

**North Hertfordshire District Local Plan  
Land at St. Ippollitts**

**Agricultural Land Classification  
ALC Map and Summary Report**

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**Resource Planning Team  
Eastern Region  
FRCA Cambridge**

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# AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY REPORT

## North Hertfordshire District Local Plan Land at St. Ippollitts

### INTRODUCTION

1. This summary report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 38.2 ha of land at St. Ippollitts. The survey was carried out during December 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 the review of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan. This survey supersedes previous ALC information for this land.
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 largely under winter cereals with grassland in the southeastern corner of the site and in association with the houses along the western edge of the site. The areas mapped as 'Other land' include several houses and gardens, two small wooded areas and various roads and hard tracks.

### 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; 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) | % surveyed area | % site area |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 2                   | 24.6            | 71.5            | 64.4        |
| 3a                  | 8.7             | 25.3            | 22.8        |
| 3b                  | 1.1             | 3.2             | 2.9         |
| Other land          | 3.8             | N/A             | 9.9         |
| Total surveyed area | 34.4            | 100             | -           |
| Total site area     | 38.2            | -               | 100         |

7. The fieldwork was conducted at an average density of one borings per hectare. A total of 38 borings and 4 soil pits was described.

8. Almost three quarters of the site has been graded 2 (very good quality agricultural land). Much of this land is limited by slight droughtiness constraints, but both wetness and workability and topsoil stone content may act as equally limiting factors in some instances. On the highest land in the northeast part of the site land has been graded 3a (good quality agricultural land). The main limitation is one of moderate droughtiness, but also topsoil stone content can be equally limiting in some locations. In the extreme northeast wetness and workability is the main limitation. A small area of land is graded 3b (moderate quality agricultural land) along the northern boundary of the surveyed area. Part of this area is graded 3b due to steep slopes whilst the remainder of the area contains disturbed soils which appear to have been used to infill part of the steep sided valley.

## **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.