

**FOR DIVISIONAL USE ONLY**  
**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION**  
**AYLSHAM LOCAL PLAN, NORFOLK**

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The three sites surveyed, covering 35.7 ha in total, are part of the Aylsham Local Plan. MAFF surveyed the site in February 1989 to assess the agricultural land quality.
- 1.2 On the published Agricultural Land Classification map sheet no 126 (Provisional, Scale 1:63360 (MAFF, 1972)) the area is shown as mainly grade 2 with a small area of grade 3 mapped along the western edge of the Hungate Nurseries Site.

2. PHYSICAL FACTORS AFFECTING LAND QUALITY

Climate

- 2.1 Climate data for the site was obtained from a recently published agricultural climatic dataset. (Met Office 1989). This indicates that for a mid range altitude of 30m the average annual rainfall is 670mm (26.4"). This data also indicates that field capacity days are 133 and moisture deficits are 112mm for wheat and 106mm for potatoes. Climate is not a limitation to the ALC grade.

Altitude and Relief

- 2.2 The land slopes gently or very gently across the survey area ranging in altitude from 27 to 32m AOD. Gradient and altitude do not constitute limitations to the ALC grade.

Geology and Soils

- 2.3 The published 1/4" to 1 mile solid and drift edition geology map 12 shows the Hungate Nurseries and Oak Lodge sites to comprise sand and gravel deposits to the east and loam deposits to the west. On the western half of the Orchard Lane site sand and gravel deposits are mapped whilst loam deposits occur to the east.

2.4 The soil survey of England and Wales have mapped the soils in the Aylsham area on two occasions. Firstly, at 1:100,000 scale in 1973 and secondly at 1:250,000 scale in 1983. The most recent map shows the occurrence of the soil association within the survey area:- the Wick 2 Association (\*1). During this survey a more detailed inspection of the soils was carried out.

Two main soil types occur over the survey area.

2.4.1 The majority of the soils typically comprise sandy loam or sandy silt loam topsoils overlying sandy silt loam, sandy loam or occasionally medium clay loam subsoils. At depth these soils typically overlie sand or occasionally loamy sand. Depth to this lower subsoil varies with location and determines the overall profile water holding capacity.

2.4.2 In the vicinity of Hungate Nurseries more droughty soils (than those described above) predominate. These soils typically comprise sandy loam topsoils over sandy loam or loamy sand upper subsoils which overlie sand (or occasionally coarse sand) at relatively shallow depths (generally 55cm+).

### 3. AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

3.1 The definitions of the Agricultural Land Classification grades are included in Appendix 1.

3.2 The table below shows the ALC grades for the survey area.

Grade	Agricultural Land Classification	
	ha	%
1	2.9	8
2	22.0	61.5
3a	8.1	23
Agricultural Buildings	1.3	3.5
Urban	0.8	2
Non Agricultural	0.6	2

(\*1) Wick 2 Association: Deep well drained coarse loamy soils, often stoneless. Some similar soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Slight risk of water erosion.

### 3.3 Grade 1

A small area of land, South of Hungate Nurseries, has been graded 1. This land is associated with the soils described in paragraph 2.4.1 above. The soils are well drained (wetness class 1) and have good moisture retention characteristics. They typically comprise deep sandy silt loams which may overlie sand at depths of one metre or more.

### 3.4 Grade 2

The majority of the survey area has been graded 2. This land is again associated with the soils described in paragraph 2.4.1. The soils are well drained (wetness class 1) and slightly droughty. The presence of the sand lower subsoil (generally at depths of 65/85cm+) has a minor limiting effect on the available water capacity of these soil profiles. As a result the minor droughtiness limitation excludes the land from grade 1.

### 3.5 Subgrade 3a

In the vicinity of Hungate Nurseries the land is associated with the soils described in paragraphs 2.4.2 above. The soils are well drained (wetness class 1) and moderately droughty. The coarse soil textures have a moderate limiting effect on the available water capacity of these soils. As a result the moderate droughtiness limitation restricts this land to subgrade 3a.

### 3.6 Non Agricultural

Scrub areas have been mapped as Non Agricultural.

### 3.7 Urban

Houses and the new bypass have been mapped as urban.

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## Appendix 1

### **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 and horticultural crops can usually be grown but on some land in 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. Where 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.

## References

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1971 Solid and Drift edition geology map sheet 12; scale  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to 1 mile.

MAFF, 1972 Agricultural Land Classification Map no 126 scale 1:63,360.

MAFF, 1988 Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales. Revised Guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of Agricultural Land. Alnwick.

METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE 1989 Climatic data extracted from the published agricultural climatic dataset.

SOIL SURVEY OF ENGLAND AND WALES 1973 'Soils of Norfolk' scale 1:100,000.

SOIL SURVEY OF ENGLAND AND WALES 1983 'The Soils of Eastern England 'Sheet 4 1:250,000 scale.