
MAFF
Ministry of
Agriculture
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and Food

North Yorkshire Minerals Local Plan
Land at West Ayton
Agricultural Land Classification
SummaryReport
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Resource Planning Team
Leeds Statutory Group
ADAS Leeds

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NORTH YORKSHIRE MINERALS LOCAL PLAN, LAND AT WEST AYTON AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 24 ha of land south of West Ayton, near Scarborough. The survey was carried out during October 1996.

2. The survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Land Use Planning Unit, Northallerton in connection with the objection to the non-inclusion of this area of land in the North Yorkshire Minerals Local Plan. This ALC survey supersedes any previous surveys.

3. The work was conducted by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Leeds Statutory Group 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 north and north-east of the site was sown to winter cereals, the centre and west had recently been harvested of potatoes, and the south recently harvested of cereals. A small area of non-agricultural land was mapped in the north-west of the site.

Summary

5. The findings of the survey are shown on the enclosed ALC map. The map has been drawn at a scale of 1:5,000. 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	% Surveyed Area
Subgrade 3a	7.3	30.4	30.5
Subgrade 3b	16.6	69.2	69.5
Other land	0.1	0.4	-
Total surveyed area	23.9	-	100
Total site area	24.0	100	-

7. The fieldwork was conducted at an average density of one boring per hectare. A total of twenty-four borings and three soil pits were described. A total of thirteen topsoil and three subsoil samples were taken to allow their organic matter content, particle size distribution and pH to be determined in the laboratory.

8. Subgrade 3a, good quality agricultural land, occurs in the west and north. On the higher land medium or heavy clay loam topsoils overlie gleyed sandy loam or sandy clay loam subsoils. Soil wetness and topsoil workability restrictions limit this land to Subgrade 3a. On the lower-lying land loamy peat or peaty loam topsoils overlie loamy peat, peaty loam or fibrous peat subsoils. Assuming that these soils are poorly drained, soil wetness limits the land to Subgrade 3a, but long-term monitoring of groundwater levels would be required before a definitive ALC grade could be given.

9. Subgrade 3b, moderate quality agricultural land, covers the remainder of the agricultural land on the site. In the south heavy clay loam or clay topsoils overlie gleyed and slowly permeable clay subsoils. These soils are poorly drained and the ALC grade is limited by soil wetness and topsoil workability restrictions. In two small areas in the east and west topsoil stone contents of more than 15% stones greater than 2 cm is the limiting factor. Some low-lying areas in the centre of the site contain organic clay topsoils overlying peaty subsoils. Assuming these soils are poorly drained and given the long-term arable use of the land Subgrade 3b is considered an accurate reflection of it's quality. However, long-term monitoring of ground water levels would be required before a definitive ALC grade could be given.

10. Other, non-agricultural, land occurs in the north-western corner of the site.

APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTIONS 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 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 (e.g. 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 which restrict use to permanent pasture or rough grazing, except for occasional pioneer forage crops.