

**BLYTH VALLEY LOCAL PLAN**

**LAND SOUTH EAST OF CRAMLINGTON**

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

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**BLYTH VALLEY LOCAL PLAN  
(LAND SOUTH EAST OF CRAMLINGTON)**

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY REPORT**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 125.5 ha of land between Cramlington and Seghill in Northumberland.
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 Blyth Valley Local Plan.
3. The work was conducted by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Northern 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 on the site was mainly under winter cereals and ley grass, with small areas of oilseed rape, set-aside and non-agricultural land.

**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
1			
2			
3a			
3b	120.8	100	96.3
4			
5			
Agricultural land not surveyed		N/A	
Other land	4.7	N/A	3.7
Total surveyed area	120.8	100	-
Total site area	125.5	-	100

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

8. Subgrade 3b, moderate quality land, covers all of the agricultural land on the site. The soils are generally poorly drained, with medium clay loam or heavy clay loam topsoils overlying gleyed and slowly permeable heavy clay loam or clay subsoils at between 20 cm and 35 cm depth. Soil wetness is the factor which limits the land to Subgrade 3b.

9. Other, non-agricultural, land on the site occurs in the south-west and west (two areas of scrub) and in the north (a small block of deciduous woodland).

## SOURCES OF REFERENCE

British Geological Survey (1968) *Sheet No. 15, Tynemouth*. 1:63,360 scale.  
BGS: London.

British Geological Survey (1977) *Sheet No. 14, Morpeth*. 1:50,000 scale.  
BGS: London.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1988) *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land*. MAFF: London.

Met. Office (1989) *Climatological Data for Agricultural Land Classification*.  
Met. Office: Bracknell.

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) *Soils of England and Wales, Sheet 1*. 1:250,000 scale.  
SSEW: Harpenden.

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1984) *Soils and their Use in Northern England*  
SSEW: Harpenden

## APPENDIX I

### DESCRIPTIONS 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 (e.g. 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.