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**NEWBURY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN  
LAND AT HILL CRESCENT,  
WOOLHAMPTON, BERKSHIRE**

**Agricultural Land Classification**

**July 1996**

**Resource Planning Team  
Guildford Statutory Group  
ADAS Reading**

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**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT**  
**LAND AT HILL CRESCENT, WOOLHAMPTON, BERKSHIRE**

**Introduction**

1. This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 0.6 ha of land to the west of Hill Crescent, on the northern edge of Woolhampton in Berkshire. The survey was carried out during July 1996.
2. The survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Land Use Planning Unit, Reading, in connection with its statutory input to the preparation of the Newbury District Local Plan. This survey supersedes previous ALC surveys on this land.
3. The work was conducted by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Guildford Statutory Group in ADAS. 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 use on the site was permanent grass.

**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 fieldwork was conducted at an average density of 2 borings per hectare. A total of 2 borings and 1 soil pits were described.
7. All of the site has been classified as Subgrade 3b, moderate quality agricultural land, as a result of a significant soil wetness limitation. Clay topsoils overlie clay subsoils which show evidence of shallow wetness due to the poorly structured nature of the subsoils.

**Factors Influencing ALC Grade**

*Climate*

8. Climate affects the grading of land through the assessment of an overall climatic limitation and also through interactions with soil characteristics.
9. The key climatic variables used for grading this site are given in Table 2 and were obtained from the published 5km grid datasets using the standard interpolation procedures (Met. Office, 1989).

Table 2: Climatic and altitude data

Factor	Units	Values
Grid reference	N/A	SU 572 670
Altitude	m, AOD	65
Accumulated Temperature	day°C (Jan-June)	1455
Average Annual Rainfall	mm	698
Field Capacity Days	days	149
Moisture Deficit, Wheat	mm	109
Moisture Deficit, Potatoes	mm	102

10. The 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.

11. The main parameters used in the assessment of an overall climatic limitation are average annual rainfall (AAR), as a measure of overall wetness, and accumulated temperature (AT0, January to June), as a measure of the relative warmth of a locality.

12. The combination of rainfall and temperature at this site mean that there is no overall climatic limitation. Local climatic factors such as frost risk or exposure are also not thought to be significant. The site is climatically Grade 1.

#### *Site*

13. The site lies at an altitude of 65-70 metres and slopes gently south west. There are no site limitation such as gradient, microrelief or flooding present.

#### *Geology and soils*

14. The most detailed published geological information for the site (BGS, 1971) shows the area to be underlain by London Clay.

15. The most detailed published soils information for the site (SSEW, 1975) shows the area to comprise stagnogleys, mostly soils of the Wickham Series, described as "clayey or loamy over clayey soils...with drainage impeded at moderate depths by an impermeable layer".

#### **Agricultural Land Classification**

16. The details of the classification of the site are shown on the attached ALC map.

17. The locations of the auger borings and the soil pit are shown on the attached sample location map and the details of the soils data are presented in Appendix III.

*Subgrade 3b*

18. All of the site has been placed in this grade due to a significant soil wetness limitation. Pit 1 is typical of the soils on the site and describes a profile with a clay topsoil overlying a clay subsoil which is slowly permeable. Gleying occurs right from the surface and the subsoil structure was assessed as massive. The soils fall into Wetness Class IV (see Appendix II) and this, combined with the field capacity level of the site (149 days) and the very heavy nature of the topsoil, means that this land cannot be classified better than Subgrade 3b. This degree of wetness reduces the land's flexibility due to the reduction in the number of days when the soil is in a suitable condition for cultivation, trafficking by machinery or grazing by livestock.

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## SOURCES OF REFERENCE

British Geological Survey (1971) *Sheet No.268, Reading*.  
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 (1975) *Soils of Berkshire*.  
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.

## APPENDIX II

### SOIL WETNESS CLASSIFICATION

#### Definitions of Soil Wetness Classes

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.

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Wetness Class	Duration of waterlogging <sup>1</sup>
I	The soil profile is not wet within 70 cm depth for more than 30 days in most years. <sup>2</sup>
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.

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#### Assessment of Wetness Class

Soils have been allocated to wetness classes by the interpretation of soil profile characteristics and climatic factors using the methodology described in *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land* (MAFF, 1988).

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<sup>1</sup> The number of days is not necessarily a continuous period.

<sup>2</sup> 'In most years' is defined as more than 10 out of 20 years.

**APPENDIX III**

**SOIL DATA**

**Contents:**

**Sample location map**

**Soil abbreviations - Explanatory Note**

**Soil Pit Descriptions**

**Soil boring descriptions (boring and horizon levels)**

**Database Printout - Horizon Level Information**





SAMPLE	DEPTH	TEXTURE	COLOUR	----MOTTLES-----			PED	----STONES----				STRUCT/	SUBS				
				COL	ABUN	CONT	COL.	GLE	>2	>6	LITH	TOT	CONSIST	STR	POR	IMP	SPL
1	0-25	c	10yr42-00	00oc00-	C			Y	0	0	0						
	25-60	c	10yr53-00	00oc00-	M			Y	0	0	0		P	Y		Y	
1P	0-25	c	10yr42-00	75yr58-	C			Y	0	0	hr	1					
	25-60	c	10yr53-00	75yr58-	M			Y	0	0	hr	1	mass	vm	P	Y	Y
2	0-25	c	10yr42-00	00oc00-	C			Y	0	0	0						
	25-60	c	10yr53-00	00oc00-	M			Y	0	0	0		P	Y		Y	

SOIL PIT DESCRIPTION

Site Name : WOOLHAMPTON SITE A                      Pit Number : 1P

Grid Reference: SU572670      Average Annual Rainfall : 698 mm  
   Accumulated Temperature : 1455 degree days  
   Field Capacity Level      : 149 days  
   Land Use                      : Permanent Grass  
   Slope and Aspect            : 3 degrees SW

HORIZON	TEXTURE	COLOUR	STONES >2	TOT.STONE	LITH	MOTTLES	STRUCTURE	CONSIST	SUBSTRUCTURE	CALC
0- 25	C	10yr42-00	0	1	hr	C				
25- 60	C	10yr53-00	0	1	hr	M	mass	vm	P	

Wetness Grade : 3B                      Wetness Class            : IV  
   Gleying                    : 000 cm  
   SPL                         : No SPL

Drought Grade :                      APW :    mm    MBW :    0 mm  
   APP :    mm    MBP :    0 mm

FINAL ALC GRADE : 3B  
MAIN LIMITATION : Wetness

## 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.

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

3. **GRDNT:** Gradient as estimated or measured by a hand-held optical clinometer.
4. **GLEYSPL:** 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.

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

## Soil Pits and Auger Borings

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

<b>S:</b> Sand	<b>LS:</b> Loamy Sand	<b>SL:</b> Sandy Loam
<b>SZL:</b> Sandy Silt Loam	<b>CL:</b> Clay Loam	<b>ZCL:</b> Silty Clay Loam
<b>ZL:</b> Silt Loam	<b>SCL:</b> Sandy Clay Loam	<b>C:</b> Clay
<b>SC:</b> Sandy Clay	<b>ZC:</b> Silty Clay	<b>OL:</b> Organic Loam
<b>P:</b> Peat	<b>SP:</b> Sandy Peat	<b>LP:</b> Loamy Peat
<b>PL:</b> Peaty Loam	<b>PS:</b> Peaty Sand	<b>MZ:</b> 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:

<b>F:</b> Fine (more than 66% of the sand less than 0.2mm)
<b>M:</b> Medium (less than 66% fine sand and less than 33% coarse sand)
<b>C:</b> 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. **GLEYS:** 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.

<b>HR:</b> all hard rocks and stones	<b>SLST:</b> soft oolitic or dolimitic limestone
<b>CH:</b> chalk	<b>FSST:</b> soft, fine grained sandstone
<b>ZR:</b> soft, argillaceous, or silty rocks	<b>GH:</b> gravel with non-porous (hard) stones
<b>MSST:</b> soft, medium grained sandstone	<b>GS:</b> gravel with porous (soft) stones
<b>SI:</b> 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 appropriate 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