0202-009-94

# NEWBURY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN
# SITE 54: SANDLEFORD FARM, NEWBURY
# AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION, SUMMARY REPORT

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 ADAS was commissioned by MAFF's Land Use Planning Unit to provide information on land quality on a number of sites in the Newbury District of Berkshire. The work forms part of MAFF's statutory input to the preparation of the Newbury District Local Plan.

1.2 Approximately 186 hectares of land relating to site 54, Sandleford Farm, Newbury, were surveyed in January 1994. The survey was undertaken at a detailed level of approximately one boring per hectare of land in agricultural use. A total of 152 soil auger borings, four topsoil stone measurements and six soil inspection pits were assessed in accordance with MAFF's revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land (MAFF, 1988). These guidelines provide a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical characteristics impose long term limitations on its use for agriculture.

1.3 The work was conducted by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Guildford Statutory Group of ADAS.

1.4 At the time of the survey the agricultural land was under permanent pasture and crop stubble, with some areas of game cover.

1.5 The distribution of grades and subgrades is shown on the attached ALC map and the areas are given in the table below. The map has been drawn at a scale of 1:10,000. It is accurate at this scale, but any enlargement would be misleading. This map supersedes a previous survey carried out in 1988, by ADAS, for the proposed Newbury by pass.

Table 1 : Distribution of Grades and Subgrades

| Grade | Area (ha) | % of Site | % of Agricultural Area |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 3.7 | 2.0 | 2.6 |
| 3a | 38.1 | 20.5 | 26.9 |
| 3b | 88.5 | 47.6 | 62.4 |
| 4 | 11.5 | 6.2 | 8.1 |
| Non Agricultural | 3.9 | 2.1 | 100% (141.8ha) |
| Urban | 3.1 | 1.7 | |
| Agricultural Buildings | 0.2 | 0.1 | |
| Woodland | 36.9 | 19.8 | |
| Total Area of Site | 185.9ha | 100% | |

1.6 Appendix 1 gives a general description of the grades, subgrades and land use categories identified in the survey. The main classes are described in terms of the type of limitation that can occur, the typical cropping range and the expected level and consistency of yield.

1.7 The area in agricultural use has been classified very good quality, Grade 2, to poor quality, Grade 4. Limitations include soil wetness, soil droughtiness, topsoil stoniness and gradient. The majority of the site is good quality, Subgrade 3a, and moderate quality, Subgrade 3b. These areas are predominantly limited by soil droughtiness, due to varying stone contents in the profile limiting water availability for crops. Occasionally stone content in the topsoil alone was sufficient to limit the classification to Subgrade 3b. Some observations were limited by soil wetness due to slowly permeable clay horizons impeding

drainage. Poor quality, Grade 4, land is primarily limited by soil wetness, due to high groundwater levels and seepage, occurring in the lower lying areas of the site where artificial drainage would have little effect. These areas are characterised by wetland flora, indicating almost permanently wet conditions, such that utilisation of the land will be severely restricted. Very good quality, Grade 2, land occurs in two small areas of the site. It is very slightly limited in some cases by soil wetness, due to shallow gleying (< 40cm), over deep (> 80cm) slowly permeable clay horizons, and soil droughtiness due to stone contents very slightly restricting profile water availability. Several small areas are limited by gradient to Subgrade 3b. This affects the safe and efficient use of farm machinery.

Resource Planning Team
Guildford Statutory Group
ADAS Reading

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