

Isle of Man
Government

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Report for Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: North and West

Planning Policy

Cabinet Office

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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.

The 2020 Report 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 achieved.

2. The Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: North and West

2.1 Geographical scope

The UUS Register: North and West considers sites within Service Centres and Service Villages in the North and West of the Island⁵. This iteration of the Register has been produced alongside the development of a UUS Register for the South 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: North and West is composed of the following documents:

- An Unoccupied Urban Sites Report: North and West
- An Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: North and West, 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 Towns of Ramsey and Peel, District of Michael and the Parishes of Andreas, Ballaugh, Bride, Jurby, Lezayre, German, Patrick and the Maughold Ward of Gaff

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

The data collected as part of the UUS Register: North and West will be kept under review, updated and monitored 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: North and West makes use of the same definition as the 2020 Register⁶ and the UUS Register: South. A UUS is considered to constitute:

An area of land, whether occupied by a 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 development 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 adopted for assessing UUS in the North and West is similar to that adopted in the preparation of the 2020 Register⁸. 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', site visits were carried out where 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: Sample site assessment form for the UUS Register: North and West

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

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: North and West 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: North and West. 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: North and West, 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 [Map 3 \(North\)](#) and [Map 3 \(West\)](#) on the published Draft Area Plan for the North and West

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

21 sites have been identified for inclusion on the UUS Register: North and West with a total gross site area of **5.15** Ha. These sites are located in the following settlements:

- Ramsey – 15 sites
- Peel – 5 sites
- Jurby – 1 site

These sites can be further broken down by land-use allocations in the Draft Area Plan for the North and West¹⁰:

- 16 Mixed use sites
- 5 'Predominately Residential' sites

It is estimated that the sites identified in the UUS Register: North and West have the potential to deliver as many as **131** dwellings, which equates to over **10%** of the housing need for the region¹¹. However, it is important to note that this will depend on the final land uses permitted and many UUSs 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 that UUS in the North and West are potentially capable of delivering is significantly lower than that identified in the East and roughly comparable to the potential capacity of UUS identified in the South.

In respect of extant planning approvals, as of December 2022 there are currently 28 dwellings which have valid planning approval on identified UUS within the North and West. These valid planning approvals can be further broken down into 26 apartments and two detached dwellings. This figure is significantly lower than the 91 dwellings with valid approval on UUS in the South (comprising eight dwellings and 83 apartments) and marginally lower than the 37 dwellings with valid approval on UUS in the East (37 apartments).

5.2 Project findings

The 2020 Register identified UUSs as generally being within one of three categories. These comprised the Coastal Zone, the Historic Core and the Outer-lying Zone¹².

Patterns of brownfield site development and levels of investment differ across the Island and as such the above categories are not wholly applicable to trends that emerged when identifying UUS in the

¹⁰ If unchanged, these land use allocations will become final when the Plan is Adopted by the Department before being Approved by Tynwald

¹¹ Over the remainder of the Plan period (to 2026)

¹² [Report for Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East](#), Pg. 11

North and West. As only one site was identified in Jurby, the following analysis of trends of UUS distribution in the North and West focuses on Ramsey and Peel.

UUS in Ramsey and Peel can be broadly 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.
- **Transition Zone** – Sites within 'Transition Zones' as shown on the relevant Town Centre maps as part of the Draft Area Plan for the North and West¹³.
- **Outer-lying Zone** – UUS with a larger footprint within an area with a predominantly residential character.

5.3 Ramsey sites:

Coastal Zone

In Ramsey, there are a number of larger UUS which front onto quay and harbour side areas which can be characterised as being within the Coastal Zone (shown in blue on figure 2). UUS in the Coastal Zone have a larger footprint than sites in the Historic Core, averaging 0.20 Ha in area compared to an average area of 0.07 Ha in the Historic Core. Several UUS within the Coastal Zone have valid planning approval for apartment or mixed use developments.

Historic Core

The Townscape Character Assessment Report for Ramsey identified the Historic Core of Ramsey as:

"To the south of the harbour and quayside and extends to the High Street and Dale Street, incorporating Parliament Square, The Courthouse and War Memorial garden and Market Square."¹⁴

This indicative description of the Historic Core of Ramsey describes an area within the identified Town Centre boundary, encompassing the area covered by Ramsey Conservation Area. Within the Historic Core there are several smaller UUS (shown in orange on figure 2) which average 0.07 Ha in area. Several of the UUS identified as being with the Historic Core of Ramsey are the result of demolitions on or close to Parliament Street.

Transition Zone

A number of UUS in Ramsey are situated in the Transition Zone as shown on Map 5 of the Draft Area Plan for the North and West (shown in pink on figure 2). These UUS have an average site area of 0.28 Ha and as such are significantly larger on average than sites in the Coastal Zone and the Historic Core.

¹³ As shown on [Map 5](#) (Ramsey Town Centre) and [Map 7](#) (Peel Town Centre) of the published Draft Area Plan for the North and West

¹⁴ [Draft Area Plan for the North and West – Townscape Character Assessment for Ramsey and Peel](#), Pg. 6

This is owed to the fact that floor plates of buildings in the Transition Zone are larger and more coarsely-grained than those in the Coastal Zone, and especially those in the Historic Core.

Outer-lying Zone

The remaining UUS in Ramsey can be categorised as being within the Outer-lying Zone (shown in green on figure 2). These UUS are on average similar in area to those situated in the Transition Zone, averaging 0.3 Ha. UUS in the Outer-lying Zone are removed from the centre of the settlement and are generally within areas with a predominantly residential character.

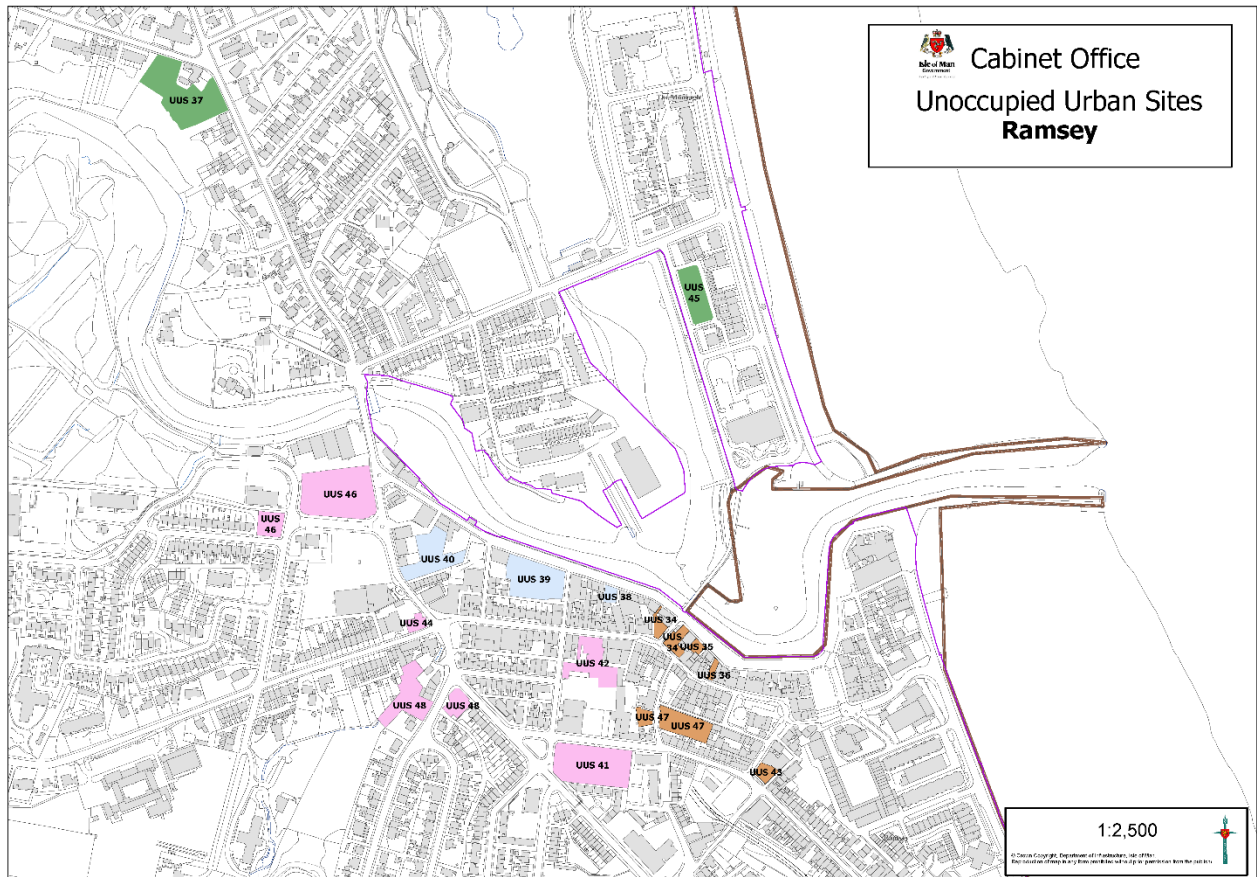


Figure 2: UUS in Ramsey grouped into Historic Core (orange), Coastal Zone (blue), Transition Zone (pink) and Outer-lying Zone (green)

5.4 Peel Sites:

Historic Core

The identified UUS in Peel can be broadly grouped into two of the aforementioned categories, these being the Historic Core and the Outer-lying Zone.

Peel Conservation Area covers a significant proportion of the town centre, resulting in the preservation of much of the town's historic street pattern. Accordingly, the UUS in Peel can almost exclusively be categorised as being within the Historic Core of the town (shown in orange on figure 3). The Townscape Character Assessment for Peel describes the Historic Core of the town as being situated:

“to the south of the outer working harbour... and comprising East Quay, with Castle Street, St. Peter’s Lane and Lake Lane leading up to Market Place which then feeds into Michael Street/Athol Place, finally reaching Derby Road”¹⁵.

As with Ramsey, a number of the UUS within Peel’s Historic Core can be identified as spot sites, this is particularly true of UUS in close proximity to St German’s Cathedral. Another emerging trend when identifying UUS in Peel was that many UUS either currently, or had previously, functioned as employment land.

The presence of UUS with historic employment uses is potentially linked to the growth of formal employment uses off Mill Road which offers purpose-built units and services - making it a more desirable location for business compared to the Historic Core of the town.

Outer-lying Zone

Only one of the UUS identified in Peel can be categorised as being within the Outer-lying Zone (shown in green on figure 3). As with Ramsey, this UUS is significantly larger than UUS categorised as being within the Historic Core measuring - 1.36 Ha compared to an average site area in the Historic Core of 0.1 Ha. The site is situated within a Predominantly Residential area as shown on Draft Proposals Map 6 of the Draft Area Plan for the North and West¹⁶.

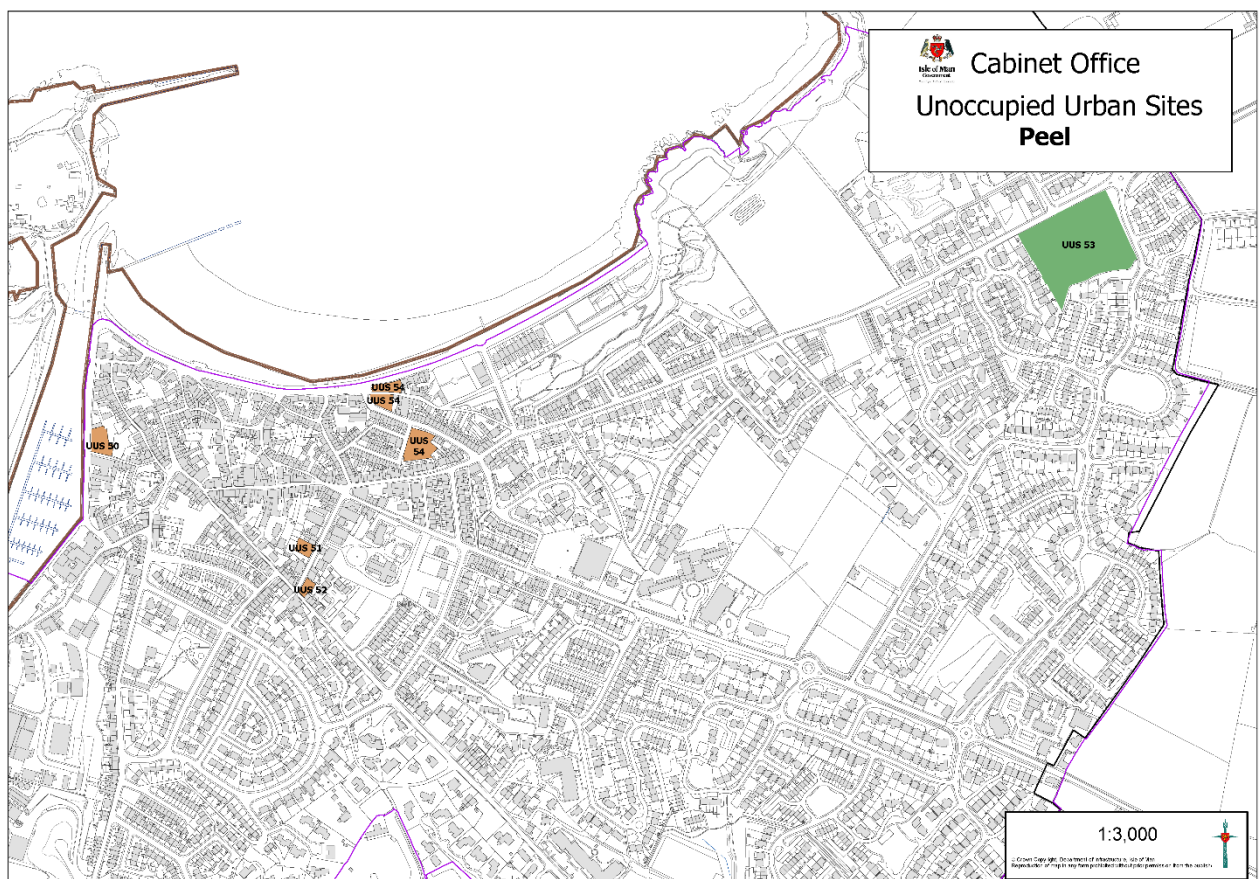


Figure 3: UUS in Peel grouped into Historic Core (orange) and Outer-lying Zone (green)

¹⁵ [Draft Area Plan for the North and West – Townscape Character Assessment for Ramsey and Peel](#), Pg. 19

¹⁶ [Draft Area Plan for the North and West – Draft Proposals Map 6](#)

6. Conclusions

The UUS Register: North and West identifies 21 Unoccupied Urban Sites across three settlements in the North and West of the Island. The development of the UUS Register: North and West will complement the existing UUS Registers: East and South to form a cohesive and comprehensive evidence base on the scale of and distribution of Unoccupied Urban Sites within existing settlements on the Isle of Man.

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