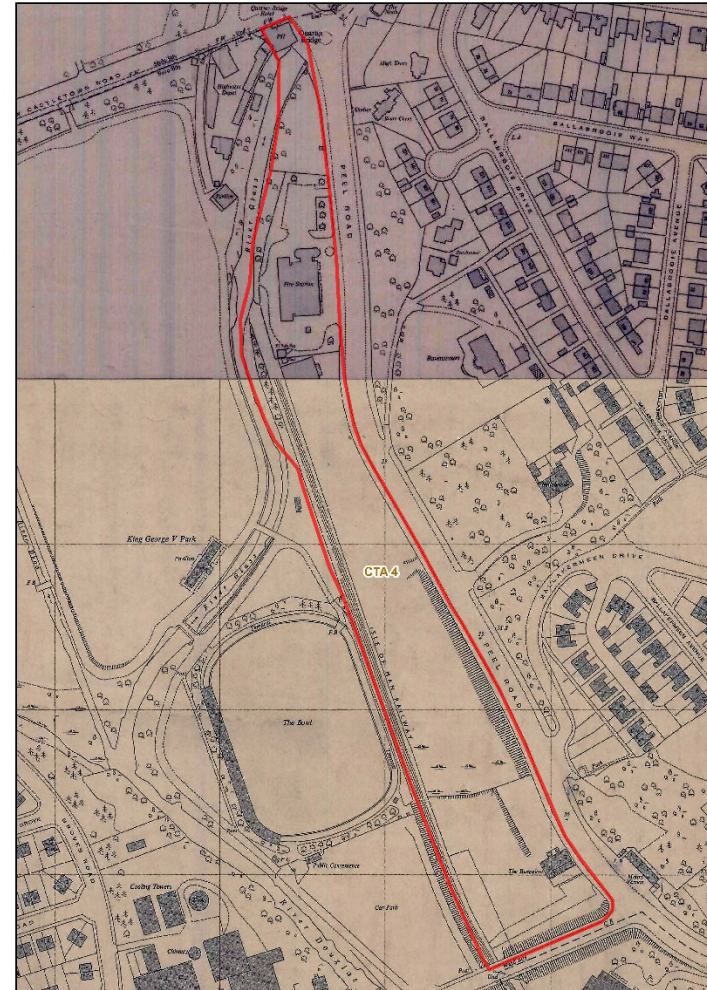


Fig. 3: 1960 Map

Historic Townscape Evolution (cont...)

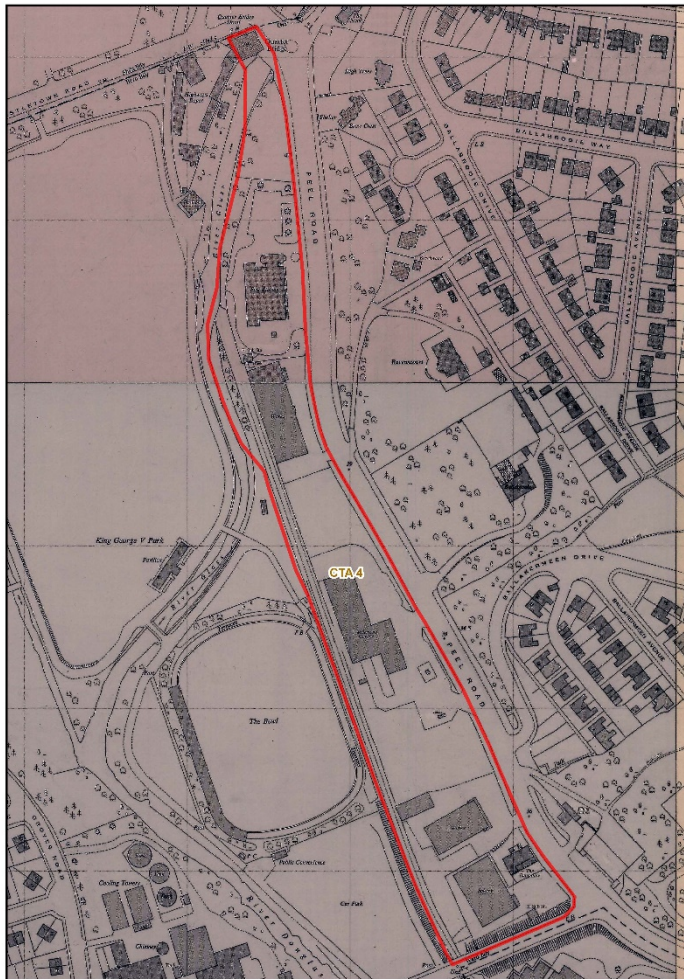


Fig. 4: 1980 Map

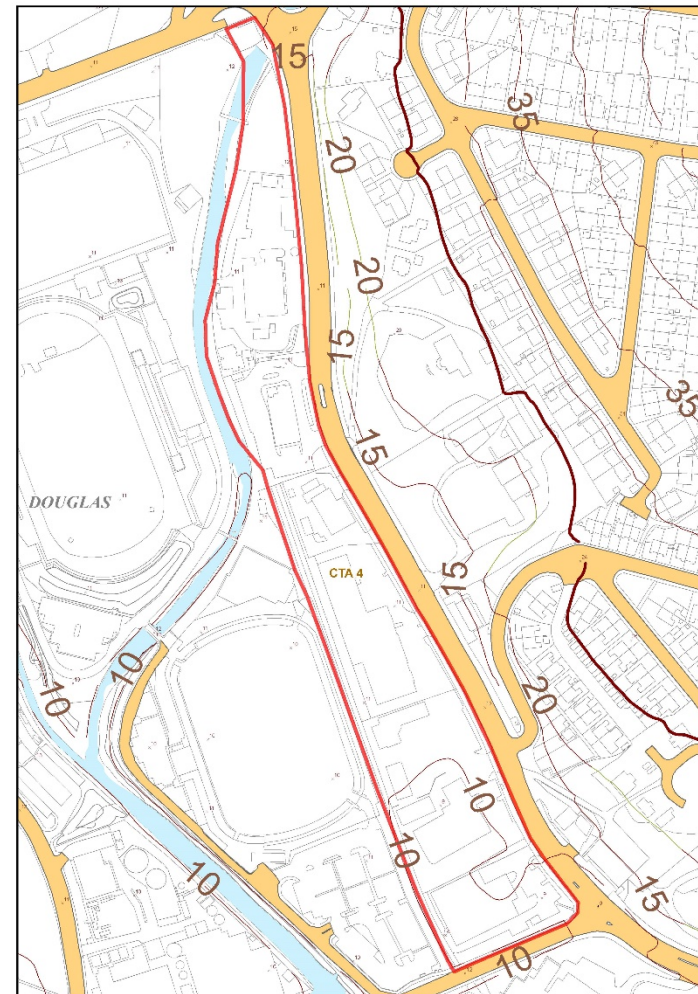


Fig. 5: 1960 Map

Government Land Ownership

In respect of government owned land, the Fire Station, the car park at the northern apex of the CTA and the redundant railway line from the southern boundary of the fire station to Pulrose Road and beyond (extending all the way down to Douglas railway station - shown in yellow) are in Government ownership.

As all of this land is in government ownership, this gives a very real opportunity to re-open the railway line for public access and extend the Heritage Trail to facilitate sustainable commuting/active travel links into Douglas.

Government also holds land to the south of Pulrose Bridge, presenting further opportunities to extend cycling links into the town centre and resolve some of the flooding issues that this area has experienced in the past.

The introduction of the pedestrian crossing just beyond the northern extent of the CTA has greatly improved safe access from the NSC to the Heritage Trail in this area and the former railway line being still in situ is a real asset to further explore connectivity improvements into and out of town.

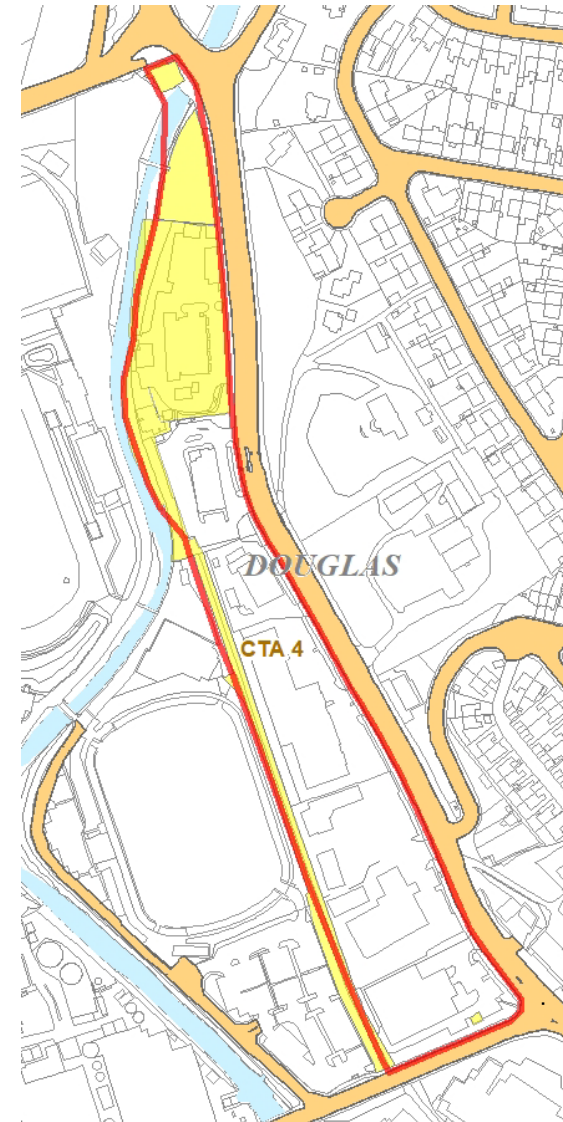


Fig 6: Plan to show extent of land in government ownership

Levels and Vehicular Access

The site is fairly level, and falls within the parameters of 10 and 15 metre contours, associated with the River Flood Plain.

The River Glass and the former rail track sever the site from the wider area, but the main distributor route of Peel Road bounds the eastern site boundary. Development within the site is accessed via Peel Road.

Two bridges span the River Glass, with the northern most bridge providing pedestrian access to the car park and NSC at the northern apex of the CTA. The second bridge provides access between the NSC astroturf pitches/track/grandstand and The Bowl. It is capable of being used by vehicles but is generally restricted to pedestrians.

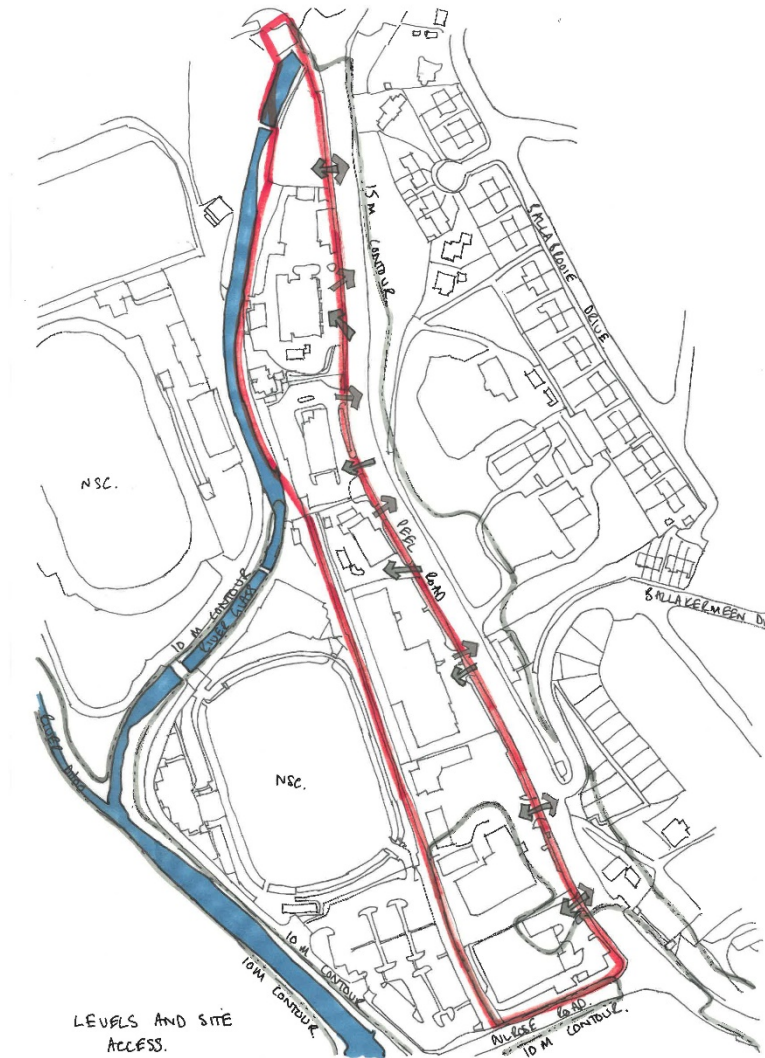


Fig 7: Illustrative Plan to show existing site contours and access

Townscape Quality and Building Condition

No urban block form is evident within this area and buildings that fall within the extent of the CTA tend to be coarsely grained and of modern construction, with a utilitarian character to them. They support low vulnerability land uses adjacent to the River Glass.

Douglas Fire Station is an interesting example of a post war Fire Station, displaying post war techniques and materials and designed for ease of access onto Peel Road. The main building displays symmetry within the bays, and the arrangement of glazing within a deeply pitched roof forms some interesting details. The tower is very functional, but displays some interesting concrete lattice work to form the supporting tower structure.

Publishing House has also been designed with longevity in mind, accommodating multiple stories within the floorplate.

Other buildings are more utilitarian in character. Designed to benefit from ease of access from Peel Road, they possess little in the way of architectural merit.

There is currently a gap site to the north of Publishing House and to the east of the NSC sports ground. This site was registered as an Unoccupied Urban Site in November 2020. Ground works have started on site with a completion advertised as Summer 2022.

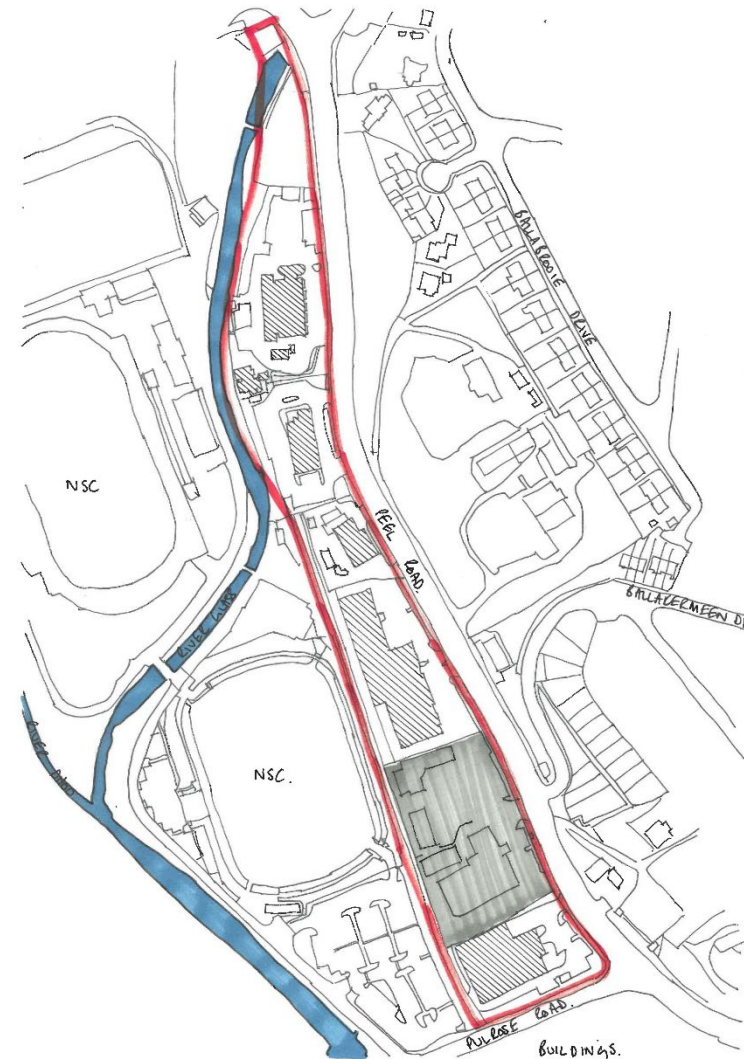


Fig 8: Illustrative Plan to show existing buildings and gap sites within CTA

Vehicular and Pedestrian Permeability

Permeability within and around this CTA is constrained by the River Glass, the former rail link and Peel Road.

Peel Road, adjacent to the eastern boundary of the CTA, serves as a major distribution road for both vehicles and pedestrians. Traffic volumes on this road are high, and despite reasonably wide pavements, pedestrians have a high number of access points to be wary of and cyclists do not benefit from a cycleway or segregated path. An alternative pedestrian and cycle route is situated to the west of the CTA boundary, adjacent to the River Glass and NSC track. A bridge crossing facilitates this access route from the Quarterbridge to Pulrose Road which ultimately connects in to The Nunnery Path, but the Peel to Douglas cycle route finishes at the NSC, presenting a huge barrier to many potential commuting cyclists.

Within the CTA, there is only one pedestrian bridge crossing point leading from the car park, to the north of the Fire Station. Steps lead up to the bridge deck level, making this access unsuitable for inclusive access.

It is also worth noting that there is a pedestrian desire line between the NSC in this area and CTA 3 (into the McDonald's site) which provides another link on its eastern boundary. This route crosses the former railway line.

Due to the restricted permeability across the site, two major movement nodes occur to the south and north of the CTA. The transport hierarchy at these two nodes is very much focussed on the movement of traffic.

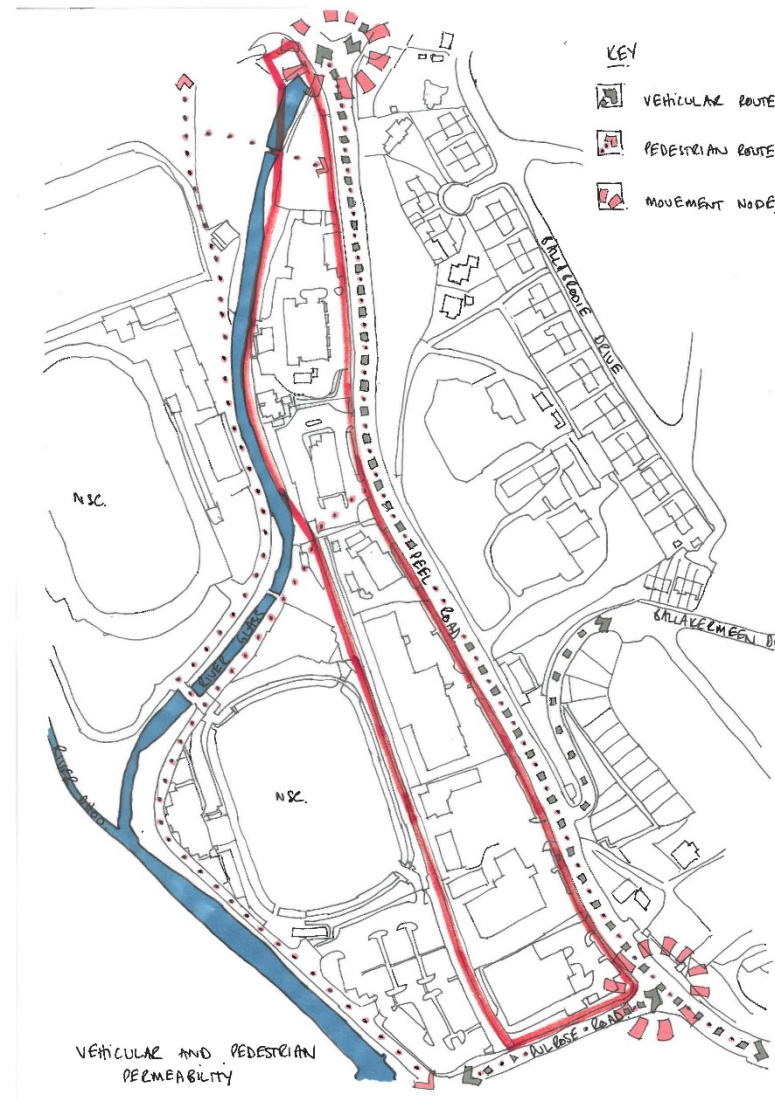


Fig 9: Illustrative Plan to show vehicular and pedestrian permeability

Visual Assets and Detractors

Tree cover and topography channels views within the River Corridor, and views tend to be limited to the commercial premises fronting onto Peel Road. There are limited views available towards the River Glass. Vantage points are available from the two bridges, and the River is visible to the rear of McDonalds.

The Fire Station is an interesting building architecturally, and helps to add interest to the street scene.

Large expanses of car parking and utilitarian buildings serve as a visual detractor within the area, and the car parks take up valuable space.



Fig. 11: River Glass, as viewed from the bridge.



Fig. 10: Douglas Fire Station.



Fig. 12: Car park and registered tree

Environmental Constraints

The CTA falls within an area identified as a high risk zone in respect of river and tidal flooding. This drives the need for low vulnerability land uses within this CTA. Additionally, the former Eurocars site is known to have contaminated fill. The full extent of that fill is not fully understood. The extraction of the contaminated fill, as a part of any future development, may be problematic.

A Registered Tree is also located within the car park, in the northern area of the CTA. A registered area of trees is located across Peel Road to the east of the CTA, forming the landscape setting to Ravenscourt, which is also a Registered Building. A registered tree area is also located on the former railway line route, next to Publishing House. No conservation area designations affect the CTA, but Manx National Heritage should be consulted in respect of archaeological interest.



Fig 13: Flood risk viewer map detailing flood risk within the CTA



Fig 14: Extract from the planning search map to show registered trees

Utilities Provision and Waste Storage

Observations on site would suggest that utilities and infrastructure provision for existing buildings on site is accessed via Peel Road. A full assessment of utilities provision is recommended, to better understand the relevant constraints on this issue.

Commercial waste storage is located to the rear of existing premises, adjacent to the River. Should public access to the River and along the western boundary be achieved, the rears of premises will be in view, including the storage of waste. Sensitive measures should be included to screen rear yards from view, in this instance.

Relevant Planning Considerations

CTA 4 is situated within a designated Mixed Use Proposal Area for the Riverside Gateway (8c)¹. Existing uses on the site include bulky retail, a petrol garage, offices, including Publishing House and Douglas Fire Station. With the exception of the fire station, land uses within this area reflect the historical designation of light industrial, as set out in the Douglas Local Plan 1998 although some uses such as the garage fall into a “sui generis” meaning that it has no specific use class under the planning legislation.

More recent approvals for Food and drink uses (Class 1.3 and Class 1.4) such as McDonalds and KFC are now becoming evident, showing a departure from the old Douglas Local Plan in more recent times.

The broad extent of CTA 4 is denoted as an orange diagonal hatch on the map extract shown here.

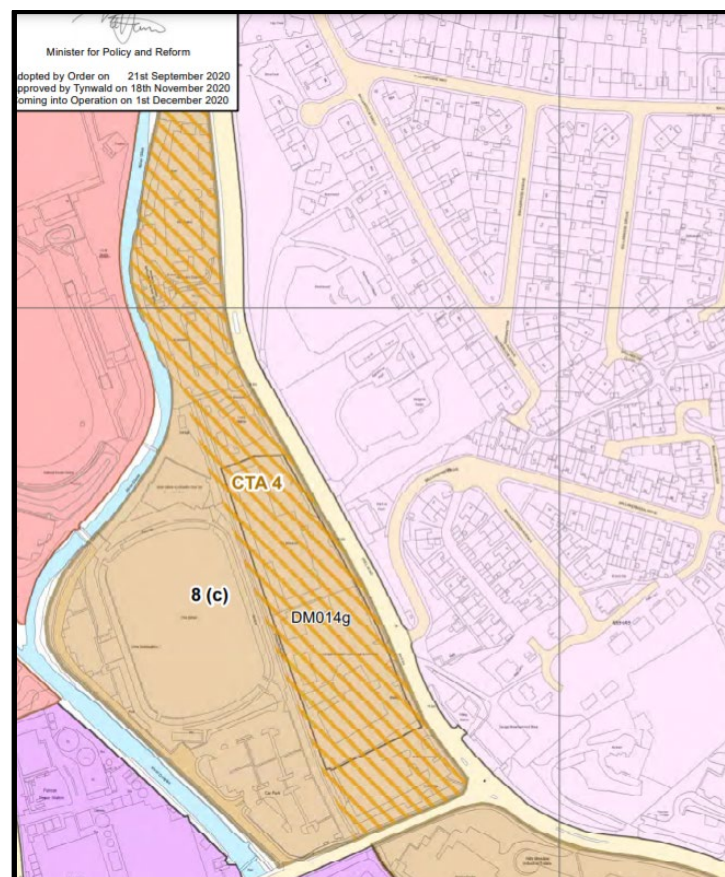


Fig. 15: Extract from Map 5: Douglas Central, an accompanying map for the Area Plan for the East

¹ CTA 4 falls outside of the boundary extent for the Central Douglas Masterplan 2014.

Relevant Planning Considerations (cont...)

The Area Plan for the East makes specific policy provision for this area, as below:

Mixed Use Proposal 8c

There will be a presumption in favour of retail warehouse (bulky goods) and leisure uses. Any proposed development should provide for improved pedestrian and cycle links and environmental enhancement alongside the River Glass, a flood risk assessment and highway impact assessment. Comparison goods retailing will not generally be supported.

A brief spatial analysis and policy intent for Peel Road (West) is set out in para. 13.10.1 of the Area Plan for the East:

- This mixed use area currently comprises some office, leisure, food and drink uses in the form of a drive-through, plus a petrol station and a fire station;
- With the relocation of car sales to a new showroom a large part of the area is vacant and the remaining land is under-used;
- The site is served by numerous accesses;
- To the rear (west) of the site is the NSC, and
- The area would benefit from improvements to increase density of development whilst improving access, flood mitigation and furthering the Heritage Trail through to Douglas Quayside.

A treatment plan for Peel Road (East) is included within the Area Plan for the East, as set out below for ease of reference:

CTA Proposal 4 – Peel Road West (Treatment Plan)

Development of this area could include leisure and retail warehouse (bulky goods). New uses shall be assessed taking into account accessibility, highway impact, design, visual impact and flood mitigation. Provision for a cycle route to link to the Heritage Trail shall be included.

Site DM014g (Milestone) is referenced in the Plan at Table 19 of the Written Statement titled 'Summary of Residential Land Provision' as being a site potentially able to deliver some new residential development but this is not significant and not a primary use in this location.

In respect of the Unoccupied Urban Sites Register, DM014g is recognised as "UU Site 23 (Milestone site)".

Relevant Planning Considerations (cont...)

The current uses of CTA 4 includes offices, a fast food restaurant, Fire Station, petrol station, car showrooms, a gym, and retail. All of these premises have received numerous applications over the years, those of note are discussed below.

- In 1994 permission was granted (91/00990/B) for 'Publishing House' which consisted of offices and a printing facilities. An application (14/00836/B) was approved in 2014 which converted the ground floor of the building to offices, alcohol storage/distribution, and a café.
- An application was approved for a drive through restaurant (McDonalds) in 1997 (97/00697/B), followed by subsequent advertisement applications, and an extension to its drive thru facilities (11/01103/B).
- An application for the Milestone site was approved in 2004 to convert a first floor showroom into a gym. More recently an application (18/00113/B) was approved that changed the use from retail of electrical goods, to the storage and retail of wine and liquor, with a deli/café.
- An application was approved in 2019 (18/00977/B) on the former Eurocars site for two fast food drive thru restaurants and two retail units.

Various applications have been made in respect of alterations and extensions to the Fire Station and petrol station.

Site Opportunities and Possible Outcomes

The location is excellent in terms of having ready access to Douglas town centre and highway routes feeding into and out of Quarterbridge. There is high density housing close by along with employment centres and alongside the NSC which is a well-used facility given its location and location close to the start of the Heritage Trail to Peel. The full length of the CTA is well within commuting distance of Douglas town centre.

Development plot sizes tend to stretch back the full width of the CTA and the proximity to the River presents an opportunity for future development to front onto an attractive riverside setting, particularly in the northern section. The Fire Station may be relocated in the future, freeing up this site for future re-development.

The historic legacy of the railway line is an asset, and continuous government ownership of the route along its length in this area to the town centre provides a very real opportunity to facilitate active travel links, connecting with established paths and bridge crossings. As a proposition, this is made all the more attractive by the riverside setting and 'jump-off' points to the NSC.

Such an improved active travel link needs to be accompanied by better stewardship of existing tree cover along its length including enhancement where necessary. This will support biodiversity net gain and strengthen green infrastructure in the vicinity of CTA 4 and within the wider area of Douglas conurbation. Flood alleviation measures on government owned land to the south of Pulrose Bridge could also contribute in this regard. A Peel Road wet woodland – which doesn't conflict with highway safety – would further improve the townscape quality on this stretch of Peel Road, and reduce flood risk.

Enhanced active travel options in this area has the potential to reduce car dependency, release land for more economically active uses and bringing more people to the area via other methods. On street car-parking in the area is unavailable and future car parking requirements for redeveloped sites will need to be carefully balanced with the uses proposed. Travel Plans could support a future planning application.

One example of why CTAs might be needed is set out in the Plan at para 13.1.4 (i) "to allow for new or improved vehicular and pedestrian movements to help improve traffic flow and reduce congestion at key times". This is relevant to CTA 4 as there are ten access points off Peel Road between Pulrose Road and Quarterbridge. Any opportunities to improve the flow of traffic or improve safety for all road users through the CTA mechanism will be taken up where evidence suggests this is needed.

This location offers opportunities for investors who are looking to invest in leisure uses and bulky goods. There is already a mix of uses and the area could comfortably accommodate uses of a larger footprint and scale than that offered in the town centre, given the character and appearance of the area and wide aspect across Peel Road.

The new climate change legislation soon to be given Royal Assent will no doubt influence future land uses and approaches to development schemes. All new development will soon have to take account of climate change principles and being close to town on a brownfield site will come with many benefits. Businesses may be attracted by both the location and the chance to reduce their carbon footprint, whilst retaining a commercially competitive advantage. This is a key opportunity for those looking for an edge of centre location with a high through put of people on foot and in vehicles.

Development Barriers

Legal tenure and land ownership within the CTA is mixed. However, a continuous stretch of land is owned by government along the former rail line, and this presents possibilities for active travel infrastructure, linking with the Heritage Trail further north.

River and tidal flood risk within the CTA may affect the type of land uses permitted going forward and uses with a high vulnerability to flooding are unlikely to be supported. A flood risk assessment will be required to determine flood risk and any acceptable mitigation measures.

Registered Trees/Tree Areas may constrain future development because of the need to protect roots however, they can also be seen as real assets within this area, contributing to green infrastructure and biodiversity.

Access to the western boundary of the CTA is restricted by the former railway line and the River Glass. Making better use of the rail line for active travel could help to re-orientate development across the length of the CTA developing a stronger river frontage.

It is important to understand highways capacity, future patterns of travel and how this can be managed better in the vicinity of Peel Road, Castletown Road and Peel Road to know the full impacts on the CTA and whether traffic circulation and access and egress from a vehicular point of view needs to be coordinated better and any traffic congestion eased.

The full extent of the possible contaminated land fill in the area needs to be quantified, with any future development mindful of the

constraints that the contamination brings. Utilities provision also needs to be better understood within the CTA.



Fig. 16: Proposed Replacement Bridge at Pulrose

Recommendations

Sites within this location offer opportunities for investors who are looking to invest in leisure uses, reduce their carbon footprint and offer good active travel and cycling perks to employees, whilst retaining a commercially competitive advantage.

The proximity to the River presents an opportunity for future development to front onto an attractive riverside setting. Equally, the railway line should be re-opened for active travel links, helping to reduce car dependency within the wider area. In-house cycling provision, such as that shown in figure 17, has the capacity to free up further land currently used for car parking for higher value economic uses. Improved bridge crossings will also help to alleviate traffic congestion and promote active travel.

Better stewardship of existing tree cover and the development of green infrastructure is achievable, and can contribute to biodiversity net gain. Townscape quality can be enhanced through further tree planting on government owned land, starting from the northern most point of CTA 4, and extending south of Pulrose Bridge. Tree planting could function as flood alleviation measures to reduce the existing flood risks in the wider area.

An arboricultural assessment would help to better understand future management practices for these trees, to ensure their longevity. A biodiversity assessment would also be beneficial.

In short, climate change principles should be embedded within redevelopment opportunities in CTA 4.

An assessment of utilities is recommended in order to support regeneration within the CTA, and the full extent of the contaminated

landfill should be investigated. A highways capacity study would also help to better understand future needs in this area.

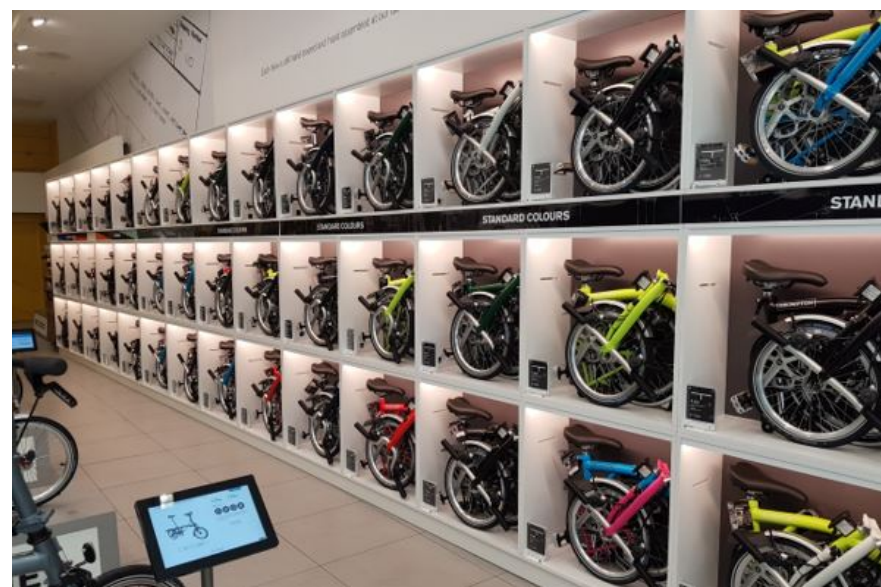


Fig. 17: Brompton junction store