



Market Street, Douglas
Development Brief and Highway Widening and Improvement Scheme
For
Isle of Man Government
Department of Local Government and the Environment



Public Consultation Draft
December 2006 (Rev C)



Department of Local Government
And the Environment



Department of Transport

Contents:

- 1.00 Introduction
- 2.00 Background
- 3.00 Site Analysis and Existing Character
- 4.00 Impact of Proposed Road Line
- 5.00 Development Considerations for Site Affected by Proposed Road Improvements
 - 5.01 Section No. 1: Well Road Hill/Market Street/Food 4 Less Supermarket junction
 - 5.02 Section No. 2: Radcliffe's Paper Works/ Vacant Car Park Sites
 - 5.03 Section No. 3: Rear of 45-85 Strand Street
 - 5.04 Section No. 4: Premises Previously Occupied by G E White Ltd (Wholesale Newsagents)
 - 5.05 Section No. 5: Rear of Burton Group/T K Max Retail Premises
 - 5.06 Section No. 6: Site of the former Bridson and Horrox Works
 - 5.07 Section No. 7: Car Park behind Victory House
- 6.00 Establishing a Character for the proposed new road and footpath works

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Department of Transport drawing no. HW/2486 showing proposed road widening and improvement works

I.00 Introduction

I.01 This document has been jointly commissioned by the Department of Local Government and the Environment (DLGE) and the Department of Transport (DoT) from McGarrigle & Jackson, Architects and Urban Designers. Its purpose is to outline the way in which the DLGE considers the area could be developed in line with the proposals in the Douglas Local Plan. This is combined with the DoT's requirement for a road widening and improvement line to improve access to existing and proposed development and for service and emergency vehicles.

I.02 In the Isle of Man Planning Scheme (Douglas Local Plan) Order 1998 land to the west of Market Street (with the exception of Chester Street car park) is allocated for Predominantly Office use and that to the east as Predominantly Shopping. The Written Statement accompanying the Order identifies Market Street as one of the areas which should be the subject of Development Briefs. The reference to Market Street states:

“14.12 Market Street

Road improvement line to be identified in addition to use of areas to the north (should read west) of Market Street below the escarpment”.

I.03 The rest of this report sets out how the DLGE and DoT consider the area could be developed with adequate access and servicing secured by the widening and improvement of Market Street.

I.04 This report is being published for public consultation and both Departments would welcome views and comments from those who may be interested in the proposals and the future of the area. After consideration of the consultation responses the Departments will, if necessary, amend it in light of the comments received and the DLGE will adopt it as supplementary planning guidance in accordance with the Local Plan and to which the Department will have regard to in the determination of planning applications for the development of land in the area. In addition the DoT will adopt the road widening and improvement line and it will also be material to the consideration of planning applications in the area.

I.05 Your comments on the draft brief would be welcomed as would your comments and thoughts on the way in which the Market Street area could develop in the future. The draft brief is being circulated to:

- Local MHK's
- The Borough of Douglas
- Government Departments and Statutory Boards
- Landowners and businesses

Copies are available for inspection at Douglas Town Hall, Douglas Library and the offices of the DLGE at, Murray House, Mount Havelock, Douglas and the DoT, at the Sea Terminal, Douglas. The document is also available from the DLGE website www.gov.im/dlge/planning. Further copies can be obtained (priced at £2.50) from the DLGE offices.

I.06 Comments should be addressed to:

Market Street Brief

Department of Local Government and the Environment

Murray House

Mount Havelock

Douglas

Isle of Man

IMI 2SF

and must be received no later than **Thursday 1st March 2007**

I.07 All comments received will be given careful consideration by the Departments before the Development Brief is finalised.

2.00 Background

2.01 McGarrigle + Jackson have been jointly commissioned by the Department of Local Government and the Environment (DLGE) and Department of Transport (DOT to undertake a detailed study of Market Street and Nelson Street, and how the implementation of widening and improvement works proposed by the Department of Transport might affect these streets.

2.02 The remit of the study is also to examine the planning issues associated with existing sites, and make recommendations as to how the sites could be developed so that overall changes to the streets are balanced and coherent.

2.03 In initial discussions with the Department it was agreed that the scope of the Study would be extended to take in Nelson Street, which is the natural extension of Market Street to the south.

For the purposes of the study, references to Market Street are deemed to include Nelson Street where they are relevant.

Where any specific distinctive references to Nelson Street are required, these are included separately in the report.

3.00 Site Analysis and Existing Character

3.01 The current highway position for Market Street can be summarised as:

- Market Street is one way at the moment
- No strategic function
- Essentially service only
- Essential route for fire engines

3.02 The implementation of widening and improvement works will act as a catalyst for change in Market Street and Nelson Street, and will result in an enhanced perception of the value of commercial land and property in these streets.

3.02.1 Subject to the correct character being established in the road improvement and widening works, redevelopment could take place on a number of the sites which front Market Street and Nelson Street.

3.02.2 The potential for commercial redevelopment is strengthened by the fact that many of the sites on the western side of the streets are either under utilised or have redundant buildings on them which are suitable for redevelopment. Market Street is also one of the few available spaces, which is the main arterial retail route of Duke Street, Strand Street and Castle Street could enlarge into.

3.02.3 A recent Planning Application for a mixed use development opposite Marks & Spencer is indicative of the commercial awareness that exists, and interest in the sites available. It is also an indication of the need to establish clear planning guidance for potential developers on the character of development that would be welcomed by the DLGE.

3.02.4 In undertaking the site analysis and review of the existing character of Market Street the report has sought to assess existing and proposed planning concerns and policies. However the report has also sought to offer some wider visions, which look beyond the site boundaries for influences and opportunities, which might have a direct longer-term impact on Market Street/Nelson Street.

3.03 Market Street which encompasses Nelson Street and Edward Street currently runs north to south from Church Road Marina to Victoria Street. Two-way vehicular traffic is permitted on the section from Victoria Street to the end of the Victory House car park, whilst the main section of Market Street is one-way.

Both west and east side are characterised currently by a range of larger and smaller plots, and by newer and older buildings.

Buildings to the west side of the street, both recent and historical, offer their front elevations to the street, while those to the east side generally offer rear elevations and service yards to the street.

3.03.1 The Marks and Spencer store, which is the newest building facing onto the street has maximised its location and created a dual-frontage, acknowledging the natural circulation of shoppers from Prospect Hill who access the main arterial shopping route of Duke Street/Stand Street via the “39 steps” and Market Street.

The store also uses the Market Street elevation for goods entry and exit, however it has minimised the impact of this as far as is reasonably possible.

3.04 Market Street derives its name from the street’s association with the cattle market which was located in the 19th Century on the site currently occupied by Radcliffe’s Paper Works.

From the 1869 map of Douglas, the street appears to have always served as a service street giving access to a number of Tanneries, stables which housed horses used by the Post Office in Regent Street, a school, numerous small housing courts and business premises, as well as the rear of shops on Duke Street, Strand Street, Castle Street and Marina Road.

3.04.1 The street also gave service access to the rears of the large villas on Finch Road whose terraced gardens stepped down to Market Street.

3.05 Photographs taken in the late 1970’s on behalf of the Manx Museum would seem to suggest that traffic flow was one way from south to north rather than from north to south as currently exists.

Photographs show the character was very much of “backlands” with derelict and semi-derelict buildings, a lack of footpaths and proper street lighting, and unregulated parking.

- 3.05.1 Many of the buildings in the photographs were swept away in the 1980’s with the development of new retail premises in Strand Street and Duke Street such as Littlewoods, Marks and Spencers and the Strand Shopping Centre.

Other sites were cleared for car parking leaving open sites which have reduced the oppressive “feel” of Market Street which is present in the photographs taken in the late 1970’s.

- 3.05.2 The smaller commercial premises to the east side of Market Street that still present their services entrances to the street are generally in reasonable order albeit there is a severe lack of uniformity between the structures, and they are devoid of aesthetic value in terms of their role as street frontage.

- 3.05.3 Many of the commercial premises to the west side of Market Street are in poor order and most are likely to be beyond viability in terms of any potential re-use.

One exception to this is the former garage building behind St Andrews House which has been enlarged and refurbished to provide Offices and technical facilities. The refurbished building offers a much improved frontage to Market Street.

- 3.06 Market Street primarily acts as a vehicle conduit in the north – south direction, for access, as a through route and for emergency purposes.

The street does not have a distinctive function as a pedestrian conduit either north – south, or south – north. This is not unexpected as Castle Street and Strand Street provide greater interest, and as a result of their pedestrianisation, better functionality as a pedestrian route.

- 3.06.1 Market Street however is penetrated at right angles by a number of pedestrian routes, mainly entering from the west side of the street.

The recognised public and private routes are:

- (i) Well Road Hill adjacent to “Food 4 Less” supermarket (formerly Safeway).
- (ii) Private pathway from 6 – 9 Mount Pleasant.
- (iii) Private pathway from Finch Road via the side of St Andrew’s House and converted garage.
- (iv) Public pathway and steps from Prospect Hill to side of Victory House (“39 Steps” onto Nelson Street).
- (v) Pedestrianised street (Nelson Street) from Prospect Hill to junction with Wellington Street.
- (vi) Pedestrianised street (Wellington Street) westwards from Duke Street to Nelson Street.
- (vii) Public Lane (Guttery Gable) westwards from Strand Street.

3.06.2 The west to east and east to west routes many of which have a primary function as conduits for office workers entering the town centre in their lunch hour and returning to their offices, experience peaks of foot traffic between 12.00 noon and 2.00 pm Monday to Friday.

The recognised major route of those noted is route (iv) as listed. Known by those who use it as the “39 Steps”, it is a steep and fairly narrow route which is extensively used in all weathers.

The western entry point to the route is conveniently located at the end of Athol Street and adjacent to the traffic lights and pedestrian crossing, and serves workers from local businesses, Banks, Government Offices etc.

3.06.3 The route during retail opening hours feeds pedestrians through Marks and Spencers store out into Drumgold Street. Outside of retail opening hours pedestrians use Wellington Street, which exits on Duke Street.

Both routes are unsuitable for disabled users, and difficult for older or more infirm users due to the steepness of the steps.

4.00 Impact of Proposed Road Line

4.01 The Department of Transport provided an initial drawing setting out the proposed widening and improvement works is considered to be the definitive brief for the works and we have reviewed the impact of the scheme on this basis.

4.01.1 The current Department of Transport scheme responds to recent changes such as the conversion of the Garage behind St Andrew's House, and also presumes the maintenance of existing pedestrian routes such as the "39 Steps" route from Prospect Hill.

4.02 The scheme has been set out to have a minimum impact on properties on the east side of the street, however the road line has a major impact on all the existing premises and sites from Markwell House to the "39 Steps".

4.02.1 The exception to this as already referenced is the converted garage behind St Andrew's House where planning permission was granted for the conversion and enlargement of the premises.

The proposed road line has been detailed at this point to reduce the carriageway width to single vehicle width thus improving the available space for a public footpath, and traffic calming has been introduced in the form of a table top ramp.

Some consideration may be required on the extent of this to ensure that access to the service area opposite the converted garage is not materially affected.

4.03 Traffic calming has also been introduced adjacent to Marks and Spencer's store to slow traffic, and establish pedestrian priority adjacent to the foot of the "39 Steps".

4.04 The overall impact of the proposed new road line to the west side of Market Street if ratified will be to require future development to be set back, and a portion of the existing site transferred to the Department of Transport Highways for the establishment of a wider public highway. In many cases this cannot be achieved without demolition of existing buildings.

- 4.04.1 For clarity in the consideration of this impact, and for the purposes of referencing design development ideas we have referenced the frontage in sections with appropriate breaks as we see it currently, and as indicated on Analysis Plan.
- 4.04.2 Section 2 of the frontage includes Radcliffe's Paper Works and the adjacent vacant sites, which are currently used for car parking.

The new road line requires a strip of land approximately 3.8m wide to the frontage of Radcliffe's Paper Works and 3.8m wide to the frontage of the car parks.

- 4.04.3 Section 4 of the frontage includes premises previously occupied by G E White Ltd (wholesale newsagents).

The new road requires a strip of land approximately 1.8m wide, which would only be achieved through complete demolition and redevelopment of the front section of the current group of buildings.

The road narrows in front of the converted garage as previously noted and there is therefore no site reduction at this point.

- 4.04.4 Section 6 of the frontage is the narrowest point on Market Street. The new road line requires a strip of land, which is 2.6m at its maximum width and reduces to 1.4m at the southerly end of the frontage. The buildings along this frontage have recently been demolished and the remainder of the site not affected by the road line is currently used as parking.

Again, the line could only be established through complete demolition and redevelopment of the front section of the site, although it is unlikely in commercial terms that this would happen in isolation of the remainder of the site.

- 4.04.5 Section 7 of the frontage is an open car parking area which serves Victory House. There is poor definition between land that is deemed to be Private car park, and land that is deemed to be Public footpath.

Subject to clarification through a check of legal titles, it would appear that the proposed road line would require a strip of land approximately 1m wide.

The road width in this area is nearer to the Department of Transport's design requirements, and their proposal mainly improves the line of the road in this section, smoothing out of the rather abrupt change of direction which currently exists.

5.00 Development Considerations for Sites Affected by Proposed Road Improvements

5.01 Section No. 1 - Well Road Hill/Market Street/Food 4 Less Supermarket junction

5.01.1 Although not directly affected by the road improvements line, this section of frontage to Market Street does offer opportunities to improve how the space outside the supermarket is utilised, and the relationship between the pedestrianised pathway known as Well Road Hill, which would be beneficial.

5.01.2 Pedestrians routed down Well Road Hill are directed in two different directions at the junction with Market Street. Pedestrians going to the right are directed towards a zebra crossing strategically located at the entrance steps to the Strand Shopping Centre.

Pedestrians routed to the left descend into a covered area, which serves as a concourse area to the supermarket, public lifts, public toilets and supermarket coffee shop.

5.01.3 Market Street at this point has the appearance of a shared surface with no footpath change in level to the west side of the street. Bollards create a division line between the existing taxi stand and the surface intended for pedestrians. Existing signage indicates a limit of three taxis at any one time. Both 'Rank Taxis' and 'Radio Taxis' should be considered within any proposals and the disabled minibus space should be retained.

5.01.4 The space is covered by a free standing concrete roof structure with an open area to the rear for improved day lighting, however the space relies on artificial lighting much of the time.

Some landscaping and trees have been integrated, and finishes are primarily buff coloured brick.

5.01.5 There are few spaces in the heart of Douglas on arterial pedestrian routes that have the potential to be developed as rest areas, and areas that could provide "comfort" and "shelter" facilities.

The potential for redevelopment in this space is high.

The following ideas could be investigated further as a concept, and the space created would be a welcome addition to the town's facilities:

- Remove existing freestanding concrete structure.
- Re-plan concourse area including removal of caretakers accommodation, new toilet facilities, improved lifts and staircase facilities.
- Erect new 3 – 4 storey high predominately glazed structure, incorporating pedestrian access from mid point of Well Road Hill, and with automatic opening doors to all entrances.
- Relocate coffee shop to create free-standing facility serving a 'pavement café' within a new enclosed space.
- Incorporate mature containerised tree planting to create attractive indoor "winter garden" environment.
- Utilise potential waste heat from supermarket bakery/equipment to heat space in winter.

5.01.6 In conjunction with these works we would foresee the removal of existing walls and ramps that present a defensive and featureless image, and the opening up and improvement of the external works around the new facility, including new mature tree planting, new street lighting, and potentially new lighter coloured paving materials. Part of this area will be affected by the current planning application to provide a doctor's surgery.

5.01.7 Some potential also exists for a high level link between the Strand Shopping Centre, and the new facility.

This link would have to exit the Strand Centre in an area of the building, which is currently a retail unit, however it would appear possible.

Any study of such a proposal would need to consider the height limitations for service vehicles and whether these would be acceptable both now, and in the future. The current recommended height to be maintained for vehicles is 16'6" as used by Marks & Spencer's.

5.01.8 The potential redevelopment has the potential to take what is currently a fairly drab and lifeless space and create a lighter and more dynamic space.

Future development in the area of the Finch Road, Christian Road, Mount Havelock, could potentially increase the level of pedestrian traffic on Well Road Hill, which would increase the potential viability of the proposed redevelopment.

- 5.01.9 The potential for redevelopment may also be enhanced because the Department of Local Government and the Environment own the existing supermarket premises and concourse area, although let to the Shoprite Group.

The commercial viability of creating the facility described may be difficult to justify without accepting that the proposals incorporate elements that may need to be considered as part of a wider improvement plan to make Douglas a more attractive centre.

As such, the value of the improved facilities might then be measured against a different set of criteria from those which would be used by a private developer.

- 5.01.10 Improvements to the eastern elevations of the supermarket, including the prominent stair tower with re-cladding and new feature lighting to create a better nighttime presence would also improve the character of Market Street in this section.

- 5.01.11 Improvement works to the car park structure which forms the backdrop to the supermarket would also contribute greatly to the environment in this area.

As a minimum, external redecoration of the concrete structure would offer both functional protection to the concrete which is over 25 years old, and better aesthetics.

Over cladding would offer more potential to reduce the visual impact of the structure and could perhaps coordinate with over cladding of the supermarket elevations to Market Street.

5.02 Section No. 2 - Radcliffe's Paper Works / Vacant Car Park Sites

- 5.02.1 This section of Market Street frontage offers enormous commercial potential for redevelopment if the two sections of the site could be developed together, and a pragmatic and imaginative view was adopted.
- 5.02.2 The potential of the site lies in its large development area "footprint", the potential for it to be developed to four or five storeys in height, and the scope to secure a number of adjoining properties in Strand Street which could be demolished to create a pedestrianised retail route directly to the entrance area of the development.
- 5.02.3 Subject to how the land to the rear of properties could be developed in the future, the site offers potential in the longer term for the establishment of a new pedestrian route descending from Finch Road, through the new development into Market Street.
- 5.02.4 The site is bounded to the western side by a tree belt forming a continuation of treed brooghs, which previously marked the rear boundaries of the terraced gardens to the Villas on Finch Road. The trees are important as a 'green wedge' and landscape feature and any development of the site would have to make provision for their well-being.
- 5.02.5 Whilst the site could be subdivided and developed as a series of narrower fronted buildings which has customer access to the Market Street frontage and service access from a service lane to the rear, the greater commercial potential in our opinion is for the site to be developed with large open floor plates that would be attractive to national retailers interested in bigger floor areas than are currently available in Douglas. But its viability would depend on a strong pedestrian and retail link to Strand Street.
- 5.02.6 The prominence of the site and its location on a significant sweep in the line of Market Street, which, in many locations is fronted by solid blank elevations, suggests to us a strong theme that could shape a development Brief for the site.
- The curved site frontage, the potential to create at least three storeys with matching floor plates, and the desirability to create "transparency" that reduces the sense of enclosure within Market Street suggests strongly to us the use of simple fully glazed facades.

- The use of glazed facades in this manner would offer a strong “open aspect” contrast to the mixture of small and larger solid blank elevations that characterise many of the properties on the eastern side of Market Street.
- Creating a glazed façade to Market Street would also offer huge potential for a building on this site to be illuminated at night internally and act as a focal point/”theatrical experience” that enlivens the street.
Incorporating vertical circulation, feature structure, creative displays and display lighting would also contribute to the creation of an exciting landmark building on the site, transforming the existing perception of Market Street completely.
- The difference in levels that exists between the site levels at Market Street, and the levels to the top of the landscaped embankment also creates the potential to exploit the upper levels of any new development to take advantage of the views towards the east, and the “green wedge” backdrop to the west. The high level planting forms an important feature and should be retained.
The upper levels of any building could be exploited for a different commercial use from the lower floors accessed from Market Street. Potential uses might include a restaurant/wine bar or private club that might also be able to exploit open roof areas or roof garden areas in good weather. Residential use could also be investigated depending on the use of the lower floors.

5.02.7 The site also offers the facility to incorporate a service lane to the western edge adjacent to the bottom of the tree lined embankment that would facilitate loading and unloading for retail units. This vehicular access route would also offer potential access for the maintenance of the retained trees, and for emergency fire engine access.

Separating the building away from the bottom of the tree lined embankment would also simplify construction giving unhindered access for contractors, and avoiding longer term access problems.

5.02.8 The development of the current site would necessitate the removal of Radcliffe’s Paper Works and the other business premises within the current group of buildings. These premises have recently been offered for sale and have attracted Developer interest.

Further detailed investigations could be carried out to determine if, and how, replacement parking spaces could be found to replace those lost by the redevelopment of the site.

5.02.9 The Department of Transport have expressed their interest to increase the number of off street disabled parking spaces outside Markwell House (Department of Health and Social Services). The increased number of spaces could be included within the re-development of this section.

5.03 Section No.3 - Rear of 45-85 Strand Street

5.03.1 This section of Market Street includes the rears of many of the older narrow frontage retail units that characterise the section of Strand Street between Littlewoods and The Strand Shopping Centre.

Many of these premises have been enlarged incrementally over the years by the addition of flat and pitched roof extensions and offer a wide variety of forms, shapes and heights to their rear elevations on to Market Street.

The alignment of rear elevations on plan also varies with some plots having space to accommodate car parking and others having accommodation constructed right up to the back of footpath.

5.03.2 The removal of a number of these buildings to open up a meaningful pedestrian and retail link from Strand Street through to Market Street would reduce the impact of these premises at the rear on Market Street, however, it is our view that additional works which harmonise the rear elevations would be required to improve the setting for a major redevelopment of the site opposite (Section 2).

5.03.3 The fact that it is likely that obtaining the co-operation of multiple owners to improvements that would require work on their sites would be extremely difficult and time consuming suggests to us that a solution which does not rely on significant input or contributions from property owners would be required.

Opportunity does, in our view, exist because of the potential commercial value of the site opposite, for a series of screening works to be undertaken in front of the existing building line that creates a greater degree of visual harmony than currently exists and that is paid for and implemented by the developer. Imaginative use of colour and external lighting would enhance the screening works along with some opportunities for planting.

Some potential for advertising sites might also exist which would assist with the costs of ongoing maintenance. Some slight re-alignment of the road line may be required to create the space for the screening, which could be tied into existing features as appropriate.

5.03.4 The location of any retail link through to Market Street from Strand Street would inevitably be dictated to a large extent by the ability to acquire existing premises on Strand Street and to a lesser extent the Planning of any new development on the site referred to as Section 2.

Such a link with a controlled environment would also help meet the need for breakout, rest and comfort facilities, on the main arterial shopping route identified by Douglas Development Partnership.

5.04 Section No.4 - Premises Previously Occupied by G E White Ltd (Wholesale Newsagents)

5.04.1 This section of Market Street frontage incorporates a collection of redundant commercial premises which include pitched and flat roof buildings from 1.5 – 2.5 storeys in height.

The buildings back on to the former stepped gardens of converted town houses located in Mount Pleasant. There is at least one private pedestrian route from the converted town houses which exits on to Market Street in the middle of the group of buildings, however others may exist legally.

5.04.2 The proposed road line would require the removal of these buildings which are generally in a poor state of repair.

5.04.3 The known rights of access through this section of frontage from Mount Pleasant and the possibility of other rights as yet unidentified suggests the possibility that the site may have to be developed as a series of individual buildings which retain the pedestrian access routes between them. Some negotiation may be possible to enable any access rights to be forfeited, or a number of established routes grouped into one communal route. This would enable a single building with a larger footprint to be planned more easily.

5.04.4 The site itself is relatively shallow because of the tiered ground behind which, although part of the town houses in Mount Pleasant, is under utilised.

The site is also overlooked by the town houses which have now all been converted into offices.

5.04.5 The conversion and enlargement of the existing garage to the left side of the frontage has resulted in the creation of a large scale 3-storey gabled structure, with a steep roof pitch.

The scale of the existing 2.5 storey height building opposite the rear elevation of T K Max would be more appropriate although a 3-storey development would be acceptable given the correct design, form and materials.

Gabled elevations would also add some interest and variety and provide opportunities for accommodation to be taken into the roof space. Balconies and gable glazing could also be incorporated to maximise the east facing orientation and views over Douglas Bay.

- 5.04.5 The site should be planned with on site car parking which is visually screened, rather than fully built on as at present. Appropriate building types would be offices, retail or trade showrooms (excluding car sales), design studios etc.

Building finishes should be light coloured to maximise reflection and external works to front elevations should not be neglected in any design considerations. Feature lighting to the Market Street frontage would add interest at night time, as would the avoidance of industrial style security shutters and a greater emphasis on internal illumination of premises, particularly any showroom facilities.

- 5.04.6 Planning of the site to allow some vehicular parking for drop off and short term visits might also offer some benefit.

5.05. Section No.5 - Rear of Burton Group/T K Max Retail Premises

5.05.1 This section of the Market Street frontage contains and is bounded by the newest development which impacts the street.

The frontage is dominated by almost blank elevations and by the servicing areas and staff car parking facilities for the retail premises on Strand Street.

Part of the frontage is contained by simple steel railings and gates, however, these do not offer any screening to cars, or to waste packaging and other refuse awaiting collection.

5.05.2 Parking to the rear of the premises appears to be somewhat haphazard and a number of the service doors and staff access doors out of the T K Max store appear not to have been used for some time. Large weeds are growing in a number of areas and although this is a reasonable recently formed frontage there is a distinct sense of neglect in the area.

5.05.3 The service plant platform and car park lights to Marks and Spencer's roof top car park stand out visually to the right hand side of the frontage and are not screened.

5.05.4 Although the frontage could be better planned and screened, it does offer some visual relief in the way the main buildings are set back from the edge of the footpath to create the service and parking facilities.

Two distinct options for improvements to the frontage would appear to be possible.

(i) The layout of car parking and organisation of the external spaces could be improved and measures could be implemented to provide screening to the spaces for a significant length of the frontage.

The screening could be provided in a number of ways such as:-

a) Traditional masonry walls and piers with feature pier caps and wall modelling.

Feature galvanised steel gates.

b) Freestanding steel structure and metal screening designed and detailed to increase the sense of scale to the frontage and provide visual continuity between the T K Max building, and the Marks and Spencer building.

With appropriate feature lighting, and a traditional colour scheme this treatment could add interest and variety without losing completely the sense of visual openness that currently exists to this frontage.

- c) An alternative approach to screening would be to recognise the drabness of the frontage to this section of Market Street, the severe absence of illuminated windows, and the opportunity to seek to create a feature that exploits this missing element.

An imaginative solution would be to create a steel structure (2.5 – 3.0m high) that is infilled with etched glass blocks, creating a large translucent surface. The screen could be then backlit at night using constant colour, or variable colour lighting to create a luminous feature that would stand out after dark.

A bold and “alternative” solution such as this would “stimulate” the urban environment as well as acting as a functional screen to the service and car parking area.

- ii) The alternative to screening the existing frontage could be to permit the development of the airspace above the service and car park area in a way that would enable both to exist independently.

Goods deliveries appear to be made at either end of the frontage and it would appear to us that some scope exists for the development of the remainder of the frontage.

The design of the development could take one of a number of different approaches.

- a) A “lightweight” steel and glass structure would offer a contrast with the solid masonry “blocks” at either end of the frontage.

Imaginative lighting and maximisation of the “transparency” of any building would create an infill development of interest that was virtually stimulating.

- b) A structural “form” which deviated from the strong rectilinear lines of the adjacent buildings and perhaps “leaned” into the street would again be visually “energetic”. A strong use of colour and texture would also provide relief from, and contrast with the “creams” and “buffs” which characterise much of the recent infill development.

Repainting of some of the existing elevations in alternative colours would also add some additional interest.

- c) A more traditional structure which suggested the existence of an infill building at ground and upper floor levels could be created, with perhaps gable features to Market Street.

The structure would have to be sufficiently high to permit delivery lorries to access loading bays, but would introduce a feature which would provide continuity to the existing frontage.

Imaginative use of lighting to highlight features, and better external works adjacent to the structural infill would add to the success of such an approach.

Whichever option is pursued it could allow for some landscaping/street planting to soften the edge between the road and the service area.

5.06 Section No. 6 – Site of the former Bridson & Horrox Works

- 5.06.1 This section of the Market Street frontage is the narrowest of the entire street and the section of roadway which requires the greatest widening.
The site was the subject of a Planning Application for redevelopment, which was refused on appeal. Planning submission has recently been granted for surface car parking which is now in operation.
- 5.06.2 The imposition of the proposed road line on the site will have the effect of reducing the developable site width by approximately 2.6m at its maximum width.
- 5.06.3 Due to the scale of the Marks & Spencer car park and store frontage, there is a chance that a ‘canyon effect’ will be created. This should be avoided.
- 5.06.4 If the redevelopment of this site is considered in isolation from the adjacent site, there could be strong pressure to maximise the development potential. This approach is likely to lead to difficulties agreeing the type and size of building that is appropriate and will not create a ‘canyon effect’.
- 5.06.5 The dominance of the Marks and Spencer’s car park and store elevation suggests that a setback to any new development would be desirable to open up the space outside Marks and Spencer’s store, and remove the claustrophobic impact that currently exists in this section of Market Street. Such a setback would reduce the footprint of the development.
- 5.06.6 There would be significant merit in developing Section 6 and Section 7 sites and frontages as a whole for a number of reasons:
- i) A joint development of the two sites would enable the impact of the pedestrian flow down the “39 steps” to be factored into the design considerations
 - ii) Consideration of the two sites together would offer potentially more interesting design options because of the additional access opportunities from an enlarged concourse level extended through from the base of Victory House.
 - iii) The possibility would exist for further design exploration of the car parking which currently occupies the site in line with Victory House, to be located further back into the adjacent site, which is currently occupied by warehousing.

5.06.7 Although outside the scope of this study, the potential for the reuse of the site currently occupied by Victoria Hall would create a more comprehensive development and greater benefit to Douglas as a whole.

5.06.8 If such a redevelopment opportunity were taken, consideration might also be extended to the long term future of Victory House and possibly even Hillary House. The replacement of these buildings could form part of a comprehensive Master Plan for the entire block, from Prospect Hill through to Market Street.

Such a redevelopment could offer the commercial leverage to enable a acceptable replacements for Victoria and Hillary House and the relocation of Victoria Hall to a more appropriate location.

A comprehensive redevelopment would also enable the significant changes in level between Prospect Hill and Market Street to be exploited to create additional commercial or retail floor space, with integration of underground car parking also.

5.06.9 The height of the Marks and Spencer store is such that a development of significant height (5-6 storeys) would be required on the Section 6 frontage to even begin to get any views towards Douglas Bay.

Currently there might not be significant commercial demand for office space or other uses which would be acceptable in this location, to justify constructing a development that simply looked out onto the Marks and Spencer's store.

5.6.10 This single consideration provides the most compelling argument for the Section 6 frontage and site to be considered as part of a larger redevelopment that creates its own internal views within the site, and incorporates enhanced external space that removes the claustrophobic presence that currently exists in this part of the street, and adds value to the remaining site area.

5.6.11 Such a comprehensive redevelopment opportunity would benefit from a number of positive factors which currently exist, or could be created within future development. These factors are positive indicators why such a redevelopment may be commercially attractive.

- i) The location of Victory House at the end of the premier business street in Douglas is strategically of high value
- ii) Victory House is an ageing office block which appears to be difficult to let, and does not benefit from the modern infrastructure incorporated in new office environments
- iii) There is a strong pedestrian flow adjacent to the site ('39 steps') which would provide viability for some retail uses on the site.
- iv) The refurbishment of the Isle of Man Government legislative buildings, will create an additional flow of pedestrians towards the retail corridor of Strand Street, Duke Street, Castle Street. This will add to the commercial attractiveness of any retail space.
- v) Recent office developments on Athol Street yet to be let also offer the potential for an additional flow of pedestrians, and sites which will be redeveloped in the future such as the Court House, and Dickinson Cruickshank's old premises will add to this number also.
- vi) The peak flow of pedestrian traffic, which takes place between 12.00 and 2.00pm, does indicate a potential opportunity for the development of additional food and beverage retailing outlets on the route. The potential to combine these into a 'food court' also acts as a quality indoor public meeting space. The proximity to Douglas's central business district would seem to offer much of the commercial confidence and reassurance required for a developer to undertake a comprehensive redevelopment of this scale.
- vii) The redevelopment of the Prospect Hill frontage would offer the opportunity for the recreation of a frontage which is nearer to the street architecture in place when the current legislative buildings existed as banking premises.
- viii) The comprehensive redevelopment of the site would enable a satisfactory solution to be found for the relocation of Victoria Hall, which originally fronted Prospect Hill, but has now become trapped in an uncomfortable relationship with Hillary House/Victory House and St Andrews House.

5.07 Section No. 7 - Car Park behind Victory House

- 5.07.1 Many of the considerations for Section 7 of the Market Street frontage have been referred to in 4.06 (Section 6) of the report.
- 5.07.2 If considered in isolation, the site is only minimally affected by the widening and improvement works proposed by the DoT.
- 5.07.3 The utilisation of the site for car parking may currently represent the best commercial use of the land for the current owners. In the context of the potential wave of redevelopment that may result from the implementation of the road widening and improvement works, we would anticipate that the site's enhanced value may initiate some considerations on the part of its owners for redevelopment.
- 5.07.4 As indicated in 4.06.9 for Section 6 frontage and site, there might not be any significant market for a building which simply looked out onto the blank elevations, car park entrance ramp, and loading bay of the Marks and Spencer's store. Such a building, raised even 2 or 3 storeys above the existing concourse at the rear of Victory House would also impact on windows to existing offices, would create a wind tunnel between the buildings, and would seem to offer few attractive benefits.
- 5.07.5 If developed in isolation from Section 6 frontage and site, and not as part of any larger comprehensive redevelopment scheme involving Victory House, the major influence that would drive the success of any development lies in "capturing" the flow of pedestrians which currently routes from Prospect Hill towards Strand Street/Duke Street via the "39 steps".
- 5.06.5 Initial assessment of the design opportunities suggests to us that the following ideas could be implemented:
- i) The site is infilled with a building which has a fully glazed frontage to Market Street to capture all available light, create a sense of "transparency" to reduce the impact of the frontage, and contribute through internal illumination, to a more stimulating night time environment on Market Street.
 - ii) The infill building has a flat roof deck which is level, with the existing concourse level to the rear of Victory House.

With improvements to the existing concourse area, and the introduction of some features to provide shelter, this space would offer some recreational benefits and facility in fair weather.

- iii) The building incorporates a double height single space that enables an internal staircase to be routed internally from the concourse level to ground floor level. This staircase could be exploited as a main design feature and would offer pedestrians an alternative route to the “39 steps”.

The building would have ground floor access opposite Marks and Spencer’s Market Street entrance.

5.07.7 Our initial thoughts are that the most potent use for a building on this site would be as a food outlet, focussed on servicing the business community. We would conceive the space as a lively noisy interchange incorporating a number of outlets, and some seating facilities.

5.07.8 Whilst a satisfactory infill building could be created on this site, the most successful use of the site might be to include it within the adjacent site as outlined under 4.06 – Section 6. The functional use of this space as part of any new building as described may continue to be the most potent, even in the context of a larger development.

5.07.9 The junction of Nelson Street, Wellington Street and Victoria Road marks the end of the area covered within the Market Street Study. This junction can be very busy and is normally used as follows:

- i) By through traffic and Taxi’s from the ‘Food 4 Less’ Supermarket and the back doors of the Strand Shopping Centre.
- ii) By service and delivery vehicles.
- iii) Marks & Spencer’s delivery lorry and loading bay.
- iv) Entrance/Exit to Marks & Spencer’s multi Storey Car Park
- v) Cars turning and dropping off
- vi) Crossing point for pedestrians travelling from Prospect Hill and Athol Street down Nelson Street to Strand Street and the main shopping area.

All the above uses combined, make this a very busy junction at the end of Market Street. If The Department of Transport were to extend their proposed road scheme through to Victoria Road this junction could be greatly simplified and priority given to pedestrians crossing from Nelson Street to Wellington Street.

5.07.10 The materials used at the junction should take into account the materials proposed for the Strand Street Master Plan prepared for the Douglas Development Partnership.

The proposed materials were mainly natural products, which are more attractive than concrete products, and if properly maintained would retain their natural qualities. Natural materials are not as prone to colour change and fading as concrete products, and they have a better appearance when wet.

The natural materials will help to create a quality environment and also allow flexible design for both vehicular and pedestrian surfaces especially in an area used by all types of traffic.

6.00 Establishing a Character for the Proposed New Road and Footpath Works

6.01 The establishment of an upgraded road and footpaths will have a significant impact on the character of Market Street, and the standards set in these works will influence how site owners and developers view the redevelopment of new buildings with their associated external works along Market Street.

6.02 The use of Market Street for access to the rears of retail premises on Strand Street/Castle Street by heavy delivery lorries will probably necessitate the need for an entirely new road build up. To avoid problems with levels it is anticipated that DOT will require the excavation of the existing road construction, and the reinstallation of new carriageway construction to levels as near as possible to existing.

It is anticipated that DOT will take the opportunity to facilitate the integration of new statutory and public utility services, duct networks etc in anticipation of ongoing development of sites fronting Market Street.

6.03 Because of Market Street's historical context as a "back lands" and service road, significant emphasis should be placed on the quality of the materials specified, and the detailing employed in the carriageway upgrading works. This should be such that it is clear to all that the planning and development expectations for new buildings are significantly higher than currently exists.

Detailed consideration of appropriate materials and detailing is outside the scope of this report, however, our own initial preference would be for the use of granite kerbs and drainage channels, and tegular block paving to road and footpath surfaces.

Such a combination would offer the strength and character of natural materials where they will have the biggest impact, in conjunction with standard cost effective materials with proven functionality and durability.

6.04 Careful selection of street lighting will also be an important consideration in the establishment of a new character for Market Street, as will be the careful integration of street furniture, signage, possible public art features, tree planting etc.

Proposals prepared by this practice for Douglas Development Partnership in October 2004 for a phased upgrading of the retail corridor from Market Hill to Marina Road will have some relevance for the proposed works to Market Street, and includes detailed specifications for many of the items referred to.

Appendix A

DOT drawing no. HW/2486 showing proposed road widening and improvement works