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YORK CITY PLAN
(York University Expansion Site)
Agricultural Land Classification
Summary Report
June 1996

Resource Planning Team
Leeds Statutory Group
ADAS Leeds

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AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY REPORT

YORK CITY PLAN: YORK UNIVERSITY EXPANSION SITE

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 202 ha of land east-south-east of York, between the edge of the urban area and the A64(T). The survey was carried out during June 1996.

2. The survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Land Use Planning Unit, Northallerton in connection with the York City Plan. This survey supersedes the May 1989 report on the south-western section of this site ("Greater York Local Plan, Site H, Heslington") and the additional information obtained during the June 1996 survey has been used to refine the grade boundaries in the area covered by the May 1989 report.

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 land on the site was in arable use, growing vining peas, sugar beet, potatoes and winter cereals. An area of 10.8 ha in the north-east was left unsurveyed as the owners could not be contacted.

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)	% Total site area	% Surveyed Area
Grade 2	99.5	49.1	51.9
Subgrade 3a	77.0	38.0	40.2
Subgrade 3b	15.2	7.6	7.9
Land not surveyed	10.8	5.3	-
Total surveyed area	191.7	-	100
Total site area	202.5	100	-

7. The fieldwork was conducted at an average density of one boring per hectare. A total of one hundred and ninety two borings and ten soil pits were described.

8. Grade 2, very good quality agricultural land, covers almost half of the total site area. In the north slightly stony light-textured topsoils and upper subsoils overlie slightly stony light or very light-textured lower subsoils. Very slight soil droughtiness and, in places, topsoil stoniness limit this land to Grade 2. In the centre and south either very slightly stony light-textured topsoils and upper subsoils overlie stoneless gleyed, very light-textured lower subsoils (in which case the ALC grade is limited by soil droughtiness), or light-textured topsoils overlie light to medium-textured upper subsoils and gleyed and slowly permeable, medium to heavy-textured lower subsoils (in which case soil wetness and/or soil droughtiness limit the land to Grade 2).

Subgrade 3a, good quality agricultural land, covers 77 ha of the site. In the north light-textured topsoils overlie either light or very light-textured subsoils, or gleyed and slowly permeable heavy-textured subsoils. The soils vary between well and imperfectly drained and the ALC grade is limited by soil wetness, soil droughtiness, and a pattern limitation which prevents Grade 2 profiles being mapped together as a separate unit. In the centre and south the ALC grade is limited by either soil droughtiness (where light or very light-textured topsoils overlie very light-textured or sandy subsoils) or by soil wetness (where light to medium-textured topsoils overlie gleyed and slowly permeable, medium to heavy-textured subsoils).

Subgrade 3b, moderate quality agricultural land, occurs in the north, in the east and in the south-west. In the north-west moderately stony light-textured topsoils overlie moderately stony very light-textured subsoils. Soil droughtiness is the grade limiting factor in this case. In the north, medium-textured topsoils overlie gleyed and slowly permeable medium to heavy-textured subsoils, and soil wetness is the factor which limits the ALC grade. In the east and south-west, medium-textured topsoils overlie gleyed and slowly permeable heavy-textured subsoils and soil wetness is again the grade-limiting factor.

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.