

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION
ST HELENS UDP
BIRCH TREE FARM (SITE 33)**

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**ADAS Ref: 25/RPT/0689
Job No: 135/95
MAFF Ref: EL 25/10752**

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT FOR
ST HELENS UDP
BIRCH TREE FARM (SITE 33)**

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey for this site shows that the following proportions of ALC grades are present:

Grade/Subgrade	ha	% of site
2	0.7	32
3a	0.5	24
3b	0.4	18
Other land		
Agricultural buildings	0.4	18
Water	0.1	4
Urban	0.1	4

- 1.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of land in Grade 2 is soil droughtiness.
- 1.3 The main limitation to the agricultural use of land in Subgrades 3a and 3b is soil wetness.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The site was surveyed by the Resource Planning Team in February 1995. An Agricultural Land Classification survey was undertaken according to the guidelines laid down in the "Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land" (MAFF 1988).
- 2.2 The 2.2 ha site is situated to the north of St. Helens and the A580 (T) road. The land immediately to the north, and west of the site is predominantly in agricultural use. The eastern boundary adjoins housing, and the southern one rough ground.
- 2.3 The survey was requested by MAFF in connection with the St. Helens UDP.
- 2.4 At MAFF Land Use Planning Unit's request this was a detailed grid survey at 1:10000 with a minimum auger boring density of 1 per hectare. The attached map is only accurate at the base map scale and any enlargement would be misleading.
- 2.5 At the time of the survey the site was either under grass or ploughed.

3 CLIMATE

3.1 The following interpolated data are relevant for the site (SJ 508 977) :

Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	898
Accumulated Temperature above 0°C January to June (day °C)	1418

3.2 There is no overall climatic limitation on the site

3.3 Other relevant data for classifying land include:

Field Capacity Days (days)	211
Moisture Deficit Wheat (mm)	81
Moisture Deficit Potatoes (mm)	66

4 SITE

4.1 Three site factors of gradient, micro relief and flooding are considered when classifying land.

4.2 At the time of the survey there was evidence of recent flooding on land adjoining Rainford Brook. This is considered in the grading of the land.

5 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

5.1 The solid geology of the area is comprised of Lower Coal Measures - British Geological Survey Sheet 84 Wigan 1:63 360. This is overlain with deposits of alluvium and sand.

5.2 The underlying geology influences the soils which have a sandy texture.

6 AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

6.1 Grade 2 - occupies 0.7 ha (32%) of the survey area and is found in the eastern part of the site.

6.1.1 These soils typically have a sandy loam texture overlying loamy sand and sand to depth, with few or no stones within the profile. The moisture balance places these soils into Grade 2.

6.1.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil droughtiness.

6.2 Subgrade 3a - occupies 0.5 ha (24%) of the survey area and is found in the south western part of the site.

6.2.1 The soil has loamy sand texture over sandy clay loam with few or no stones within the profile. Observations of gleying place the soil in Wetness Class II.

6.2.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil wetness.

6.3 Subgrade 3b - occupies 0.4 ha (18%) of the survey area and is found in a depression close to Rainford Brook.

6.3.1 The soil typically has a loamy sand texture overlying clay at 48cm. Observations of gleying and the depth to the slowly permeable layer places the soil in Wetness Class IV. At the time of the survey there was evidence of recent winter flooding.

6.3.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil wetness.

6.4 Other land includes agricultural buildings which occupy 0.4 ha (18%) of the survey area and are found at the eastern boundary of the site; non-agricultural land (tall ruderal) occupying 0.1 ha (4%) of the site, water (small pond) occupying 0.1 ha (4%) of the site.

6.5 SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION GRADES

Grade/Sub-grade	Area in Hectares	% of Survey Area	% of Agricultural Land
2	0.7	32	44
3a	0.5	24	31
3b	0.4	18	25
Other land			
Agricultural Buildings	0.4	18	-
Water	0.1	4	
Non-Agricultural	0.1	4	
Totals	2.2	100	100