

## AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

DORSET MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN  
BS14 ACTON

## REPORT OF SURVEY

## 1. SUMMARY

The site, an area of 30.25 hectares of land south of Langton Matravers was graded using the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system in July 1993. The survey was carried out on behalf of MAFF as part of its statutory role in the preparation of the Dorset Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

The field work was carried out by ADAS (Resource Planning Team, Taunton Statutory Unit) at a scale of 1:10,000. The information is correct at this scale but any enlargement would be misleading. A total of 22 auger borings and a soil profile pit were examined.

The distribution of ALC grades identified in the survey area is detailed below and illustrated on the accompanying map.

## Distribution of ALC grades: Acton

Grade	Area (ha)	% of Survey Area	% of Agricultural Land
3B	13.9	46.0	60.6
4	9.05	30.0	39.4
Non Agric	7.3	24.0	
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	30.25	100%	100% (22.95ha)

The site includes two areas of quarry workings which are marked as non-agricultural land. Nearly half the agricultural land has been graded 3b with a workability limitation imposed by the clay topsoils. There are two areas where poorly drained clay soils have been assessed as wetness class IV and thus Grade 4.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Twenty-seven hectares of land south of Langton Matravers were graded using the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system in July 1993. The survey was carried out on behalf of MAFF as part of its statutory role in the preparation of the Dorset Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

The field work was carried out by ADAS (Resource Planning Team, Taunton Statutory Unit) at a scale of 1:10,000 (approximately one sample point every hectare). The information is correct at this scale but any enlargement would be misleading. A total of 22 auger borings and a soil profile pit were examined.

The published Provisional 1" to the mile ALC map of this area (MAFF 1973) shows the site to be non-agricultural land and grade 3. The recent survey supersedes this map, having been carried out at a more detailed level and using the Revised Guidelines and Criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land (MAFF 1988).

The ALC provides a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. The grading takes account of the top 120 cm of the soil profile. A description of the grades used in the ALC System can be found in Appendix 2.

## 3. CLIMATE

The grade of the land is determined by the most limiting factor present. The overall climate is considered first because it can have an overriding influence on restricting land to lower grades despite other favourable conditions.

Climatic data for the site were interpolated from the Agricultural Climate Dataset ( Meteorological Office 1989). The parameters used for assessing overall climatic limitation are accumulated temperature (a measure of the relative warmth of a locality) and average annual rainfall (a measure of overall wetness). The results shown in Table 1 indicate that there is no overall climatic limitation.

No locally limiting climatic factors such as exposure were noted in the survey area. Climatic data on Field Capacity Days (FCD) and Moisture Deficits for wheat (MDW) and potatoes (MDP) are also shown. These data are used in assessing the soil wetness and droughtiness limitations referred to in Section 6.

**Table 1 Climatic interpolations: Acton**

Grid Reference	SY 959 776
Height (m)	135
Accumulated Temperature (day deg)	1428
Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	916
Overall Climatic Grade	1
Field Capacity (Days)	155
Moisture Deficit, Wheat (mm)	106
Potatoes (mm)	96

**4. RELIEF AND LANDCOVER**

The site slopes gently southwards, the highest point being 145 m AOD, falling to 125 m on the southern boundary. The two blocks of non-agricultural land shown on the map are present quarry workings. All the agricultural land is grass leys.

**5. GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

The published one inch scale solid and drift geology map, sheet 343 (Geological Survey of England and Wales 1976) shows the entire site to comprise Purbeck beds.

The Soil Survey of England and Wales mapped the soils of the area in 1983, at a reconnaissance scale of 1:250,000. This map shows the soils at the site to comprise the Sherbourne Association. This soil is described as brashy calcareous clayey soils over limestone, associated with slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils.

The soils found in the recent survey show evidence of restricted drainage. In the north of the site this is caused by slowly permeable layers high in the profile, while to the south no slowly permeable layers were found. In this area the soils were also stony at depth.

The recent survey indicates deep clay profiles occur across the whole of the site, however in the northern and eastern parts the soils are relatively stone free to a depth of 80 cm, below which approximately 10% limestone is found. These profiles show evidence of impeded drainage. Soils in the central area of the site are moderately stony (30% limestone) from a depth of 40-60 cm, below which are slightly stony clays. All stone contents were measured by sieving a sample then visually estimating the percentage of stones.

**6. AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION**

The distribution of ALC grades identified in the survey area is detailed below and illustrated on the accompanying ALC map. The information is correct at the scale shown but any enlargement would be misleading.

**Table 2    Distribution of ALC grades:    Acton**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>% of Survey Area</b>	<b>% of Agricultural Land</b>
3B	13.9	46.0	60.6
4	9.05	30.0	39.4
Non Agric	7.3	24.0	—
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30.25</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100% (22.95 ha)</b>

**Subgrade 3b**

Approximately half the site has been graded 3b. These soils have been assessed as wetness classes I and II. The clay topsoil textures impose a limit to the times in a year when farming operations can be carried out without causing damage to the soil structure. Thus these soils have a moderately severe workability limitation and so are graded 3b.

**Grade 4**

This grade relates to soils where the drainage of water is severely impeded due to a slowly permeable layer starting within 40 cm. These soils have been assessed as wetness class IV indicative of the severe wetness limitation on the land and is thus graded 4.

## APPENDIX 1

### REFERENCES

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF ENGLAND AND WALES (1976) Solid and Drift edition. Sheet 343 1:50,000 scale

MAFF (1973) Agricultural Land Classification Map Sheet 179 Provisional 1:63,360 scale

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

METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE (1989) Published climatic data extracted from the agroclimatic dataset, compiled by the Meteorological Office

SOIL SURVEY OF ENGLAND AND WALES (1983) Sheet 5 Soils of South West England 1:250,000 scale

## APPENDIX 2

### 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 include 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 most 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 park land, public open spaces, sports fields, allotments and soft-surfaced areas on airports/airfields. Also active mineral workings and refuse tips where restoration conditions to 'soft' after-uses may apply.

### **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.

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

## APPENDIX 3

### DEFINITION OF SOIL WETNESS CLASSES

#### Wetness Class I

The soil profile is not wet within 70 cm depth for more than 30 days in most years.

#### Wetness Class 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 not wet within 40 cm depth for more than 30 days in most years.

#### Wetness Class 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 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 and 90 days in most years.

#### Wetness Class IV

The soil profile is wet within 70 cm depth for more than 180 days but not within 40 cm depth for more than 210 days in most years *or*, if there is no slowly permeable layer within 80 cm depth, it is wet within 40 cm depth for 91-210 days in most years.

#### Wetness Class V

The soil profile is wet within 40 cm depth for 211-335 days in most years.

#### Wetness Class VI

The soil profile is wet within 40 cm depth for more than 335 days in most years.

**Notes:** The number of days specified is not necessarily a continuous period. 'In most years' is defined as more than 10 out of 20 years.

**Source:** Hodgson, J M (in preparation) Soil Survey Field Handbook (revised edition).

SITE NAME	PROFILE NO.	SLOPE AND ASPECT	LAND USE	Av Rainfall: 916 mm	PARENT MATERIAL
Acton	Pit 1	0°	Permanent grazing on edge of quarry face	ATO: 1428°C	Middle Purbeck
JOB NO.	DATE	GRID REFERENCE	DESCRIBED BY	FC Days: 186	SOIL SAMPLE REFERENCE
36/93	1/7/93	SY 988 781	N A Done	Climatic Grade: 1	-

Horizon Number	Lowest Av Depth (cm)	Matrix and Ped Face Colours	Texture	Stoniness: Size, Shape, Type, and Field Method	Mottling Abundance, Contrast, Size and Colour	Structure: Development Size and Shape	Pores and Fissures	Structural Condition	Consistence	Roots: Abundance, Size and Nature	Calcium Carbonate Content	Mangan Concs etc	Horizon Boundary: Distinctness and form
1	30	2.5Y54	C	2% >2cm HR	No mottles	Mod DCSAB	Porous	-	Firm	Many fine	Slightly	None	Smooth/gradual
2	70	2.5Y53	C	None	CDOM 10YR56/58	Mod dev CAB	<0.5% biopores	P	Firm	Common fine roots (mainly ex-ped)	None	None	Smooth/abrupt
3	80	2.5Y62	C	10% SLST +10% <2cm chalk st.	MDOM 10YR58	Mod dev CSAB	<0.5%	Moderate	Friable	Few fine	V calc	None	Smooth/abrupt
4	120	2.5Y62/60	C	10% Est	CDOM 10YR68	Mod dev VCPL	<0.5%	P	Friable	Few fine	None	None	-

Profile Gleyed From: 30  
Depth to Slowly Permeable Horizon: 30  
Wetness Class: IV  
Wetness Grade: 4

Available Water Wheat: 125 mm  
Potatoes: 102 mm  
Moisture Deficit Wheat: 98 mm  
Potatoes: 89 mm  
Moisture Balance Wheat: +27 mm  
Potatoes: +13 mm  
Droughtiness Grade: 2 (Calculated to 120 cm)

Final ALC Grade: 4  
Main Limiting Factor(s): Wetness

Remarks:  
Quarry face <2 m had horizon of flaggy st extending from 40 cm to 60 cm (30% st).

SITE NAME		PROFILE NO.		SLOPE AND ASPECT		LAND USE		Av Rainfall: 916 mm			PARENT MATERIAL		
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JOB NO.		DATE		GRID REFERENCE		DESCRIBED BY		FC Days: 186			SOIL SAMPLE REFERENCE		
36/93		1/7/93		SY 988 781		N A Done		Climatic Grade: 1			-		
Horizon Number	Lowest Av Depth (cm)	Matrix and Ped Face Colours	Texture	Stoniness: Size, Shape, Type, and Field Method	Mottling Abundance, Contrast, Size and Colour	Structure: Development Size and Shape	Pores and Fissures	Structural Condition	Consistence	Roots: Abundance, Size and Nature	Calcium Carbonate Content	Mangan Concs etc	Horizon Boundary: Distinctness and form
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