

**STEWARTBY MILLENNIUM
COUNTRY PARK
BEDFORDSHIRE**
Agricultural Land Classification
ALC Map and Summary Report

September 1997

Resource Planning Team
Eastern Region
FRCA Cambridge

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AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY REPORT

Stewartby Millennium Country Park Bedfordshire

INTRODUCTION

1. This summary report presents the findings of a detailed, Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 256.4 ha of land at Stewartby, Bedfordshire. The survey was carried out during September 1997.

2. The survey was carried out by the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA) for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), in connection with a proposal for a Millennium Country Park. This survey supersedes previous ALC information for this land.

Land to the west of the stream running from the sewage works in a south westerly direction was surveyed in 1995 (q.v. RPT Job No 15/95). It was not re-surveyed on this occasion, and the previous gradings are incorporated into the present map.

3. The work was conducted by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Eastern Region of FRCA. 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 stubble after barley, beans, and oilseed rape harvest. Stewartby Lake in the north, and a smaller lake in the south, plus wooded and scrub covered areas constitute '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; and 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)	% surveyed area	% site area
3a	55.9	50.9	21.8
3b	54.0	49.1	21.1
Other land	146.5	N/A	57.1
Total surveyed area	109.9	100	---
Total site area	256.4	---	100

7. The fieldwork was conducted at an average density of 1 boring per hectare. A total of 88 borings and 3 soil pits was described.

8. The agricultural land area is equally split between subgrade 3a (good quality agricultural land) and subgrade 3b (moderate quality agricultural land). The quality of the land in the 3a area is affected by moderate wetness and workability imperfections which preclude the land from a higher grade.

9. The subgrade 3b land is slowly permeable at shallow depths and consequently significant wetness and workability imperfections preclude the land from a higher grade.

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.