

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT FOR THE LOMAX PROPOSED OPENCAST COAL SITE

This report provides information on the agricultural land quality of the proposed Lomax Opencast Coal site prior to working. The survey has been undertaken in September 1990, using the Revised Agricultural Land Classification. In determining the final grade of the land auger boring information from a previous survey of the site has been used, in conjunction with soil pit information gathered in 1990.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Location, Altitude and Relief

The site occupies 448 ha of land south of the M61, surrounded by the urban areas of Tyldesley, Ellenbrook, Little Hulton and Over Hulton. It is bisected by a disused railway line.

Whilst the land slopes gently from north to south, the topography is gently undulating with several small valleys and at Ashes Farm (694041) and at Padiham (70035) a localized area of steep valley sides occur. In the north east of the site there is a large colliery spoil heap which dominates the landscape.

Altitude varies between approximately 120 metres in the north of the site and 50 metres in the south of the site.

Climate and Rainfall

The main parameters used in the assessment of the climatic limitations are average annual rainfall (AAR) and accumulated temperature (ATO). For this site these figures are 999mm and 1354°C respectively, indicating that there is a climatic limitation for this site, preventing any land from being grade 1. The field capacity days figure for the site is 233 days. The mean last frost occurs in early May.

Geology and Soils

The area is underlain by Carboniferous Westphalian 'B' Coal Measures. These have been covered by drift deposits of Boulder Clay. The soils are predominantly loamy and clayey surface-water gleys of the Brickfield 3 Association. Three main soil types occur on the site. Derelict land with no recoverable soil resources includes Cutacre Tip, the dismantled railway line and partially restored slag heaps at Ellenbrook. Disturbed land previously disturbed by opencast workings is common to the south of the railway line. Undisturbed land of varying quality occurs throughout the remainder of the site.

Land Use

The majority of the area is down to grass for stock grazing with dairy cattle, beef cattle and sheep. Several of the smaller fields are used for horse grazing. Near Oliver Fold (6696037) there are several cereal fields. To the east of Common Fold (699032), on both sides of the railway, much of the land is currently uncultivated/abandoned although of similar agricultural quality to the surrounding land.

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

Sub-grade 3a land covers 13.85 ha and accounts for 3% of the site. It occurs in limited areas near Oliver Fold (696037) and Mills Brow (692042). Soils are typically sandy loam to depth, or overlying sandy clay loam. Wetness is the principal limitation to the agricultural use of this land.

Sub-grade 3b land covers 300.68 ha and accounts for 67% of the site. It is widespread throughout the site. Soils are typically sandy silt loams, medium clay loams or silty clay loams overlying sandy clay loams or clay loams often with bands of lighter sandy loams or sandy silt loams. Some of the restored land is also of sub-grade 3b quality. Wetness is the principal limitation to the agricultural use of this land.

Grade 4 land covers 52.44 ha and accounts for 12% of the site. It occurs in limited areas near Ashes Farm (694041) and in the extreme east of the site at (726026) where gradient and micro irregularities are the main limitation to the agricultural use of this land.

Elsewhere, much of the Grade 4 occurs on restored land as in the extreme north around GR 698052 and in the south-east around GR 714024. These soils are typically heavy clay loams overlying coal waste and clay, and are often heavily compacted. Soil texture, soil structure and wetness all limit the agricultural use of this land.

Grade 5 land covers 2.56 ha and accounts for less than 1% of the site. It includes land at Cutacre Brook (701035), near Cleworth Hall at (706028).

Non agricultural land covers 72.89 ha and accounts for 16% of the site, and includes areas of colliery spoil heaps and the dismantled railway and scrubland around derelict farmhouses.

Woodland covers 4.96 ha and accounts for 1% of the site.

Urban land covers 0.98 ha and accounts for less than 1% of the site.

Summary

Grade	Area (a)	% of agric area	% of site
3A	13.85	4	3
3b	300.68	81	67
4	52.44	14	12
5	2.56	1	< 1
Non-agric	72.89	-	16
Urban	0.98	-	< 1
Woodland	4.96	-	1
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RESOURCE PLANNING GROUP
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