

**HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH
LOCAL PLAN
Jericho Farm, Burbage - Site b
Agricultural Land Classification
February 1997**

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**ADAS Reference: 95/96s
MAFF Reference: EL 22/1519b
LUPU Commission: 02633**

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH LOCAL PLAN

Jericho Farm, Burbage - Site b

INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 21.2 ha of land between Sketchley Brook and the railway line at Burbage in Leicestershire. The survey was carried out during February 1997.

2. The survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Land Use Planning Unit, Cambridge, in connection with Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan. This survey supersedes previous ALC surveys on this land.

3. The work was conducted by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Eastern Statutory Centre in ADAS. The land has been graded in accordance with the published MAFF ALC guidelines and criteria (MAFF, 1988). A description of the ALC grades and subgrades is given in Appendix I.

4. At the time of survey the land use on the site was predominantly agricultural, supporting crops of cereals, beans and oilseed rape. In addition farm buildings, associated land and a track in the northeast of the site were mapped as other land.

SUMMARY

5. The findings of the survey are shown on the enclosed ALC map. The map has been drawn at a scale of 1:10 000, it is accurate at this scale, but any enlargement would be misleading.

6. The area and proportions of the ALC grades and subgrades on the surveyed land are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Area of grades and other land

Grade/Other land	Area (hectares)	% Total site area
2	1.8	9
3a	3.8	18
3b	15.3	72
Other land	0.3	1
Total surveyed area	21.2	100

7. The fieldwork was conducted at an average density of 1 boring per hectare. A total of 22 borings and 3 soil pits were described.

8. The agricultural land at the site has been graded 2 (very good quality agricultural land), 3a (good quality agricultural land) and 3b (moderate quality agricultural land) in relation to varying wetness and workability limitations, although some grade 2 land is also limited by minor droughtiness restrictions.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ALC GRADE

Climate

9. Climate affects the grading of land through the assessment of an overall climatic limitation and also through interactions with soil characteristics.

10. The key climatic variables used for grading this site are given in Table 2 and were obtained from the published 5 km grid datasets using the standard interpolation procedures (Met. Office, 1989).

Table 2: Climatic and altitude data

Factor	Units	Values
Grid reference	N/A	SP 415 928
Altitude	m, AOD	95
Accumulated Temperature	day°C (Jan-June)	1369
Average Annual Rainfall	mm	661
Field Capacity Days	days	151
Moisture Deficit, Wheat	mm	99
Moisture Deficit, Potatoes	mm	88

11. 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.

12. The main parameters used in the assessment of an overall climatic limitation are average annual rainfall (AAR), as a measure of overall wetness, and accumulated temperature (AT0, January to June), as a measure of the relative warmth of a locality.

13. The combination of rainfall and temperature at this site mean that it is relatively warm and dry. These climatic characteristics are such that in themselves they impose no limitation to land quality and therefore the climate grade for this site is 1.

Site

14. The land at the site falls gently southwards from 101 m AOD in the northeast to 92 m AOD in the east and 93 m AOD in the south, towards Sketchley Brook. Therefore neither gradient nor altitude impose limitations to land quality.

Geology and soils

15. The published 1:63 360 scale geology map, sheet 169, Coventry (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1948) shows the majority of the site to be covered by glacial boulder clay deposits. The northeast of the site is shown as comprising glacial sand and gravel deposits, while adjacent to Sketchley Brook, in the south of the site, alluvium is mapped.

16. On the 1:250 000 scale published soils map, sheet 3, Soils of Midland and Western England (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983) the whole site is mapped as Beccles 3 Association soils which are briefly described as slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils and similar soils with only slight seasonal waterlogging. Some calcareous clayey soils especially on steeper slopes.

17. The current detailed survey of the site identified two main soil types.

18. In a small area in the northeast of the site sandy textured soils occur, corresponding with the glacial sand and gravel deposits. Profiles typically comprise sandy clay loam topsoils over sandy clay loam upper subsoils. Lower subsoils are typically medium sandy loam which merge into slowly permeable sandy clays or clays, or loamy medium sands with evidence of minor seasonal waterlogging as a result of groundwater within the profiles. These soils are typically very slightly stony and non-calcareous throughout.

19. The second soil type occurs over the remainder of the site and topsoils typically comprise medium, sandy or heavy clay loams over slowly permeable clay subsoils. Occasionally medium, sandy or heavy clay loam upper subsoils are present. These soils are typically very slightly stony throughout, with non-calcareous topsoils and upper subsoils, and variable calcareous lower subsoils.

Agricultural Land Classification

20. The details of the classification of the site are shown on the attached ALC map and the area statistics of each grade are given in Table 1, page 1.

21. The location of the auger borings and pits is shown on the attached sample location map.

Grade 2

22. A small area of land has been graded 2 in the northeast of the site and is associated with the sandy textured soils described in paragraph 18. These soils suffer from minor seasonal waterlogging as a result of groundwater or a slowly permeable layer at depth and have been assessed as wetness class II (for definition of wetness classes see Appendix II). This factor combines with the topsoil textures to slightly restrict the timing of cultivations. Therefore minor wetness and workability limitations preclude this land from a higher grade. In addition, where profiles are particularly light textured, moisture balance calculations indicate that profiles also suffer from minor droughtiness imperfections, which are a function of climate and the soil water holding capacity, and this also excludes the land from a higher grade.

Subgrade 3a

23. Subgrade 3a land occurs in a thin band on mid slopes above Sketchley Brook and corresponds with the better drained variants of the soils described in paragraph 19. These soils are assessed as wetness class III due to the presence of slowly permeable lower subsoils. This factor combines with the medium and sandy clay loam topsoil textures resulting in moderate wetness and workability imperfections which limit the land to subgrade 3a.

Subgrade 3b

24. Land graded 3b occupies the majority of the site and is associated with the poorer drained variants of the soils described in paragraph 19. These soils are poorly drained having slowly permeable clays directly below the topsoils and have therefore been assessed as wetness class IV. This factor combines with the topsoil textures to restrict land to subgrade 3b due to significant wetness and workability constraints.

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SOURCES OF REFERENCE

Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) (1948) *Sheet 169, Coventry*.
BGS: London.

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

Met. Office (1989) *Climatological Data for Agricultural Land Classification*.
Met. Office: Bracknell.

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) *Sheet 3, Soils of Midland and Western England*.
SSEW: Harpenden.

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1984) *Soils and their Use in Midland and Western England*.
SSEW: Harpenden

APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF THE GRADES AND SUBGRADES

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 of this 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 land.

Grade 3: Good to Moderate Quality Land

Land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, the 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.

Subgrade 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.

Subgrade 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 that 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 severe limitations that restricts use to permanent pasture or rough grazing, except for occasional pioneer forage crops.

APPENDIX II

SOIL WETNESS CLASSIFICATION

Definitions of Soil Wetness Classes

Soil wetness is classified according to the depth and duration of waterlogging in the soil profile. Six soil wetness classes are identified and are defined in the table below.

Wetness Class	Duration of waterlogging ¹
I	The soil profile is not wet within 70 cm depth for more than 30 days in most years. ²
II	The soil profile is wet within 70 cm depth for 31-90 days in most years or, if there is no slowly permeable layer within 80 cm depth, it is wet within 70 cm for more than 90 days, but only wet within 40 cm depth for 30 days in most years.
III	The soil profile is wet within 70 cm depth for 91-180 days in most years or, if there is no slowly permeable layer present within 80 cm depth, it is wet within 70 cm for more than 180 days, but only wet within 40 cm depth for between 31-90 days in most years.
IV	The soil profile is wet within 70 cm depth for more than 180 days but not wet within 40 cm depth for more than 210 days in most years or, if there is no slowly permeable layer present within 80 cm depth, it is wet within 40 cm depth for 91-210 days in most years.
V	The soil profile is wet within 40 cm depth for 211-335 days in most years.
VI	The soil profile is wet within 40 cm depth for more than 335 days in most years.

Assessment of Wetness Class

Soils have been allocated to wetness classes by the interpretation of soil profile characteristics and climatic factors using the methodology described in *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land* (MAFF, 1988).

¹ The number of days is not necessarily a continuous period.

² 'In most years' is defined as more than 10 out of 20 years.