

Elton Westbury on Severn
Agricultural Land Classification
May 1999

Resource Planning Team
Bristol
FRCA Western Region

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**ELTON WESTBURY ON SEVERN
AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SURVEY**

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ELTON WESTBURY ON SEVERN

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

1 This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 14.3 ha of land at Elton Westbury on Severn. Field survey was based on 14 auger borings and 2 soil profile pits and was completed in April 1999.

2 The survey was conducted by the Resource Planning Team of FRCA Western Region on behalf of MAFF in its statutory role in connection with an application to the Planning Authority under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for a railway halt and park and ride.

3 Information on climate, geology and soils and from previous ALC surveys was considered and is presented in the relevant sections. Apart from the published regional ALC map (MAFF 1977) which shows the site at a reconnaissance scale as Grade 2 with Grade 3 to the east of the railway, the site had not been surveyed previously. The current survey uses the Revised Guidelines and Criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land (MAFF 1988) and supersedes any previous ALC survey. Grade descriptions are summarised in Appendix I.

4 At the time of survey, land cover was in arable production except for the north eastern field which was in pasture.

5 The distribution of ALC grades is shown on the accompanying 1:10,000 scale ALC map. The detail of information shown at this scale is appropriate to the intensity of field survey but could be misleading if enlarged or applied to small areas. Areas are summarised in the Table 1.

Table 1 Distribution of ALC grades Elton

Grade	Area (ha)	% Surveyed Area (13.9 ha)
3a	7.1	51
3b	6.8	49
Other land	0.4	
Total site area	14.3	

6 Just over half of the site has been mapped as Subgrade 3a, best and most versatile land. The remaining land being mapped as Subgrade 3b. The soils across the site experience

Little evidence was found for the terrace gravels during the recent survey and marl was found within most borings at depth

12 Soils were mapped by the Soil Survey of England and Wales at a reconnaissance scale of 1 250 000 (SSEW 1983) as Whimple 1 Association west of the railway and Newchurch 2 Association to the east of the railway

13 Whimple 1 Association is described as reddish fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging Newchurch 2 Association is described as deep stoneless calcareous clayey soils

14 The majority of the survey area had soils typical of the Whimple Association The lower subsoils were found to be slowly permeable To the west of the railway the soils were more variable with some similarities to Newchurch Association in the north

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

15 The distribution of ALC grades found by the current survey is shown on the accompanying 1 10 000 scale map and areas are summarised in Table 1 The detail of information shown at this scale is appropriate to the intensity of field survey but could be misleading if enlarged or applied to small areas

Subgrade 3a

16 Just over half of the area surveyed has been mapped as Subgrade 3a good quality land These soils experience a moderate wetness limitation The topsoils are medium silty clay loam over heavy clay loam and clay subsoils The lower subsoils are slowly permeable These reddish soils sometimes display gleying The soils are assessed as Wetness Class III (see Appendix II) The combination of wetness class topsoil texture and the prevailing climate allow these soils to be Subgrade 3a These soils are described by soil profile pit 2

Subgrade 3b

17 The rest of the survey area is mapped as Subgrade 3b moderate quality land These soils are similar to those described above except that the topsoil texture is heavier heavy clay loam This downgrades the soils to 3b compared to the soils described above The lower subsoils are slowly permeable The upper subsoils are quite variable but the soil profile pit (pit 1) to the east of the railway showed that these upper horizons were not slowly permeable The soils are also assessed as Wetness Class III and IV depending on the depth to the slowly permeable layer The pit also showed a stony layer in the subsoil but the soils do not experience a droughtiness limitation greater than that imposed by wetness

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17 May 1999

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF 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 include 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.

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 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 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 most 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

Source MAFF (1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land MAFF Publications Alnwick

APPENDIX II

DEFINITION OF SOIL WETNESS CLASSES

Soil wetness is classified according to the depth and duration of waterlogging in the soil profile

Wetness Class I

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

Wetness Class 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 not wet within 40 cm depth for more than 30 days in most years

Wetness Class 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 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 and 90 days in most years

Wetness Class IV

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

Wetness Class V

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

Wetness Class VI

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

Notes The number of days specified is not necessarily a continuous period

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

Source Hodgson J M (Ed) (1997) Soil Survey Field Handbook Soil Survey Technical Monograph No 5 Silsoe

APPENDIX III

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS USED IN SURVEY DATA

Soil pit and auger boring information collected during ALC survey is held on a computer database and is reproduced in this report. Terms used and abbreviations are set out below. These conform to definitions contained in the Soil Survey Field Handbook (Hodgson 1997)

1 Terms used on computer database in order of occurrence

GRID REF National 100 km grid square and 8 figure grid reference

LAND USE At the time of survey

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

GRDNT Gradient as estimated or measured by hand held optical clinometer

GLEYSPL Depth in centimetres to gleying or slowly permeable layer

AP (WHEAT/POTS) Crop adjusted available water capacity

MB (WHEAT/POTS) Moisture Balance (Crop adjusted AP - crop potential MD)

DRT Best grade according to soil droughtiness

If any of the following factors are considered significant Y will be entered in the relevant column

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

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	Erosion Risk	WD	Soil Wetness/Droughtiness
ST	Topsoil Stoniness				

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
ZL	Silt 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 the following 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)

MOTTLE COL Mottle colour using Munsell notation

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%+

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

PED COL Ped face colour using Munsell notation

GLEYS If the soil horizon is gleyed a **Y** will appear in this column If slightly gleyed an **S** will appear

STONE LITH Stone Lithology One of the following is used

HR	All hard rocks and stones	SLST	Soft oolitic or dolimitic limestone
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CH	Chalk	FSST	Soft fine grained sandstone
ZR	Soft argillaceous or silty rocks	GH	Gravel with non porous (hard) stones
MSST	Soft medium grained sandstone	GS	Gravel with porous (soft) stones
SI	Soft weathered igneous or metamorphic rock		

Stone contents are given in % by volume for sizes >2cm >6cm and total stone >2mm

STRUCT The degree of development size and shape of soil pedes are described using the following notation

<u>Degree of development</u>	WA	Weakly developed Adherent	WK	Weakly developed
	MD	Moderately developed	ST	Strongly developed
<u>Ped size</u>	F	Fine	M	Medium
	C	Coarse	VC	Very coarse
<u>Ped Shape</u>	S	Single grain	M	Massive
	GR	Granular	AB	Angular blocky
	SAB	Sub angular blocky	PR	Prismatic
	PL	Platy		

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

SUBS STR Subsoil structural condition recorded for the purpose of calculating profile droughtiness **G** Good **M** Moderate **P** Poor

POR Soil porosity If a soil horizon has poor porosity with less than 0.5% biopores >0.5mm a **Y** will appear in this column

IMP If the profile is impenetrable to rooting a **Y** will appear in this column at the appropriate horizon

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

CALC If the soil horizon is calcareous with naturally occurring calcium carbonate exceeding 1% a **Y** will appear this column

2 Additional terms and abbreviations used mainly in soil pit descriptions

STONE ASSESSMENT

V	Visual	S	Sieved	D	Displacement
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MOTTLE SIZE

EF	Extremely fine <1mm	M	Medium 5-15mm
VF	Very fine 1-2mm	C	Coarse >15mm
F	Fine 2-5mm		

MOTTLE COLOUR May be described by Munsell notation or as ochreous (OM) or grey (GM)

ROOT CHANNELS In topsoil the presence of rusty root channels might be noted as RRC

MANGANESE CONCRETIONS Assessed by volume

N	None	M	Many	20-40%
F	Few <2%	VM	Very Many	>40%
C	Common 2-20%			

POROSITY

P	Poor	less than 0.5% biopores at least 0.5mm in diameter
G	Good	more than 0.5% biopores at least 0.5mm in diameter

ROOT ABUNDANCE

The number of roots per 100cm ²		Very Fine and Fine	Medium and Coarse
F	Few	1-10	1 or 2
C	Common	10-25	2-5
M	Many	25-200	>5
A	Abundant	>200	

ROOT SIZE

VF	Very fine	<1mm	M	Medium	2-5mm
F	Fine	1-2mm	C	Coarse	>5mm

HORIZON BOUNDARY DISTINCTNESS

Sharp	<0.5cm	Gradual	6-13cm
Abrupt	0.5-2.5cm	Diffuse	>13cm
Clear	2.5-6cm		

HORIZON BOUNDARY FORM Smooth wavy irregular or broken *

* See Soil Survey Field Handbook (Hodgson 1997) for details