



Isle of Man
Government

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Report for Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East (Update 1)

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, Cabinet Office published the Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East in November 2020. The 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 is stated that the initial focus will be on the Main Centre and Service Centres in the East 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. As part of this 2022 update, the UUS Register has now been extended to cover the whole Island.

NOTE: All definitions set out in the 2020 Report are equally applicable to this Update.

2. The Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East (Update 1)

2.1 Geographical Scope

The UUS Register: East (Update 1) considers sites within the Main Centre and Service in the East of the Island. This iteration of the Register has been produced alongside the development of a UUS Register for the North and West, and together with the UUS Register: South, 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: East (Update 1) is composed of the following documents:

- An Unoccupied Urban Sites Report: East (Update 1),
- An Unoccupied Urban Sites Register: East (Update 1), 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 of the [Isle of Man Strategic Plan 2016](#)

- An Unoccupied Urban Sites Map set: East (Update 1) to show the locations of the UUS within their respective settlements.

2.3 Executive Summary

The 2020 Register identified 33 UUS within the settlement boundaries of Douglas and Onchan with a total combined area of 20 Hectares (Ha). The UUS Register: East (Update 1) identifies an additional 23 UUS in the East (19 in Douglas and four in Laxey), as well as identifying two UUS which are to be removed from the Register and a further two UUS which required an amended site boundary as part of the UUS Register: East (Update 1).

2.4 Removals

The UUS Register: East (Update 1) identifies two UUS which are deemed to be suitable for removal from the UUS Register: East. Both UUS 15 (Glenside) and UUS 23 (The Milestone, Peel Road) had valid planning approval at the time of being included on the 2020 Register but those approvals had not been taken up. Since then, development on both sites has commenced to such an extent that it is deemed appropriate that the sites be removed from the Register.

2.5 Modifications

As well as identifying two UUS which are suitable for removal from the UUS Register: East, the UUS Register: East (Update 1) also identifies a further two UUS which require an amended site boundary. These two sites are UUS 1 (Westmoreland Road) and UUS 7 (Masterplan SG1). These two UUS require an amended site boundary as in both cases part of the site extent is no-longer considered be constitute an unoccupied urban site.

2.6 Additions

The UUS Register: East (Update 1) identifies 23 new UUS in the East. These sites have a combined area of 3.6 Ha. and are situated in two settlements in the East, these being:

- Douglas – 19 sites
- Laxey – 4 sites

The UUS identified as part of the UUS Register: East (Update 1) can be further broken down into the following land use allocations as part of the Area Plan for the East⁴:

- Mixed Use: 14
- Predominantly Residential: 7
- Employment: 2

The ownership of the above sites can be broken down as follows:

- 3 in Government Department or Local Authority Ownership
- 20 in private (one or more owners)

⁴ As shown on [Map 4](#) – Douglas and [Map 7](#) – Laxey of the Area Plan for the East

3. Summary of Findings

3.1 UUS Register: East (Update 1) Key results

A large proportion of sites are situated in the lower Douglas area⁵. Of the 19 UUS identified in Douglas as part of the UUS Register: East (Update 1), over 50% were located within one of the Mixed Use Areas shown on Proposals Map 5 of the Area Plan for the East.⁶

The average site area of UUS in Douglas identified as part of the UUS Register: East (Update 1) is also significantly smaller than the average area of UUS identified as part of the 2020 Register (0.17 Ha. compared to 0.65 Ha.). This is owed to the fact that a number of the UUS identified as part of Update 1 constitute 'spot sites', i.e. derelict individual buildings within areas where the building density is higher and more finely grained.

3.2 Monitoring of planning applications on UUS: East

In accordance with recommendation 1 of the Select Committee Report⁷, this report seeks to provide an update on planning applications approved on sites identified as a UUS in the 2020 Register.

At the publication of the 2020 Register, there was valid planning approval for a total of 72 units on identified unoccupied urban sites. This number of units can be further broken down in to seven dwelling houses and 65 apartments.

Since the 2020 Register was published, approval for ten of these units has lapsed.

At the time of this update to the register, there is valid planning approval for a total of 37 units on identified unoccupied urban sites (37 apartments). Applications are currently pending consideration for the development of a further ten dwellings⁸.

The latest Cabinet Office data on the uptake of Planning Applications across the Island indicates that from the period of July 2011 to June 2022, there was a 21% lapse rate⁹ on planning applications in the East.

Between July 2011 and June 2022, there was valid approval granted for the development of 131 dwellings on UUS identified in the 2020 Register. As of December 2022, there remained valid approval for the development of 62 dwellings, whereas approval for 69 dwellings had lapsed inferring a lapse rate of 52%.

4. Conclusions

The 2020 Register identified 33 UUS within the settlement boundaries of Douglas and Onchan. As part of a review of this dataset, several additions and modifications have been made comprised of 23 newly identified sites (of which 19 are in Douglas and 4 in Laxey) two sites to be removed from the Register and two sites which require an amended site boundary.

⁶ [Map 5](#) of the Area Plan for the East

⁷ [Report of the Select Committee of Tynwald on the development of Unoccupied Urban Sites, 2018, Pg. 24.](#)

⁸ The redevelopment of the former Castlemona Hotel is noted although no firm proposals have yet emerged.

⁹ [Residential Land Availability Study, Update 15, 2001-2022, Pg. 4](#)

The 2020 Report recommended a “tailored approach” be adopted to the development of previously developed land within settlement boundaries. Some of the recommendations contained within the Report have been explored, these include:

- The undertaking of a Viability Assessment in order to expand Cabinet Office’s evidence base on development viability (currently being considered by Cabinet Office).
- The setting up of a Development Agency (MDC) who are tasked with making a long-term contribution to urban and brownfield regeneration (the Agency is now operational and securing planning approvals).
- The development of a grant scheme to deliver national economic and social value on Unoccupied Urban Sites (The Island Infrastructure Scheme – to be debated in December Tynwald).

Under the objective of Building Great Communities, Our Island Plan¹⁰ makes a strong commitment to “focus development on brownfield sites”. This updated Unoccupied Urban Sites Register forms part of the cohesive evidence base for both Government and the private sector to help focus resources and facilitate the development of brownfield sites.

¹⁰ [Island Plan \(GD No. 2022/0004\)](#)