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Land opposite Nos. 112 - 162 New Dover Road, Canterbury Agricultural Land Classification ALC Map And Summary Report November 1993

LAND OPPOSITE Nos. 112 - 162, NEW DOVER ROAD, CANTERBURY

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION, SUMMARY REPORT

1. Summary

1.1 In February 1993, an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey was carried out on 275 hectares of land to the immediate south east of Canterbury in Kent. ADAS was commissioned by MAFF's Land Use Planning Unit to determine the quality of land identified for possible inclusion in the Canterbury District Draft Local Plan.

1.2 Subsequently, part of the area surveyed was the subject of a planning application for parking and recreational facilities. This report represents the findings of the ALC survey for this 14.4 hectare site contained within the larger area surveyed in February 1993.

1.3 The survey was undertaken at a detailed level of approximately one boring per hectare. Borings and soil inspection pits were described 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 agricultural use. A total of 14 borings from the original survey are within the new application area.

1.4 The distribution of grades and sub-grades in the application area is shown on the attached ALC map and the areas and extent are given in the table below. The map has been drawn at a scale of 1:5,000. It is accurate at this scale, but any enlargement may be misleading.

Distribution of Grades and Sub-grades

	Area (ha)	% total agricultural area
Grade 2	6.5	45.8
3a	3.9	27.4
3b	3.8	26.8
Total agricultural area	14.2	
Urban	0.2	
Total area	14.4 ha	

1.5 A general description of the grades, subgrades and land-use categories identified in this survey is provided as an appendix. The grades are described in terms of the type of limitation that can occur, the typical cropping range and the expected level and consistency of yield.

1.6 The majority of land in the application area is of very good or good quality, (Grades 2 and 3a, respectively). Land assigned to Grade 2 has slight wetness and droughtiness limitations resulting from the interaction of soil and climatic factors. Land assigned to Subgrades 3a and 3b is mainly limited by moderate to severe soil wetness problems associated with clayey subsoils and impeded soil drainage.

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Resource Planning Team
Guildford Statutory Group
ADAS Reading

APPENDIX 1
DESCRIPTION OF THE GRADES AND SUBGRADES

The ALC grades and subgrades are described below in terms of the types of limitation which can occur, typical cropping range and the expected level and consistency of yield. In practice,, the grades are defined by reference to physical characteristics and the grading guidance and cut-offs for limitation factors in Section 3 enable land to be ranked in accordance with these general descriptions. The most productive and flexible land falls into Grades 1 and 2 and Subgrade 3a and collectively comprises about one-third of the agricultural land in England and Wales. About half the land is of moderate quality in Subgrade 3b or poor quality in Grade 4. Although less significant on a national scale such land can be locally valuable to agriculture and the rural economy where poorer farmland predominates. The remainder is very poor quality land in Grade 5, which mostly occurs in the uplands.

Descriptions are also given of other land categories which may be used on ALC maps.

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 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 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 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 parkland, public open spaces, sports fields, allotments and soft-surfaced areas on airports/airfields. Also active mineral working and refuse tips where restoration conditions to 'soft' after-uses may apply.

Woodland

Includes commercial and non-commercial woodland. A distinction may be made as necessary between farm and non-farm woodland.

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 land cover types, eg buildings in large grounds, and where map scale permits, the cover types may be shown separately. Otherwise, the most extensive cover type will usually be shown.