



# Area Plan for the East: Draft Plan Groups of Houses in the Countryside

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Evidence Paper No. DP EP4

Cabinet Office

# Evidence Paper: Groups of Houses in the Countryside

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## Introduction

This Evidence Paper aims to identify groups of houses in the countryside in the East, assess these groups in terms of their potential to accommodate additional residential development and make recommendations to inform the Draft Area Plan for the East.

## What is a GHIC?

The term 'Groups of Houses in the Countryside' in a planning context is set out in the Isle of Man Strategic Plan (hereafter referred to as 'the Strategic Plan') and the general policy direction provided is that "in future Area Plans all groups of houses in the countryside will be assessed for development potential by identifying the village envelope or curtilage and providing the opportunity for appropriate development within this area" (Paragraph 8.8.3). The full reference - Section 8.8 - is set out in Annexe 1. It was recognised that any development in the countryside in this manner would need to be controlled by the development plan process and would be a better solution to ad hoc decision making perhaps through individual planning applications for example.

The following extract describes the basic meaning of a 'Group of houses in the countryside'.

*"There are in the countryside many small groups of dwellings which, whilst not having the character of, or the full range of services usually provided in a village, nevertheless have a sense of place and community"* (paragraph 8.8.1).

## Planning policy context in respect of development in the countryside

There is, in the Strategic Plan, a presumption against development in the countryside.

Paragraph 7.13.2 outlines the *'general presumption against the introduction of new uses into the countryside (including industrial or office uses):*

- (a) *for which there is no local need;*
- (b) *which would materially affect the rural character of an area;*
- (c) *which would necessitate the creation of new buildings; and*
- (d) *which would be more appropriate in industrial zones, business parks or within urban centres.'*

However, in the case of Groups of Houses in the Countryside, the addition of further dwellings may be considered appropriate where this development would:

- a) assist in meeting the needs of rural areas;
- b) maintain social and family associations;
- c) assist in sustaining the rural economy; and
- d) reduce the pressure for purely sporadic and isolated development.

## Why address through the Area Plans?

If on a case by case basis - subject to GP2. Otherwise General Policy 3 which states that **Development will not be permitted outside of those areas which are zoned for development on the appropriate Area Plan.** GP3 goes on to mention a number of exceptions which does not mention

general rural housing and so the opportunity rests with proper consideration through the Area Plan process itself.

## **Objectives and Outcomes**

The objectives of the study are to:

- Identify areas which have the constitute Groups of Houses in the Countryside and, within these, which are potentially suitable locations for development. It may be the case that in some settlements no additional dwellings will be permitted and where additions are allowed these must be sensitively related to the existing settlement pattern and the landscape.

## **Broad methodology**

The 23 sites which constitute this study are based on suggestions from the Cabinet Office and public responses to the Preliminary Publicity consultation. For each of these potential Groups of Houses in the Countryside a map and aerial photo was produced and a boundary line drawn around the "settlement's" curtilage (or envelope). All of the sites included in the study lie outside those settlements which are identified in Spatial Policies 2, 3 and 4 of the Strategic Plan.

## ***Identification Survey***

During the site visits, members of the Planning Policy team carried out a survey to identify Groups of Houses in the Countryside. The survey questions are listed below. In section D of this Evidence Paper the results have been entered into a matrix table.

*1) Is the settlement located in a rural setting?*

Groups of Houses in the Countryside should, by definition be located in rural settings and not on the edges of urban or suburban areas.

*2) Is the settlement's layout relatively compact?*

A compact layout in which dwellings are grouped around a feature, such as a crossroads or junction will often denote a sense of place, or a feeling of 'having arrived somewhere'. In contrast, ribbon developments in which dwellings are spaced out along a stretch of road are less likely to have this characteristic.

*3) Is the settlement distinct from its neighbours?*

According to the Strategic Policy 3, 'the individual character of our towns and villages is protected or enhanced by...avoiding coalescence and maintaining adequate physical separation between settlements'. The same can be said of Groups of Houses in the Countryside.

*4) Does the access to this settlement contribute to a distinctive identity?*

The way in which a settlement is accessed by vehicle can alter how it is perceived by passers by. A settlement on a busy through road with no streetlights may lack a sense of identity while a road which meets a dead end may add to sense of reaching a specific destination. A changing speed limit on entering or leaving a settlement may have a similar effect.

*5) Are there any topographical features which promote a sense of place?*

Settlements located on the coast, in sheltered valleys or in wooded enclaves may have a more instinctive identity due to the sense of enclosure created by these landscape features.

6) *Are the buildings in the settlement predominately residential?*

The term Groups of Houses in the Countryside is specifically applied to settlements which are essentially residential in character. While industrial or agricultural buildings may feature, the focus is on identifying groups of residential dwellings.

7) *Are there any community facilities situated in the settlement?*

While Groups of Houses in the Countryside are not expected to have the same level of public amenity as a village, the presence of features such as bus shelters, post boxes or benches can help to convey a sense of place. Additionally, public buildings such as churches or community halls may reflect a historic sense of identity which has developed over time.

8) *Is there a diversity of ownership?*

A group of houses in diverse ownership is more likely to house a community rather than a single family.

9) *Does the settlement have agricultural or industrial connections (historic or existing)?*

In some cases, historical industrial uses, such as an abandoned mill, may provide a nexus for a Group of Houses in the Countryside and convey a sense of place. Agricultural connections are an important factor in maintaining a sustainable rural economy and will be discussed further as part of the Development Suitability Survey.

**Site Assessment Framework**

Settlements which passed the Identification Survey and were designated as Groups of Houses in the Countryside then passed to the next stage of assessment.

As explained in the Area Plan for the East: Preliminary Publicity- Site Assessment Framework document, potential residential development sites within Groups of Houses in the Countryside were assessed separately to other proposed sites. Under the standard Preliminary Screening these sites would be ruled out because their location is unsuitable as they are located outside the existing boundaries of settlements identified in the Strategic Plan settlement hierarchy.

While the full SAF could not be applied, the criteria of Step 2: The application of Critical Constraints and Step 3: Detailed Considerations are still applicable. Step 4: Consideration of whether the site is Developable includes additional questions pertinent to Groups of Houses in the Countryside. At each step of the SAF the entire area within the settlement boundary of the Group of Houses is considered as well as the areas immediately abutting the boundary. Table 1 details how these steps can be utilised to assess the suitability of Groups of Houses in the Countryside for Development.

Step	Explanation		Outcome	Application of assessment step to Groups of Houses in the Countryside
2: The application of Critical Constraints	The concept of Critical Constraints is used as a trigger to identify those sites where the impact of development on the	Sites are screened out which are unsuitable due to the presence of Critical Constraints which cannot be	Particular attention was paid to CCQ.1-	'Are existing uses on surrounding land highly incompatible and cannot be made compatible through mitigation methods?' and CCQ.2-'Would the development not fit the scale, landform and pattern of the

	<p>site, or the impact of the site's characteristics on potential development, is such that development would be hindered (and mitigation or compensation is not possible or appropriate). In the interests of clarity, criteria identified as Critical Constraints have been separated into a discreet step which can be used to screen out sites prior to detailed consideration.</p>	<p>overcome.</p>	<p>landscape, resulting in the total loss or major alteration of one or more key features?' Due to the special nature of Groups of Houses in the Countryside and the potential level of impact on surrounding countryside, consideration of the maximum scale of potential allowable development is essential.</p>
<p>3: Detailed Consideration</p>	<p>The consideration of sites using a combination of site scoring and report writing enables the relative merits of sites (in relation to the policy aspirations set out in the Strategic Plan) to be clearly identified.</p>	<p>The relative planning merits of sites which are potentially acceptable in planning terms (i.e. which have passed Steps 1 and 2) are understood. No sites will be screened-out as part of Step 3.</p>	<p>The same considerations are applicable in Groups of Houses in the Countryside as in any other site.</p>
<p>4: Consideration of whether the site is Developable</p>	<p>Those criteria concerned with the availability and viability aspects of whether a site is developable are combined and placed into Step 4, to allow an overall judgement about whether or not a site is developable (these terms are defined in Section 5).</p>	<p>Consideration is given to whether or not a site is developable. Where sites are taken forward, this consideration may influence <i>how</i> sites are taken forward (for example, sites not deliverable during the plan period may be suitable as strategic reserve sites). In some circumstances, concerns about whether a site is developable may be such that the site is not considered appropriate for further consideration.</p>	<p>Questions of availability and viability were addressed in the Call for Sites Response Form for some of the sites being assessed. For Groups of Houses where forms were not submitted, enquiries were made regarding issues such as site ownership, access to utilities and infrastructure provision. Additional questions were also posed (detailed below).</p>

## **Additional developability questions for Groups of Houses in the Countryside**

In Paragraph 8.8.2 of the Strategic Plan the rationale for adding dwellings to carefully selected Groups of Houses in the Countryside is explained, describing the circumstances in which new development would be allowable. From these rationales the Department has generated four additional questions to which professional judgement must be applied:

### *1. Would development in this settlement support the needs of rural areas?*

Paragraph 7.2.3 of the Strategic Plan describes the exceptional circumstances in which the need for development in the countryside is identified and assessed through the development plan process. It notes that facilities may be required in a rural location to serve the needs of local communities, but that in these cases any adverse impact of development should be minimised having regard to landscape, wildlife and other policy considerations. It explains that in all locations there is a need for development to meet housing and employment provisions. Local needs differ from place to place, therefore it is essential that development responds to the particular needs of the settlement in question and its resident population. This question prompts the planner to consider whether or not development of a particular Group of Houses in the Countryside would meet the needs of a rural area, where need can be generated both by the resident population and by visitors.

### *2. Would development in this settlement help to maintain social and family associations?*

Family associations have been central to the development of the Isle of Man's settlements. As stated in Paragraph 8.2.1 of the Strategic Plan: 'The Island's population has, for many years, remained rooted in its various parishes and settlements and still today many people would wish to have the opportunity to remain living in the area in which they and their families were brought up'. For this reason, consideration should be given to whether additional dwellings in a Group of Houses in the Countryside would create an opportunity to house subsequent generations of rural families and persons working full time or part time in rural areas. It should be noted that falling average household size, an ageing population and the emigration of young people from the Island means that a Group of Houses in the Countryside may house fewer residents than in previous decades despite there being no reduction in the actual the number of dwellings. Maintaining or, in some cases slightly increasing the rural population may have additional benefits for the sustainability of a community; for example, making public transport routes and stops more viable.

### *3. Would development in this settlement assist in sustaining the rural economy?*

If appropriately sited, development in Groups of Houses in the Countryside could create new rural employment opportunities and support existing ones, such as by providing accommodation for rural workers. New developments might include tourist accommodation, agri-businesses or home-based enterprises. Additionally, an uplift in local population would increase support for existing business.

### *4. Would development in this settlement reduce pressure for purely sporadic and isolated development?*

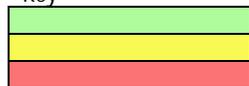
The Strategic Plan supports development in existing settlements, making efficient use of sites and utilising existing and planned infrastructure, facilities and services. Allowing more development in Groups of Houses in the Countryside could create opportunities for self-builders to create bespoke homes in established settings, thereby reducing pressure for isolated development. In addition, the controlled release of sites via the development plan process would go some way to ensuring that development was not carried out sporadically.

## Individual assessments

### Identification survey matrix table

No.	Name	Parish	Is the settlement located in a rural setting?	Is the settlement's layout relatively compact?	Is the settlement distinct from its neighbours?	Does the settlement's means of access contribute to a distinctive identity?	Are there any topographical features which promote a sense of place?	Are the buildings in the settlement predominately residential?	Are there any community facilities situated in the settlement?	Is there a diversity of ownership?	Does the settlement have agricultural or industrial connections (historic or existing)?
1	Ballaragh	Lonan	Yes	Partially	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
2	Agneash	Lonan	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
3	Baldhoon	Lonan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
4	Barrose Road	Lonan	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
5	Little Mill Road	Onchan	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
6	Hillberry	Onchan	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
7	West Baldwin Village	Braddan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Mount Rule	Braddan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
9	Braddan Bridge	Braddan	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Partially	No
10	Colooney's Lane	Braddan	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Partially
11	Ellen Brook Farm	Braddan	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
12	Richmond Hill	Braddan	Yes	No	No	No	No	Partially	Yes	Partially	Yes
13	Quine's Hill	Braddan	Yes	Partially	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
14	Ballaveare	Braddan	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
15	Glen Grenaugh	Santon	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
16	Ballachurry	Santon	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17	Stuggadhoo	Marown	Yes	Partially	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Partially
18	Braaid	Marown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partially
19	Eairy	Marown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
20	Greeba	Marown	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
21	Ballavitchel	Marown	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
22	Glen Darragh	Marown	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
23	Ballakelly	Marown	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Key



"Yes"  
"Partially"  
"No"

## **1. Ballaragh**

Ballaragh's sloping topography and coastal views offer it a distinctive identity. Though the settlement is linear in form, the location of housing has been efficient, with some potential remaining on the western edge of the B11 for future development. There are as yet no community facilities.

## **2. Agneash**

Agneash has a distinct identity and compact layout, with the Methodist church forming a focal point. However, the single track road climbs steeply to the settlement and has few passing or turning places.

## **3. Baldhoon**

Baldhoon Road is bordered by sod banks and high hedgerows and the majority of houses and farms are set back from the road and have private drives. This ribbon-type development does not offer any focus point or distinctive identity.

## **4. Barroose Road**

Barroose Road does have a distinctive identity, created on arrival at the Liverpool Arms building as the A2 meets Barroose Road which is a single track, dead end road. However, as this pub has now closed, the settlement has lost its single community facility.

## **5. Little Mill Road**

Little Mill Road does not have the identity of a group, being a collection of larger properties reached by long private drives. The single track road has few passing or turning places and visibility on bends is poor.

## **6. Hillberry**

Hillberry is located on a section of the TT course and its grandstand and campsite do have the effect of creating a distinctive identity. However, this settlement contains only a small number of houses and some workshop-style buildings which do not give the impression of being a group.

## **7. West Baldwin Village**

West Baldwin Village has a strong sense of identity and excellent visual amenity owing to its location in West Baldwin Glen. The 30mph speed limit, recycling facilities and village notice board all contribute to a sense of reaching a distinct settlement. The bridge over the River Glass provides a centre point for the group.

## **8. Mount Rule**

Mount Rule contains a mixture of houses set in garden and those set in larger private grounds. Though there are some street facing properties, the settlement lacks any kind of centre point and does not have a distinctive identity.

## **9. Braddan Bridge**

Braddan Bridge is not located in the countryside and is predominately in ecclesiastical use, with a small number of residential properties. The rising land to the rear of Braddan Church precludes any significant development on this site.

## **10. Colooney's Lane**

Colooney's Lane has a diffuse layout with a number of self-contained properties strung out along the length of the lane. Access via the single track lane is difficult with few passing or turning places and a general feeling of enclosure due to the sod banks and walls. There are no community facilities in this settlement.

## **11. Ellen Brook Farm**

As a single farm building as opposed to a collection of houses, Ellen Brook Farm does not meet the requirements for designation as a Group of Houses in the Countryside.

## **12. Richmond Hill**

Richmond Hill consists of both farms and houses and is not compact in form. There is no clear sense of having arrived in a distinctive place. Despite the provision of bus stop, there is no sense that this settlement caters for a residential population.

## **13. Quine's Hill**

Quine's Hill offers a distinctive community character, centred on the community hall which has been converted into a nursery with car parking. The 30mph speed limit along this stretch of the Old Castletown Road creates a sense of arrival and maintains an efficient link to Douglas. There is mixture of street-facing housing, including detached and semi-detached properties and a converted chapel. The presence of a functioning business providing early years education is a bonus for young families living in this settlement.

## **14. Ballaveare**

The layout of this settlement is not compact and merges into the outskirts of Quine's Hill. Though a lowering in the speed limit (40mph) helps to create a sense of arrival there is little sense of connection between the houses which tend to be set in their own land or gardens. There is bus stop but little other evidence of this being a cohesive community.

## **15. Glen Grenaugh**

Glen Grenaugh is a settlement with an excellent level of visual amenity, being located in an attractive glen leading to the beach at Port Grenaugh. The topography of the river valley creates a distinctive settlement with a mixture of houses, a farm, converted mill and boarding kennels. The main issue here is access: a single track road with few passing or turning spaces compounds the sense of having arrived in an enclosed area which has reached its capacity to accommodate buildings.

## **16. Ballachurry**

The layout of Ballachurry is diffuse with concentrations of development along this section of the New Castletown Road. The settlement contains the Isle of Man Government's Professional Development Centre, Santon Country Retreat and a Motorcycle Museum. Despite the 50mph speed limit, the footpaths and two bus shelters do provide a sense of arrival and a good level of access provision. While new development in this settlement would support the existing rurally-located businesses, the scale of building required to connect the existing housing in Ballachurry is unlikely to be viable.

## **17. Stuggadhoo**

Stuggadhoo is located around a central crossroads. However, its surrounding topography is more open and the same sense of place is not apparent. The more diffuse layout means that the settlement edges come close to merging with Braaid. There are no community facilities.

## **18. Braaid**

Braaid's location at a crossroads creates a strong focus for the settlement, as does the surrounding topography of hills enclosing this group. The settlement is amply provided with facilities, including Braaid Hall, car parking, a post box and bus shelter.

## **19. Eairy**

Eairy Dam lends Eairy a distinctive setting to the West of the settlement, though this dissipates as the A24 climbs eastward and houses are hidden by tall hedges. However, such screening could prove beneficial to any future development, if suitable locations could be identified. The settlement has a bus shelter and post box.

## **20. Greeba**

Greeba has very diffuse layout and stretches a considerable distance along Peel Road. Though it is equipped with bus stops, this ribbon development along a 50mph road does not represent a group.

## **21. Ballavitchel**

Ballavitchel is difficult to view as a distinct settlement from Crosby. The access off Peel Road up a single track road lacks good visibility and there are few passing or turning places. There are no community facilities.

## **22. Glen Darragh**

It is difficult to perceive Glen Darragh as a settlement in its own right as it is extremely close to Glen Vine. Any development in this area would equate to an expansion of Glen Vine as this would encourage the merging of the two settlements.

## **23. Ballakelly**

Ballakelly is a collection of houses and farms which cannot be said to be grouped and does not possess a distinctive identity.

## **Recommendations/conclusions**

The following settlements are recommended for designation as Groups of Houses in the Countryside:

- Ballaragh (Site No.1)
- West Baldwin Village (Site No.7)
- Quine's Hill (Site No.13)
- Ballachurry (Site No.16)
- Braaid (Site No.18)
- Eairy (Site No.19)

Bearing only the present layout and servicing of these groups in mind, only **West Baldwin Village** and **Quine's Hill** can be considered as suitable locations for development and are recommended for further feasibility studies.





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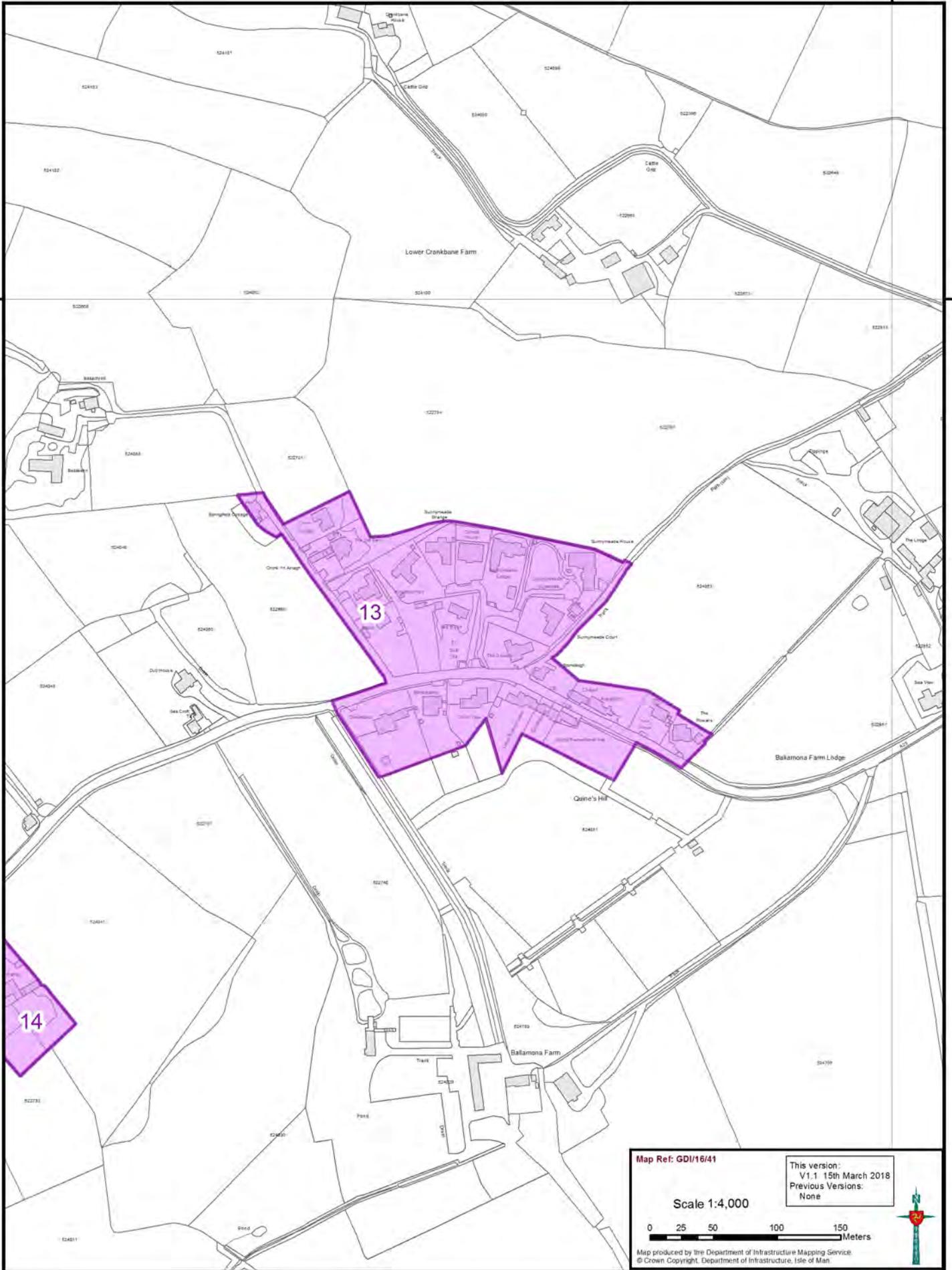
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