73/95

South Somerset Local Plan
Lopen Head Nursery
Agricultural Land Classification

Prepared for MAFF by
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ADAS
FOOD, FARMING, LAND & LEISURE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Land Use Planning Unit

MAFF

SOUTH SOMERSET LOCAL PLAN

LOPEN HEAD NURSERY, LOPEN

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey was carried out in January 1996 at Lopen Head Nursery, Lopen on behalf of MAFF as part of its statutory role in the preparation of the South Somerset Local Plan. The fieldwork covering 7.6 ha of land was conducted by ADAS at a scale of 1:10,000 with approximately one boring per hectare of agricultural land. A total of seven auger borings were examined and one soil profile pit used to assess subsoil conditions.

The published provisional one inch to the mile ALC map of this area (MAFF 1970) shows the grade of the site at a reconnaissance scale to be all Grade 1.

The recent survey supersedes this map having been carried out at a more detailed level and using the 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 agricultural use. The grading takes account of the top 120 cm of the soil profile. A description of the grades used in the ALC system can be found in Appendix 2.

2. CLIMATE

The grade of the land is determined by the most limiting factor present. The overall climate is considered first because it can have an overriding influence on restricting land to a lower grade despite other favourable conditions.

Estimates of climatic variables were interpolated from the published agricultural climate dataset (Meteorological Office 1989). The parameters used for assessing overall climate are accumulated temperature, a measure of the relative warmth of a locality, and average annual rainfall, a measure of overall wetness. The results shown in Table 1 indicate there is no overall climatic limitation.

Table 1: Climatic Interpolations: Lopen Head Nursery

Grid Reference		ST 423 142
Altitude (m)		65
Accumulated Temperature (day °)		1504
Average Annual Rainfall (mm)		807
Overall Climatic Grade		1
Field Capacity Days		171
Moisture deficit (mm):	Wheat	101
	Potatoes	93

Climatic data on Field Capacity Days (FCD) and Moisture Deficits for wheat and potatoes are also shown. These data are used in assessing the soil wetness and droughtiness limitations referred to in later sections.

3. RELIEF AND LANDCOVER

The site consists of two fields on the northern edge of Lopen, at Lopen Head. They are gently sloping, with gradients of less than 7°, at an altitude of 65 - 70 m Above Ordnance Datum. At the time of survey one field was in cereal and the other was under fruit.

4. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The geology of the site is shown on the published geology map of the area (Institute of Geological Sciences, 1973). This shows that the whole site is underlain by Upper Lias (Yeovil) Sands.

The soils were mapped by the Soil Survey of England and Wales in 1983 at a reconnaissance scale of 1:250,000. This shows that the whole site consists of soils from the South Petherton Association. They are described as being deep, well drained, silty soils with some over soft rock.

The soils found during the survey were very similar to those found by the Soil Survey of England and Wales. They were deep well drained sandy and clay loams with sandy silt loam topsoils.

5. AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

The distribution of ALC grades is shown in Table 2 and on the accompanying ALC map. This information could be misleading if shown at a larger scale.

Table 2: Distribution of ALC grades: Lopen Head Nursery, Lopen

Grade	Area (ha)	% of Survey Area	% of Agricultural Land
1	5.4	71.1	100.0
Other Land	2.2	28.9	0.0
TOTAL	7.6	100.0	100.0

Grade 1

All of the agricultural land was mapped as Grade 1 with no limitation to its agricultural use. The profiles consist of deep, well drained fine sandy silt loams over sandy loam, clay loam, and sandy clay loam subsoils. They were assessed as Wetness Class I (see Appendix 3). The stone contents were very low and with the relatively high local rainfall no drought limitations is experienced.

Other Land

Areas of residential land and the built up land at the nursery were not surveyed.

Resource Planning Team
Taunton Statutory Unit
January 1996

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APPENDIX 1

REFERENCES

INSTITUTE OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES (1973) Solid and Drift Edition, Sheet 312, Yeovil, 1:50,000

MAFF (1970) Agricultural Land Classification Map, Sheet 177, Provisional 1:63,360 scale.

MAFF (1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales (Revised Guidelines and Criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land), Alnwick.

METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE (1989) Climatological Data for Agricultural Land Classification.

SOIL SURVEY OF ENGLAND AND WALES (1983) Sheet 5, Soils of South West England, 1:250,000 scale.

APPENDIX 2

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.

Descriptions of other land categories used on ALC maps

Urban

Built-up or 'hard' uses with relatively little potential for a return to agriculture including: housing, industry, commerce, education, transport, religious buildings, cemeteries. Also, hard-surfaced sports facilities, permanent caravan sites and vacant land; all types of derelict land, including mineral workings which are only likely to be reclaimed using derelict land grants.

Non-agricultural

'Soft' uses where most of the land could be returned relatively easily to agriculture, including: private park land, public open spaces, sports fields, allotments and soft-surfaced areas on airports/airfields. Also active mineral workings and refuse tips where restoration conditions to 'soft' after-uses may apply.

Agricultural buildings

Includes the normal range of agricultural buildings as well as other relatively permanent structures such as glasshouses. Temporary structures (eg polythene tunnels erected for lambing) may be ignored.

Open water

Includes lakes, ponds and rivers as map scale permits.

Land not surveyed

Agricultural land which has not been surveyed.

Where the land use includes more than one of the above landcover types, eg buildings in large grounds, and where may be shown separately. Otherwise, the most extensive cover type will usually be shown.

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

APPENDIX 3

DEFINITION OF SOIL WETNESS CLASSES

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 (in preparation), Soil Survey Field Handbook (revised edition).

SITE NAME	PROFILE NO.	SLOPE AND ASPECT	LAND USE		PARENT MATERIAL
Lopen Head Nursery, Lopen	Pit 1 (Asp 7)	1° South	Fruit	Av Rainfall: 807 mm ATO: 1504 day °C FC Days: 171 Climatic Grade: 1 Exposure Grade: -	Yeovil Sands
JOB NO.	DATE	GRID REFERENCE	DESCRIBED BY		SOIL SAMPLE REFERENCES
73/95	15/1/96	ST 424152	HLJ		RPT/HLJ/193

Horizon No.	Lowest Av. Dcpth (cm)	Texture	Matrix (Ped Face) Colours	Stoniness: Size,Type, and Field Mcthod	Mottling Abundance, Contrast, Size and Colour	Mangan Concs	Structure: Ped Development Size and Shape	Consistence	Structural Condition	Pores (Fissures)	Roots: Abundance and Size	Calcium Carbonate Content	Horizon Boundary: Distinctness and form
1	30	FSZL	10YR54	none	none	none	-	-	-	Good	MF + VF	_	Clear smooth
2	64	FSL	10YR68	none	none	none	MCAB	Friable	Moderate	Good	CF + VF	-	Gradual smooth
3	100+	FSL	10YR66	none	FDFO (75YR58)	none	MCAB	Friable	Moderate	Good	FVF	-	_
4													

Profile Gleyed From: Not gleyed

Depth to Slowly Permeable Horizon: No spl

Wetness Class: I

Wetness Grade: 1

Available Water Wheat: 193 mm

Potatoes: 138 mm

Moisture Deficit Wheat: 101 mm

Potatoes: 93 mm

Moisture Balance Wheat: 92 mm

Potatoes: 45 mm

Droughtiness Grade: 1 (Calculated to 120 cm)

Final ALC Grade: 1

Main Limiting Factor(s):

Remarks: