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OXFORDSHIRE MINERALS PLAN
SUTTON WICK, NW BLOCK
AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION
ALC MAP & REPORT
JANUARY 1994

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1.0 Summary

1.1 ADAS was commissioned by MAFF's Land Use Planning Unit to provide information on land quality on an area of land adjacent to the sewage works, south of Abingdon in Oxfordshire. The work forms part of MAFF's statutory input to the preparation of the Oxfordshire Minerals Plan.

1.2 Approximately 10 hectares of land was surveyed in December 1993. The survey was undertaken at a detailed level of approximately one boring per hectare. A total of 8 soil auger borings and 1 soil inspection pit were assessed in accordance with MAFF's revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land (MAFF, 1988). These guidelines provide a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical characteristics impose long term limitations on its use for agriculture.

1.3 The work was conducted by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Guildford Statutory Group of ADAS.

1.4 At the time of the survey the land use on the site was set-aside. An area to the east of the site is occupied by allotment gardens, and is thus classed as being in Non-agricultural use.

1.5 The distribution of grades and subgrades is shown on the attached ALC map and the areas are given in the table below. The map has been drawn at a scale of 1:5,000. It is accurate at this scale, but any enlargement would be misleading. This map supersedes any previous survey information for this site.

Table 1 : Distribution of Grades and Subgrades

Grade	Area (ha)	% of Site
3b	6.0	60.6
Non-agricultural	3.9	39.4
Total area surveyed	9.9	100

1.6 Appendix 1 gives a general description of the grades, subgrades and land use categories identified in the survey. The main classes are described in terms of the type of limitation that can occur, the typical cropping range and the expected level and consistency of yield.

1.7 All of the agricultural land surveyed has been classified as Subgrade 3b, moderate quality land. Soil wetness and soil workability are the key limitations. Clay loam topsoils are underlain by poorly structured clay subsoils at shallow depths, which significantly impair drainage. Profiles are very slightly stony or stoneless and non-calcareous throughout. The interaction between poor soil drainage characteristics and the local climatic regime means that this land can be graded no higher than Subgrade 3b.

2.0 Climate

2.1 The climatic criteria are considered first when classifying land as climate can be overriding in the sense that severe limitations will restrict land to low grades irrespective of favourable site or soil conditions.

2.2 The main parameters used in the assessment of an overall climatic limitation are average

annual rainfall, as a measure of overall wetness, and accumulated temperature, as a measure of the relative warmth of a locality.

2.3 A detailed assessment of the prevailing climate was made by interpolation from a 5km gridpoint dataset (Met. Office, 1989). The details are given in the table below and these show that there is no overall climatic limitation affecting the site. However, climatic factors do interact with soil factors to influence soil wetness and soil droughtiness. At this locality, the field capacity days and average annual rainfall are low thus reducing the likelihood of soil wetness.

2.4 No local climatic factors such as exposure or frost risk affect the site.

Table 2 : Climatic Interpolation

Grid Reference :	SU 490 953
Altitude (m) :	50
Accumulated Temperature (days) :	1462
Average Annual Rainfall (mm) :	595
Field Capacity (days) :	125
Moisture Deficit, Wheat (mm) :	117
Moisture Deficit, Potatoes (mm) :	111
Overall Climatic Grade :	1

3.0 Relief

3.1 The survey area is flat and lies at approximately 50m AOD. Nowhere on the site does gradient or relief impose any limitation to the land quality.

4.0 Geology and Soil

4.1 British Geological Survey, Sheet 253, Abingdon (1971) shows most of the site to be underlain by Alluvium. An area along the eastern boundary is underlain by first Terrace Deposits.

4.2 There are two soil types for the site, as shown on the Soil Survey map, Soils of the Wantage and Abingdon District (SSEW, 1971, 1:63,360). Across the majority of the site, the soils comprise the Thames Series. These soils are described as 'stoneless, mainly calcareous clayey soils affected by groundwater. Flat land. Risk of flooding' (SSEW, 1983). A small area along the eastern boundary is shown as the Sutton Series. Soils of the Sutton 1 Association are described as 'well drained fine and coarse loamy soils locally calcareous and in places shallow over limestone gravel' (SSEW, 1983).

4.3 Detailed field examination generally found deep, poorly drained non-calcareous clays.

5.0 Agricultural Land Classification

5.1 Table 1 provides the details of the area measurements for each grade and the distribution of each grade is shown on the attached ALC map.

5.2 The location of the soil observation points are shown on the attached sample point map.

Subgrade 3b

5.3 All of the agricultural land surveyed has been classified as Subgrade 3b. This moderate quality land is restricted by a significant soil wetness and workability limitation. Topsoils comprise non-calcareous clays. These are underlain by clay upper and lower subsoils which extend to depth. Profiles are either very slightly stony or stoneless throughout. Both the upper and lower subsoils of these profiles are gleyed and poorly structured. These profiles are typified by Pit 1, which was found to have moderately developed coarse angular-blocky subsoil structures. Given the relatively dry climate at this locality, the slowly permeable characteristics of the subsoils significantly impede drainage such that Wetness Class III is appropriate. The interaction between the non-calcareous clay topsoils, soil drainage characteristics and the local climatic regime means that this land can be classified as no higher than Subgrade 3b. This soil wetness adversely affects seed germination and survival, and inhibits the development of a good root system. This limits the crops which can tolerate such conditions. In addition, significant restrictions are imposed on cultivations, grazing by livestock and trafficking by machinery.

Non-Agricultural

5.4 The Non-Agricultural land shown on the map is occupied by allotment gardens.

ADAS Ref : 3304/252/93
MAFF Ref : EL 33/17

Resource Planning Team
Guildford Statutory Group
ADAS Reading

APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF THE GRADES AND SUB-GRADES

Grade 1 : Excellent Quality Agricultural Land

Land with no or very minor limitations to agricultural use. A very wide range of agricultural and horticultural crops can be grown and commonly includes top fruit, soft, fruit, salad crops and winter harvested vegetables. Yields are high and less variable than on land of lower quality.

Grade 2 : Very Good Quality Agricultural Land

Land with minor limitations which affect crop yield, cultivations or harvesting. A wide range of agricultural or horticultural crops can usually be grown but on some land on the grade there may be reduced flexibility due to difficulties with the production of the more demanding crops such as winter harvested vegetables and arable root crops. The level of yield is generally high but may be lower or more variable than Grade 1.

Grade 3 : Good To Moderate Quality Agricultural Land

Land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield. When more demanding crops are grown yields are generally lower or more variable than on land in grades 1 and 2.

Sub-grade 3A : Good Quality Agricultural Land

Land capable of consistently producing moderate to high yields of a narrow range of arable crops, especially cereals, or moderate yields of a wide range of crops including cereals, grass, oilseed rape, potatoes, sugar beet and the less demanding horticultural crops.

Sub-grade 3B : Moderate Quality Agricultural Land

Land capable of producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, principally cereals and grass, or lower yields of a wider range of crops or high yields of grass which can be grazed or harvested over most of the year.

Grade 4 : Poor Quality Agricultural Land

Land with severe limitations which significantly restrict the range of crops and/or the level of yields. It is mainly suited to grass with occasional arable crops (eg. cereals and forage crops) the yields of which are variable. In moist climates, yields of grass may be moderate to high but there may be difficulties in utilisation. the grade also includes very droughty arable land.

Grade 5 : Very Poor Quality Agricultural Land

Land with very severe limitations which restrict use to permanent pasture or rough grazing, except for occasional pioneer forage crops.

Urban

Built-up or 'hard' uses with relatively little potential for a return to agriculture : housing, industry, commerce, education, transport, religious buildings, cemeteries. Also, hard-surfaced sports facilities, permanent caravan sites and vacant land; all types of derelict land, including mineral workings which are only likely to be reclaimed using derelict land grants.

Non-agricultural

'Soft' uses where most of the land could be returned relatively easily to agriculture, including : private parkland, public open spaces, sports fields, allotments and soft-surfaced areas on airports/airfields. Also active mineral workings and refuse tips where restoration conditions to 'soft' after-uses may apply.

Woodland

Includes commercial and non-commercial woodland.

Agricultural Buildings

Includes the normal range of agricultural buildings as well as other relatively permanent structures such as glasshouses. Temporary structures (eg. polythene tunnels erected for lambing) may be ignored.

Open Water

Includes lakes, ponds and rivers as map scale permits.

Land Not Surveyed

Agricultural land which has not been surveyed.

Where the land use includes more than one of the above, eg. buildings in large grounds, and where map scale permits, the cover types may be shown separately. Otherwise, the most extensive cover type will be shown.

APPENDIX II

REFERENCES

* British Geological Survey (1971), Sheet No. 253, Abingdon, 1:50,000.

* MAFF (1988), Agricultural Land Classification of England And Wales : Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land.

* Meteorological Office (1989), Climatological Data for Agricultural Land Classification.

* Soil Survey of England and Wales (1971), Sheet 253, Soils of the Wantage and Abingdon District.

* Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983), Soils of South East England - accompanying legend.

APPENDIX III

DEFINITION OF SOIL WETNESS CLASSES

Wetness Class I

The soil profile is not wet within 70cm depth for more than 30 days in most years.

Wetness Class II

The soil profile is wet within 70cm depth for 31-90 days in most years **or**, if there is no slowly permeable layer within 80cm depth, it is wet within 70cm for more than 90 days, but not wet within 40cm depth for more than 30 days in most years.

Wetness Class III

The soil profile is wet within 70cm depth for 91-180 days in most years **or**, if there is no slowly permeable layer within 80cm depth, it is wet within 70cm for more than 180 days, but only wet within 40cm depth for 31-90 days in most years.

Wetness Class IV

The soil profile is wet within 70cm depth for more than 180 days but not wet within 40cm depth for more than 210 days in most years **or**, if there is no slowly permeable layer within 80cm depth, it is wet within 40cm depth for 91-210 days in most years.

Wetness Class V

The soil profile is wet within 40cm depth for 211-335 days in most years.

Wetness Class VI

The soil profile is wet within 40cm depth for more than 335 days in most years.

(The number of days is not necessarily a continuous period. 'In most years' is defined as more than 10 out of 20 years.)

APPENDIX IV

SOIL PIT AND SOIL BORING DESCRIPTIONS

Contents :

SOIL PROFILE DESCRIPTIONS : EXPLANATORY NOTE

Soil pit and auger boring information collected during ALC fieldwork is held on a database. This has commonly used notations and abbreviations as set out below.

Boring Header Information

1. **GRID REF** : national grid square and 8 figure grid reference.

2. **USE** : Land use at the time of survey. The following abbreviations are used.

ARA : Arable **WHT** : Wheat **BAR** : Barley **CER** : Cereals **OAT** : Oats **MZE** : Maize **OSR** : Oilseed rape
BEN : Field Beans **BRA** : Brassicae **POT** : Potatoes **SBT** : Sugar Beet **FCD** : Fodder Crops **LIN** : Linseed
FRT : Soft and Top Fruit **HRT** : Horticultural Crops **PGR** : Permanent Pasture **LEY** : Ley Grass **RGR** : Rough Grazing
SCR : Scrub **CFW** : Coniferous Woodland **DCW** : Deciduous Woodland **HTH** : Heathland **BOG** : Bog or Marsh
FLW : Fallow **PLO** : Ploughed **SAS** : Set aside **OTH** : Other

3. **GRDNT** : Gradient as measured by a hand-held optical clinometer.

4. **GLEY/SPL** : Depth in cm to gleying or slowly permeable layers.

5. **AP (WHEAT/POTS)** : Crop-adjusted available water capacity.

6. **MB (WHEAT/POTS)** : Moisture Balance.

7. **DRT** : Best grade according to soil droughtiness.

8. If any of the following factors are considered significant, an entry of 'Y' will be entered in the relevant column.

MREL : Microrelief limitation **FLOOD** : Flood risk **EROSN** : Soil erosion risk **EXP** : Exposure limitation **FROST** : Frost
DIST : Disturbed land **CHEM** : Chemical limitation

9. **LIMIT** : The main limitation to land quality. The following abbreviations are used.

OC : Overall Climate **AE** : Aspect **EX** : Exposure **FR** : Frost Risk **GR** : Gradient **MR** : Microrelief
FL : Flood Risk **TX** : Topsoil Texture **DP** : Soil Depth **CH** : Chemical **WE** : Wetness **WK** : Workability
DR : Drought **ER** : Soil Erosion Risk **WD** : Combined Soil Wetness/Droughtiness **ST** : Topsoil Stoniness

Soil Pits and Auger Borings

1. **TEXTURE** : soil texture classes are denoted by the following abbreviations.

S : Sand **LS** : Loamy Sand **SL** : Sandy Loam **SZL** : Sandy Silt Loam **CL** : Clay Loam **ZCL** : Silty Clay Loam
SCL : Sandy Clay Loam **C** : Clay **SC** : Sandy Clay **ZC** : Silty Clay **OL** : Organic Loam **P** : Peat **SP** : Sandy Peat
LP : Loamy Peat **PL** : Peaty Loam **PS** : Peaty Sand **MZ** : Marine Light Silts

For the sand, loamy sand, sandy loam and sandy silt loam classes, the predominant size of sand fraction will be indicated by the use of prefixes.

F : Fine (more than 66% of the sand less than 0.2mm)
M : Medium (less than 66% fine sand and less than 33% coarse sand)
C : Coarse (more than 33% of the sand larger than 0.6mm)

The clay loam and silty clay loam classes will be sub-divided according to the clay content.

M : Medium (< 27% clay) **H** : Heavy (27-35% clay)

2. **MOTTLE COL** : Mottle colour

3. **MOTTLE ABUN** : Mottle abundance, expressed as a percentage of the matrix or surface described.

F : few < 2% **C** : common 2-20% **M** : many 20-40 **VM** : very many 40% +

4. **MOTTLE CONT** : Mottle contrast

F : faint - indistinct mottles, evident only on close inspection **D** : distinct - mottles are readily seen
P : prominent - mottling is conspicuous and one of the outstanding features of the horizon

5. **PED. COL** : Ped face colour

6. **STONE LITH** : One of the following is used.

HR : all hard rocks and stones **MSST** : soft, medium or coarse grained sandstone
SI : soft weathered igneous or metamorphic **SLST** : soft oolitic or dolimitic limestone
FSST : soft, fine grained sandstone **ZR** : soft, argillaceous, or silty rocks **CH** : chalk
GH : gravel with non-porous (hard) stones **GS** :gravel with porous (soft) stones

Stone contents (> 2cm, > 6cm and total) are given in percentages (by volume).

7. **STRUCT** : the degree of development, size and shape of soil peds are described using the following notation:

- degree of development **WK** : weakly developed **MD** : moderately developed **ST** : strongly developed

- ped size **F** : fine **M** : medium **C** : coarse **VC** : very coarse

- ped shape **S** : single grain **M** : massive **GR** : granular **AB** : angular blocky **SAB** : sub-angular blocky **PR** : prismatic **PL** : platy

8. **CONSIST** : Soil consistence is described using the following notation:

L : loose **VF** : very friable **FR** : friable **FM** : firm **VM** : very firm **EM** : extremely firm **EH** : extremely hard

9. **SUBS STR** : Subsoil structural condition recorded for the purpose of calculating profile droughtiness.

G : good **M** : moderate **P** : poor

10. **POR** : Soil porosity. If a soil horizon has less than 0.5% biopores > 0.5 mm, a 'Y' will appear in this column.

11. **IMP** : If the profile is impenetrable a 'Y' will appear in this column at the appropiate horizon.

12. **SPL** : Slowly permeable layer. If the soil horizon is slowly permeable a 'Y' will appear in this column.

13. **CALC** : If the soil horizon is calcareous, a 'Y' will appear in this column.

14. Other notations

APW : available water capacity (in mm) adjusted for wheat
APP : available water capacity (in mm) adjusted for potatoes
MBW : moisture balance, wheat
MBP : moisture balance, potatoes

SOIL PIT DESCRIPTION

Site Name : SUTTON WICK, NW BLOCK Pit Number : 1P

Grid Reference: SU48869530 Average Annual Rainfall : 595 mm
Accumulated Temperature : 1462 degree days
Field Capacity Level : 125 days
Land Use :
Slope and Aspect : degrees

HORIZON	TEXTURE	COLOUR	STONES >2	TOT.STONE	MOTTLES	STRUCTURE
0- 18	C	10YR42 00	0	0	C	WDCSAB
18- 65	C	10YR52 00	0	0	M	MDCAB
65-120	C	10YR63 00	0	5	M	MDCAB

Wetness Grade : 3B Wetness Class : III
Gleying : 0 cm
SPL :018 cm

Drought Grade : 3A APW : 121mm MBW : 4 mm
APP : 98 mm MBP : -13 mm

FINAL ALC GRADE : 3B
MAIN LIMITATION : Wetness

SAMPLE NO.	GRID REF	USE	ASPECT	GRDNT	GLEY	SPL	--WETNESS-- CLASS	GRADE	-WHEAT- AP	MB	-POTS- AP	MB	DRT	M.REL FLOOD	EROSN EXP	FROST DIST	CHEM LIMIT	ALC	COMMENTS
1	SU48909540	SAS		0	025		3	3B	124	7	101	-10	2				WE	3B	
1P	SU48869530	SAS		0	018		3	3B	121	4	98	-13	3A				WE	3B	PIT TO 120
2	SU49009540	SAS		025	025		3	3B	124	7	101	-10	2				WE	3B	
3	SU48809525	SAS		0	040		3	3B	129	12	106	-5	2				WE	3B	
4	SU48909530	SAS		020	020		3	3B	122	5	99	-12	3A				WE	3B	
5	SU49009530	SAS		0	029		3	3B	126	9	103	-8	2				WE	3B	
6	SU48839539	SAS		0	020		3	3B	120	3	99	-12	3A				WE	3B	
8	SU48909520	SAS		030	030		3	3B	126	9	103	-8	2				WE	3B	
9	SU49909520	SAS		025	025		3	3B	126	9	103	-8	2				WE	3B	

COMPLETE LIST OF PROFILES 24/01/94 SUTTON WICK, NW BLOCK

SAMPLE	DEPTH	TEXTURE	COLOUR	----MOTTLES----- COL	ABUN	CONT	PED COL.	GLEY	----STONES---- >2	>6	LITH	TOT	STRUCT/ CONSIST	SUBS STR	POR	IMP	SPL	CALC
1	0-25	c	10YR42 00	10YR58 61	C			Y	0	0		0						
	25-55	c	10YR51 00	10YR78 00	M			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
	55-120	c	10YR63 00	10YR78 71	M			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
1P	0-18	c	10YR42 00	10YR56 00	C			Y	0	0		0	WDCSAB FR					
	18-65	c	10YR52 00	10YR58 51	M			Y	0	0		0	MDCAB FM	P	Y		Y	
	65-120	c	10YR63 00	10YR78 00	M			Y	0	0	CH	5	MDCAB FM	P	Y		Y	
2	0-25	c	10YR32 00	10YR58 00	F				0	0		0						
	25-50	c	10YR51 00	10YR58 00	M			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
	50-120	c	10YR53 00	10YR58 00	M			Y	0	0	CH	3		P	Y		Y	
3	0-25	c	10YR42 00	10YR58 00	C			Y	0	0		0						
	25-40	c	10YR53 00	10YR58 61	C			Y	0	0		0		M				
	40-120	c	10YR52 00	10YR68 61	M			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
4	0-20	c	10YR42 00						0	0		0						
	20-75	c	10YR51 00	10YR68 00	M			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
	75-120	c	10YR63 00	10YR68 71	M			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
5	0-29	c	10YR32 00	10YR56 00	C			Y	0	0		0						
	29-60	c	10YR52 00	10YR56 51	C			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
	60-120	c	25Y 53 00	10YR56 00	C			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
6	0-20	c	10YR52 00	10YR58 61	C			Y	0	0		0						
	20-65	c	10YR62 00	10YR58 61	M			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
	65-120	c	10YR73 00	10YR78 71	M			Y	0	0	HR	5		P	Y		Y	
8	0-30	c	10YR42 00						0	0		0						
	30-60	c	10YR63 00	10YR78 71	C			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
	60-120	c	10YR52 00	10YR68 00	M			Y	0	0		0		P	Y		Y	
9	0-25	hcl	10YR32 00						0	0		0						
	25-60	c	10YR81 62	10YR56 00	M			Y	0	0	CH	3		P	Y		Y	
	60-120	c	10YR63 00	10YR56 00	C			Y	0	0	CH	3		P	Y		Y	