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Land west of Laundry Road,
Minster, Thanet
Agricultural Land Classification
Report
December 1994

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT

LAND WEST OF LAUNDRY ROAD, MINSTER, THANET

1 Summary

1 1 ADAS was commissioned by MAFF's Land Use Planning Unit to provide information on land quality for a site to the immediate west of Laundry Road Minster Kent The work forms part of MAFF s statutory input an application for development The land is also part of a larger site being considered in relation to the Isle of Thanet Local Plan

1 2 The site comprises approximately 1 7 hectares of land An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey was carried out during December 1994 The survey was undertaken at a detailed level of approximately two borings per hectare of agricultural land surveyed A total of 4 borings and one soil inspection pit 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 a long term limitation on its use for agriculture

1 3 The work was carried out by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Guildford Statutory Group of ADAS

1 4 At the time of survey the agricultural land on the site had been ploughed

1 5 The distribution of grades and subgrades is shown on the attached ALC map and the areas 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 would be misleading This survey supersedes any previous survey of the land

Table 1 Distribution of Grades and Subgrades

Grade	Area (ha)	% of Site
3a	1 7	100 0
Total area of site	1 7 ha	100%

1 6 Appendix 1 gives a general description of the grades subgrades and land use categories identified in this survey The main classes are described in terms of the type of limitation that can occur the typical cropping range and expected level and consistency of yield

1 7 Land on the site has been assigned to Subgrade 3a good quality on the basis of a slight soil droughtiness limitation Soils comprise calcareous silty clay loams overlying chalky drift and chalk relatively deep in the profile The interaction between these soil characteristics and the dry climate which prevails at this locality causes profile available water to be slightly restricted The land is thereby affected by a slight risk of soil droughtiness

2 Climate

2 1 Climatic criteria are considered first when classifying land as climate can be overriding in the sense that severe limitations will restrict land to low grades irrespective of favourable site or soil conditions

2 2 The main parameters used in the assessment of an overall climatic limitation are average annual rainfall as a measure of overall wetness and accumulated temperature (degree days Jan June) as a measure of the relative warmth of a locality

2 3 A detailed assessment of the prevailing climate was made by interpolation from a 5km grid point dataset (Met Office 1989) The details are given in the table below and these show that there is no overall climatic limitation affecting the site

2 4 No local climatic factors such as exposure or frost risk are believed to affect the site However climatic factors do interact with soil properties to influence soil wetness and droughtiness At this locality the climate is particularly dry in regional and national terms Low field capacity days and correspondingly high soil moisture deficits will act to reduce the likelihood of soil wetness problems whilst enhancing the possibility of soil droughtiness

Table 2 Climatic Interpolations

Grid Reference	TR3165656
Altitude (m AOD)	50
Accumulated Temperature (degree days Jan June)	1433
Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	612
Field Capacity (days)	123
Moisture Deficit Wheat (mm)	122
Moisture Deficit Potatoes (mm)	120
Overall Climatic Grade	1

3 Relief

3 1 The site lies at an altitude of approximately 50 m AOD falling gently towards the south Nowhere on the site does gradient or microrelief affect agricultural land quality

4 Geology and Soil

4 1 British Geological Survey (1980) shows the entire site to be underlain by Upper Chalk

4 2 The Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) shows much of the site to comprise soils of the Coombe 1 association These are described as brown silty typical brown calcareous earth (SSEW 1984) The southern periphery of the site is shown to comprise Hamble 1 soils these being well drained silty brown earths (SSEW 1984)

4 3 Detailed field examination found the soils on the site to comprise well drained calcareous silty clay loams overlying chalky drift and chalk at depth

5 Agricultural Land Classification

5 1 Table 1 provides the details of the area measurements for each grade and the distribution of each grade is shown on the attached ALC map

5 2 The location of the soil observation points are shown on the attached sample point map

Subgrade 3a

5 3 Good quality agricultural land has been mapped across the entire site The use of the land may be influenced by slight soil droughtiness restrictions

Profiles typically comprise calcareous medium silty clay loam topsoils containing 1 2% total flints by volume These overlie similar or slightly heavier upper subsoils and pass to chalky (ie 10 30% total chalk fragments) silty clay loam horizons between 55 and 75 cm depth Occasional profiles are impenetrable (to soil auger) due to flints in the lower subsoils whilst the majority of observations passed to hard white chalk below 80 90 cm A soil inspection pit on the site found rooting by crops into the chalk substratum to be severely restricted due to the hard and compact nature of the chalk

The combination of restricted rooting depth and chalky lower subsoils at a locality where the climate is especially dry causes profile available water to be slightly restricted as evidenced by moisture balance calculations for the soils on the site

Soil droughtiness may cause crops to experience drought stress and thereby affect the versatility of the land in terms of the yield potential of crops which are grown

SOURCES OF REFERENCE

British Geological Survey (1980) Sheet No 274 1 50 000 Series (solid and drift edition)

MAFF (1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land

Meteorological Office (1989) Climatological Data for Agricultural Land Classification

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) Sheet 6 Soils of South East England 1 250 000 and accompanying legend

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1984) Bulletin 15 Soils of their use in South-East England

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 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 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 which restrict use to permanent pasture or rough grazing except for occasional pioneer forage crops

Urban

Built-up or 'hard' uses with relatively little potential for a return to agriculture including housing industry commerce education transport religous buildings cemetries 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 Also active mineral workings 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 eg buildings in large grounds and where map scale permits the cover types may be shown separately Otherwise the most extensive cover type will be shown

APPENDIX II

FIELD ASSESSMENT OF SOIL WETNESS CLASS

SOIL WETNESS CLASSIFICATION

Soil wetness is classified according to the depth and duration of waterlogging in the soil profile Six soil wetness classes are identified and are defined in the table below

Definition of Soil Wetness Classes

Wetness Class	Duration of Waterlogging[1]
I	The soil profile is not wet within 70 cm depth for more than 30 days in most years [2]
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 only wet within 40 cm depth for 30 days in most years
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 present within 80 cm depth it is wet within 70 cm for more than 180 days but only wet within 40 cm depth for between 31-90 days in most years
IV	The soil profile is wet within 70 cm depth for more than 180 days but not wet within 40 cm depth for more than 210 days in most years **or** if there is no slowly permeable layer present within 80 cm depth it is wet within 40 cm depth for 91-210 days in most years
V	The soil profile is wet within 40 cm depth for 211 335 days in most years
VI	The soil profile is wet within 40 cm depth for more than 335 days in most years

Soils can be allocated to a wetness class on the basis of quantitative data recorded over a period of many years or by the interpretation of soil profile characteristics site and climatic factors Adequate quantitative data will rarely be available for ALC surveys and therefore the interpretative method of field assessment is used to identify soil wetness class in the field The method adopted here is common to ADAS and the SSLRC

[1]The number of days specified is not necessarily a continuous period

[2] In most years is defined as more than 10 out of 20 years

APPENDIX III

SOIL PIT AND SOIL BORING DESCRIPTIONS

Contents

SOIL PROFILE DESCRIPTIONS EXPLANATORY NOTE

Soil pit and auger boring information collected during ALC fieldwork is held on a computer database This uses notations and abbreviations as set out below

Boring Header Information

1 **GRID REF** national 100 km grid square and 8 figure grid reference

2 **USE** Land use at the time of survey The following abbreviations are used

ARA	Arable	**WHT**	Wheat	**BAR**	Barley
CER	Cereals	**OAT**	Oats	**MZE**	Maize
OSR	Oilseed rape	**BEN**	Field Beans	**BRA**	Brassicae
POT	Potatoes	**SBT**	Sugar Beet	**FCD**	Fodder Crops
LIN	Linseed	**FRT**	Soft and Top Fruit	**FLW**	Fallow
PGR	Permanent Pasture	**LEY**	Ley Grass	**RGR**	Rough Grazing
SCR	Scrub	**CFW**	Coniferous Woodland	**DCW**	Deciduous Wood
HTH	Heathland	**BOG**	Bog or Marsh	**FLW**	Fallow
PLO	Ploughed	**SAS**	Set aside	**OTH**	Other
HRT	Horticultural Crops				

3 **GRDNT** Gradient as estimated or measured by a hand-held optical clinometer

4 **GLEY/SPL** Depth in centimetres (cm) to gleying and/or slowly permeable layers

5 **AP (WHEAT/POTS)** Crop adjusted available water capacity

6 **MB (WHEAT/POTS)** Moisture Balance (Crop adjusted AP crop adjusted MD)

7 **DRT** Best grade according to soil droughtiness

8 If any of the following factors are considered significant Y will be entered in the relevant column

MREL	Microrelief limitation	**FLOOD**	Flood risk	**EROSN**	Soil erosion risk
EXP	Exposure limitation	**FROST**	Frost prone	**DIST**	Disturbed land
CHEM	Chemical limitation				

9 **LIMIT** The main limitation to land quality The following abbreviations are used

OC	Overall Climate	**AE**	Aspect	**EX**	Exposure
FR	Frost Risk	**GR**	Gradient	**MR**	Microrelief
FL	Flood Risk	**TX**	Topsoil Texture	**DP**	Soil Depth
CH	Chemical	**WE**	Wetness	**WK**	Workability
DR	Drought	**ER**	Erosion Risk	**WD**	Soil Wetness/Droughtiness
ST	Topsoil Stoniness				

Soil Pits and Auger Borings

1 **TEXTURE** soil texture classes are denoted by the following abbreviations

S	Sand	**LS**	Loamy Sand	**SL**	Sandy Loam
SZL	Sandy Silt Loam	**CL**	Clay Loam	**ZCL**	Silty Clay Loam
ZL	Silt Loam	**SCL**	Sandy Clay Loam	**C**	Clay
SC	Sandy Clay	**ZC**	Silty Clay	**OL**	Organic Loam
P	Peat	**SP**	Sandy Peat	**LP**	Loamy Peat
PL	Peaty Loam	**PS**	Peaty Sand	**MZ**	Marine Light Silts

For the sand loamy sand sandy loam and sandy silt loam classes the predominant size of sand fraction will be indicated by the use of the following prefixes

F Fine (more than 66% of the sand less than 0 2mm)
M Medium (less than 66% fine sand and less than 33% coarse sand)
C Coarse (more than 33% of the sand larger than 0 6mm)

The clay loam and silty clay loam classes will be sub divided according to the clay content **M** Medium (<27% clay) **H** Heavy (27-35% clay)

2 **MOTTLE COL** Mottle colour using Munsell notation

3 **MOTTLE ABUN** Mottle abundance expressed as a percentage of the matrix or surface described

F few <2% **C** common 2 20% **M** many 20 40% **VM** very many 40% +

4 **MOTTLE CONT** Mottle contrast

F faint - indistinct mottles evident only on close inspection
D distinct - mottles are readily seen
P prominent mottling is conspicuous and one of the outstanding features of the horizon

5 **PED COL** Ped face colour using Munsell notation

6 **GLEY** If the soil horizon is gleyed a Y will appear in this column If slightly gleyed an S will appear

7 **STONE LITH** Stone Lithology - One of the following is used

HR	all hard rocks and stones	**SLST**	soft oolitic or dolimitic limestone
CH	chalk	**FSST**	soft fine grained sandstone
ZR	soft argillaceous or silty rocks	**GH**	gravel with non-porous (hard) stones
MSST	soft medium grained sandstone	**GS**	gravel with porous (soft) stones
SI	soft weathered igneous/metamorphic rock		

Stone contents (>2cm >6cm and total) are given in percentages (by volume)

8 **STRUCT** the degree of development size and shape of soil peds are described using the following notation

degree of development	**WK** weakly developed	**MD** moderately developed
	ST strongly developed	
ped size	**F** fine	**M** medium
	C coarse	**VC** very coarse
ped shape	**S** single grain	**M** massive
	GR granular	**AB** angular blocky
	SAB sub-angular blocky	**PR** prismatic
	PL platy	

9 **CONSIST** Soil consistence is described using the following notation

L loose **VF** very friable **FR** friable **FM** firm **VM** very firm
EM extremely firm **EH** extremely hard

10 **SUBS STR** Subsoil structural condition recorded for the purpose of calculating profile droughtiness **G** good **M** moderate **P** poor

11 **POR** Soil porosity If a soil horizon has less than 0 5% biopores >0 5 mm a Y' will appear in this column

12 **IMP** If the profile is impenetrable to rooting a 'Y will appear in this column at the appropiate horizon

13 **SPL** Slowly permeable layer If the soil horizon is slowly permeable a Y' will appear in this column

14 **CALC** If the soil horizon is calcareous a 'Y' will appear in this column

15 Other notations

APW available water capacity (in mm) adjusted for wheat
APP available water capacity (in mm) adjusted for potatoes
MBW moisture balance wheat
MBP moisture balance potatoes

SAMPLE	DEPTH	TEXTURE	COLOUR	-- MOTTLES COL	ABUN	CONT	PED COL	GLEY	---STONES- >2	>6	LITH	TOT	-- STRUCT/ CONSIST	SUBS STR	POR	IMP	SPL	CALC	
1	0 33	mzcl	10YR42 00						0	0	HR	1						Y	
	33-50	hzcl	10YR54 00						0	0	HR	1		M				Y	
	50-65	hzcl	10YR54 00	75YR58 00	C			S	0	0	HR	1		M				Y	
	65-75	c	10YR54 00	75YR58 00	C		00MN00 00	S	0	0	HR	1		M				Y	
	75-90	hzcl	10YR74 00						0	0	CH	30		M				Y	
	90-95	ch	10YR81 00						0	0		0		P				Y	
1P	0-35	mzcl	10YR42 00						0	0	HR	2						Y	
	35-55	mcl	10YR54 00						0	0	HR	3	MDCSAB	FR M				Y	
	55 80	mcl	10YR64 00						0	0	CH	30	MDCSAB	FR M				Y	
	80 85	ch	10YR81 00						0	0	HR	2		P				Y	
2	0 33	mzcl	10YR42 00						0	0	HR	1						Y	
	33-60	mzcl	10YR54 00						0	0	CH	2		M				Y	
	60 80	mzcl	10YR74 00						0	0	CH	20		M				Y	
	80 85	ch	10YR81 00						0	0		0		P				Y	
3	0 32	mzcl	10YR42 00						0	0	HR	1						Y	
	32 50	mzcl	10YR54 00						0	0	HR	1		M				Y	
	50-70	mzcl	10YR64 00						0	0	CH	5		M				Y	
	70-88	mzcl	10YR74 00						0	0	CH	15		M				Y	
	88 93	ch	10YR81 00						0	0		0		P				Y	
4	0 35	mzcl	10YR42 00						0	0		0						Y	
	35-55	mzcl	10YR54 00						0	0	CH	1		M				Y	
	55-70	mzcl	10YR74 00						0	0	CH	5		M				Y	
	70-75	mzcl	10YR74 00						0	0	CH	10		M				Y	Imp flints

SAMPLE NO	GRID REF	USE	ASPECT	GRDNT	GLEY	WETNESS - SPL	CLASS	GRADE	-WHEAT- AP	-WHEAT- MB	POTS- AP	POTS- MB	DRT	M REL FLOOD	EROSN EXP	FROST DIST	CHEM LIMIT		ALC	COMMENTS
1	TR31606560	PLO	S	01			1	1	131	9	124	4	2				DR	2	SL	GLEY 50
TP	TR31656556	PLO	S	01			1	1	120	-2	118	-2	3A				DR	3A		
2	TR31706560	PLO	S	01			1	1	123	1	123	3	3A				DR	3A	CHALK	80
	TR31606551	PLO	S	01			1	1	131	9	124	4	2				DR	2	CHALK	88
	TR31706556	PLO	S	01			1	1	117	-5	125	5	3A				DR	3A		

SOIL PIT DESCRIPTION

Site Name LAUNDRY ROAD MINSTER Pit Number 1P

Grid Reference TR31656556 Average Annual Rainfall 612 mm
Accumulated Temperature 1433 degree days
Field Capacity Level 123 days
Land Use Ploughed
Slope and Aspect 01 degrees S

HORIZON	TEXTURE	COLOUR	STONES 2	TOT STONE	LITH	MOTTLES	STRUCTURE	CONSIST	SUBSTRUCTURE	CALC
0 35	MZCL	10YR42 00	0	2	HR					Y
35 55	MCL	10YR54 00	0	3	HR		MDCSAB	FR	M	Y
55 80	MCL	10YR64 00	0	30	CH		MDCSAB	FR	M	Y
80 85	CH	10YR81 00	0	2	HR				P	Y

Wetness Grade 1 Wetness Class I
Gleying cm
SPL No SPL

Drought Grade 3A APW 120mm MBW -2 mm
APP 118mm MBP 2 mm

FINAL ALC GRADE 3A
MAIN LIMITATION Droughtiness