



Isle of Man
Government

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Report for Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: South

Planning Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In April 2018, Tynwald resolved that a Select Committee “*be appointed to investigate the options available to encourage and prioritise the development of unoccupied or previously developed urban sites ahead of building on green fields in the Manx countryside*”.

In June 2018, the Select Committee published its report. Among other conclusions, the Select Committee resolved that:

“...there is a lack of a register of brownfield sites and a lack of readily accessible data on the number of planning approvals given and taken up in brownfield and greenfield sites”¹.

Further to this, Recommendation 1 of the report stated:

“That the Cabinet Office should publish at regular intervals data on planning approvals given and taken up on brownfield and greenfield sites respectively”²

1.2 The Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East (2020)

In accordance with the recommendations outlined above, in November 2020 Cabinet Office published the first iteration of the UUS Register, the UUS Register: East (2020). This Register focused on Douglas (Main Centre) and Onchan (Service Centre)³ and initially identified a total of 33 sites for inclusion on the UUS Register.

Within section 1.4 of the 2020 Report, it states that the initial focus will be on the Main Centre and Service Centres in the East⁴ but that the UUS Register may be extended to cover Service Centres, Service Villages and Villages on an island wide basis after a review of the process. This has now been undertaken.

2. The Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: South

2.1 Geographical Scope

The UUS Register: South considers sites within Service Centres and Service Villages in the South of the Island⁵. This iteration of the UUS Register has been produced alongside the development of a UUS Register for the North and West, and together with the UUS Register: East (Update 1), is intended to provide an up-to-date evidence base on unoccupied urban sites across the whole Island.

2.2 Composition of the Register

The UUS Register: South is comprised of the following documents:

- An Unoccupied Urban Sites Report;
- An Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: South, and

¹ [Report of the Select Committee of Tynwald on the development of Unoccupied Urban Sites, 2018, Pg. 24.](#)

² *Ibid*, Pg. 25.

³ [Spatial Policies 1-4, Isle of Man Strategic Plan 2016](#)

⁴ [Report for Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East, Pg. 5](#)

⁵ Incorporating the Parishes of Rushen, Arbory and Malew, the Villages of Port Erin and Port St. Mary and the Town of Castletown

- An Unoccupied Urban Sites Map set: South to show the locations of the UUS within their respective settlements.

The data collected as part of the UUS Register: South will be kept under review and updated at regular intervals in order to ensure that it remains as up to date as possible.

3. Defining an 'Unoccupied Urban Site'

3.1 Definition of an Unoccupied Urban Site

The UUS Register: South uses the same definition as the original 2020 Register for the East⁶, the East Update and the UUS Register: North and West. An Unoccupied Urban Site is defined as:

An area of land, whether occupied by building(s) or not which is within an identified settlement that has the potential for development. Generally, all sites which appear on the register will be Previously Developed land and will fit the definition set out in the Isle of Man Strategic Plan 2016 (or replacement thereof)⁷.

4. Assessment Criteria and Methodology

4.1 Determining the assessment criteria

The methodology used in assessing UUS in the South of the Island is similar to the approach taken in the East⁸ and to the approach taken in assessing UUSs in the North and West. The first stage in preparing the Register was a desk-top study which entailed examining mapping evidence and aerial photography in order to identify sites which could be deemed suitable for inclusion on the Register. Following the development of a 'long-list', the below assessment criteria was used.

⁶ [Report for Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East](#), Pg. 7

⁷ Previously Developed land is defined in Appendix 1 of the [Isle of Man Strategic Plan](#) 2016

⁸ [Report for Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East](#), Pg. 8

Site Reference:	
Date:	
Officer Initials:	
Primary Assessment Criteria	
Does the site form an area of previously developed land within an identified settlement boundary?	
Secondary Assessment Criteria	
Is there evidence of an existing vehicular access into the site?	
Are former uses on the site redundant?	
Does the site serve as a visual detractor within the existing urban context?	
Does the site have the potential for redevelopment, allowing it to be brought back into active use?	
Recommendation and additional notes	

Figure 1: A sample site assessment sheet used in the UUS Register: South

In order to ensure consistency, the UUS Register: South uses the same assessment criteria as the UUS Register: East and the UUS Register: North and West.

The site assessment is comprised of primary and a secondary criteria. The primary assessment criteria aims to ascertain if the site is an area of previously developed land within an existing settlement boundary. A positive response to this criteria is mandatory for the site to be considered further.

The secondary assessment criteria entails a more detailed assessment of the site. Most sites included on the UUS Register: South show a positive response to all of the indicative assessment criteria. Some sites which don't show an affirmative response to all of the indicative assessment criteria have still been included on the UUS Register: South. Where this is the case, professional judgement has been exercised when formulating the recommendation. In these instances, additional notes have been included to demonstrate the thought process behind the recommendation.

4.2 Basic Assumptions

In the preparation of the UUS Register: South, the following basic assumptions have been made:

1. Sites which fall outside of settlement boundaries⁹ and/or which do not constitute previously developed land will be excluded from the Register.
2. Other exclusions include vacant office premises or vacant upper floors, as conversion may be an acceptable alternative in these instances.

⁹ As shown on [Area Plan for the South – Map 1 Constraints](#)

3. Sites that fall within areas of open space and/or sports pitches will also be excluded from the Register.

5. Summary of findings

5.1 Identified sites

22 sites have been identified for inclusion on the UUS Register: South with a total area of **3.41** Ha. These sites are located in the following settlements:

- Port Erin: 7 sites
- Castletown: 8 sites
- Port St. Mary: 6 sites
- Ballasalla: one site

These sites can be further broken down by their respective land use allocation within the Area Plan for the South as follows:

- 6 Mixed use sites
- 13 'Predominantly Residential' sites
- 2 Industrial sites
- 1 Civic site

It is estimated that the identified UUS in the South of the Island have a potential housing yield of **58** dwellings. However, it is important to note that this will depend on the land uses approved and many UUS will have site constraints that will limit their developable area and reduce the amount of development that can be delivered on a particular site.

The amount of residential development potentially deliverable on UUS in the South is significantly lower than that potentially deliverable in the East and marginally lower than the North and West.

In respect of extant planning approvals, as of December 2022, there are a total of 91 dwellings approved on identified UUS in the South of the Island (comprising eight dwellings and 83 apartments). This is over three times the number of dwellings currently approved on UUS in the North and West (28 units – comprising 26 apartments and two detached dwellings) and over two and a half times the number of dwellings approved on UUS in the East (37 apartments).

5.2 Project findings

The 2020 Register identified unoccupied urban sites as being within one of three categories, these being the Coastal Zone, the Historic Core and the Outer-lying Zone¹⁰.

Levels of investment and patterns of brownfield site development vary across the Island. As only one UUS was identified in Ballasalla, the following analysis of trends focuses on UUS in Port Erin, Castletown and Port St. Mary.

UUS in the above settlements can generally be grouped into one of the following categories:

- **Coastal Zone** – Sites which front onto promenades, harbour or quayside areas which may be at risk of tidal flooding and are outside of Conservation Areas.
- **Historic Core** – Smaller UUS within the historic built environment of a settlement and within the boundary of a Conservation Area.
- **Outer-lying Zone** – UUS with a larger footprint within an area with a predominantly residential character.

5.3 Port Erin Sites

Coastal Zone

The development of Port Erin as a Victorian seaside resort resulted in the construction of numerous hotels and guest houses on and around the Promenade. However, as tourism trends have shifted over time some of Port Erin's visitor infrastructure has been converted from hotels and guest houses to residential apartments or entirely re-developed for residential uses. In some cases however, demolitions have resulted in gap sites which have not been re-developed and have accordingly been included on the UUS Register: South.

Sites in the Coastal Zone of Port Erin (shown in blue on figure 2) have an average site area of 0.21 Ha. and are thus on average one and a half times larger than UUS outside of the Coastal Zone.

Historic Core

Two UUS in Port Erin can be categorised as being within the Historic Core of the village. UUS categorised as being within the Historic Core (shown in orange on figure 2) are smaller in area than UUS within the Coastal or Outer-lying Zones. This is due to the higher building density and more finely-grained levels of development associated with older building stock. As a result of this, the UUS in the Historic Core of Port Erin have an average site area of 0.07 Ha. compared to an average site area of 0.21 Ha. for UUS outside of the Historic Core.

Outer-Lying Zone

The remaining UUS identified in Port Erin can be categorised as being within the Outer-lying Zone (shown in green on figure 2). These UUS are significantly larger than those categorised as being within the Historic Core and are have the same average site area as UUS within the Coastal Zone (0.21 Ha).

¹⁰ [Report for Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East](#), Pg. 11

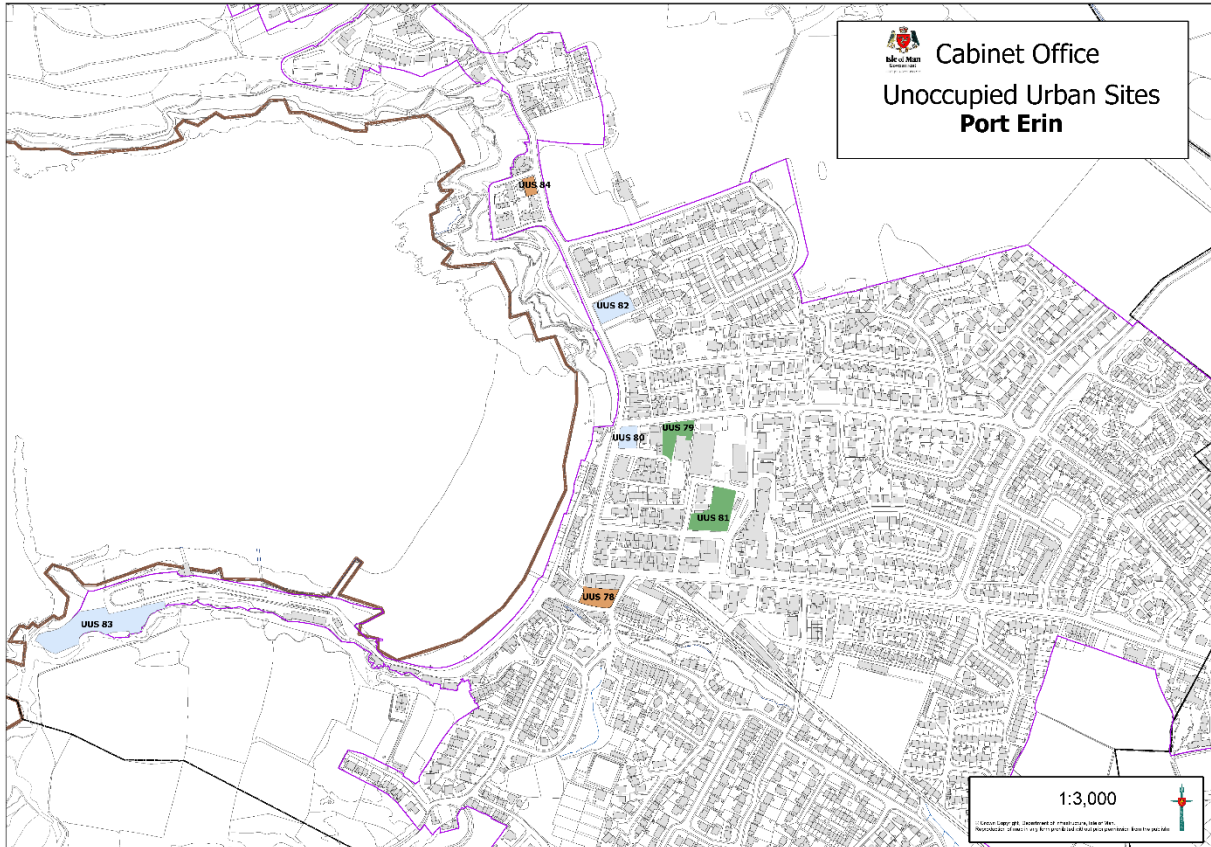


Figure 2: UUS in Port Erin grouped into Coastal Zone (blue), Historic Core (orange) and Outer-lying Zone (green)

5.4 Castletown Sites

Coastal Zone

Two UUS in Castletown can be categorised as being within the Coastal Zone of Castletown (shown in blue in figure 3). These sites both front onto coastal areas and have an average site area of 0.09 Ha, which is larger than the average area of UUS within the Historic Core of the town.

Historic Core

Similarly to Peel, Castletown's Conservation Area covers a significant proportion of the centre of the town. Consequently, Castletown retains much of its historic street pattern and vernacular architecture with plentiful examples of construction using scarce, indigenous building materials such as local limestone¹¹. Accordingly, UUS within Castletown's Historic Core (shown in orange on figure 3) are limited in number and in area, with an average site area of 0.07 Ha.

Outer-lying Zone

Half of the UUS identified in Castletown can be categorised as being within the Outer-lying Zone (shown in green on figure 3). UUS in the Outer-lying Zone of Castletown have an average area of 0.14 Ha. UUS in the Outer-lying Zone exhibit a mixture of land use allocations as part of the Area Plan for the South¹² including employment, residential and civic land uses.

¹¹ Strategic Policy 1 Isle of man [Strategic Plan 2016](#)

¹² [As shown on Area Plan for the South map 5 - Castletown](#)

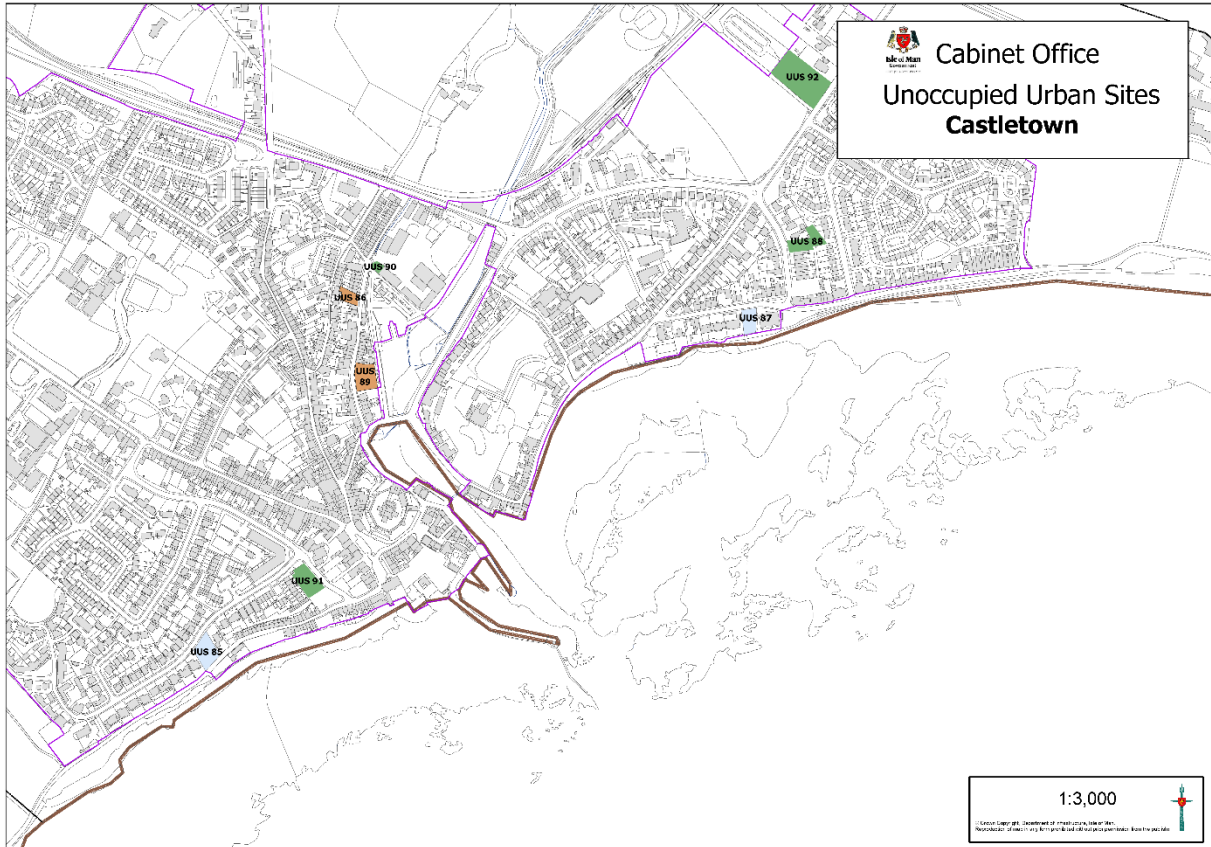


Figure 3: UUS in Castletown grouped into Coastal Zone (blue), Historic Core (orange) and Outer-lying Zone (green)

5.5 Port St. Mary Sites

Coastal Zone

Three UUS in Port St. Mary can be categorised as being within the Coastal Zone (shown in blue on figure 4). These UUS all front onto promenade or seaside highway areas. The UUS within the Coastal Zone of Port St. Mary have a combined site area of 0.81 Ha. which represents 89% of the total area of UUS identified within the village.

Historic Core

The remaining three UUS identified in Port St. Mary can be categorised as being within the Historic Core (shown in orange on figure 4). This represents a high proportion of the total number of UUS identified in the village, significantly higher than Port Erin and Castletown, where in both cases 33% of UUS were situated in the Historic Core.

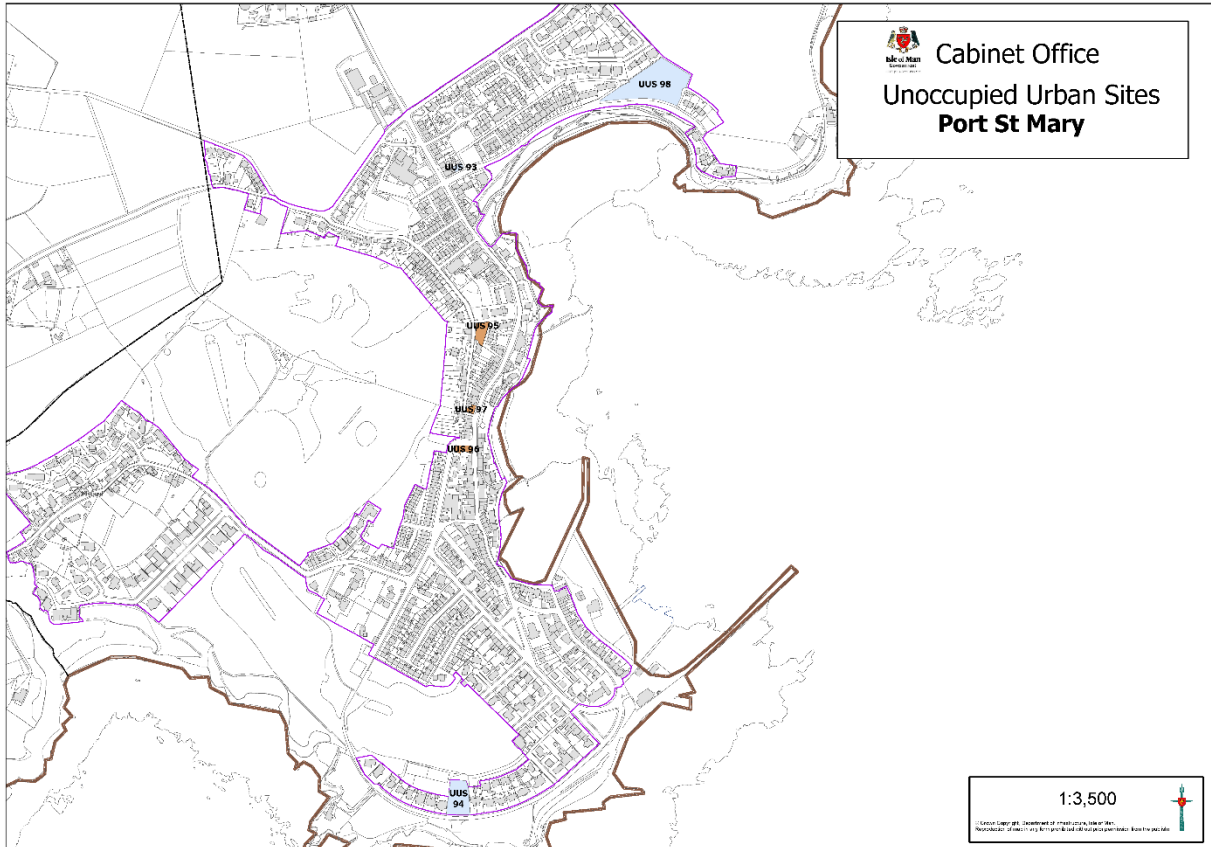


Figure 4: UUS in Port St. Mary grouped into Coastal Zone (blue) and Historic Core (orange)

6. Conclusions

The UUS Register: South identifies 22 Unoccupied Urban Sites across four settlements in the South of the Island. The development of the UUS Register: South will complement the existing UUS Register: East and North and West to form a cohesive and comprehensive evidence base on the scale and distribution of Unoccupied Urban Sites within existing settlements on the Isle of Man.

In order for the UUS Register: South to remain a useful tool in the identification of Unoccupied Urban Sites, it should be kept as up to date as possible.