WEST LANCASHIRE LOCAL PLAN
Objection 0103/002
Agricultural Land Classification
ALC Map and Report
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AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT
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INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey on 19.6 hectares of land. The results of this survey supersede any previous ALC information for this land. The land is located to the east of Birkdale, Southport. The survey was in connection with the West Lancashire Local Plan.

2. The survey was undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in July and September 1997 by the Resource Planning Team of the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA)- Northern region of FRCA.

3. The land has been graded in accordance with the publication "Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land" (MAFF 1988) .

4. At the time of survey the agricultural land on this site was under grass, horticultural crops and cereals.

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 with an average auger boring density of 1 per hectare. The ALC map is only accurate at this base map scale and 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	13.9	100	71
3b	-	-	-
4	-	-	-
5	-	-	-
Agricultural land not surveyed	-	N/A	-
Other land	5.7	N/A	29
Total surveyed area	13.9	100	-
Total site area	19.6	-	100

7. The agricultural land on this site has been classified as Subgrade 3a (good quality). The key limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil wetness.

8. The area of good quality land is located over the majority of the site. The soils have either a sandy peat or an organic sandy clay loam texture over sandy clay loam and silty clay loam.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ALC GRADE

Climate

9. Climate affects the grading of land through the assessment of an overall climatic limitation and also through interactions with soil characteristics.

10. The key climatic variables used for grading this site are given in Table 2 and were obtained from the published 5km grid datasets using standard interpolation procedures (Meteorological Office, 1989).

Table 2: Climatic and altitude data

Factor	Units	Values
Grid reference	N/A	SD 342 148
Altitude	m, AOD	5
Accumulated Temperature	day°C (Jan-June)	1443
Average Annual Rainfall	mm	858
Field Capacity Days	days	195
Moisture Deficit, Wheat	mm	89
Moisture Deficit, Potatoes	mm	76
Overall climatic grade	N/A	Grade 1

11. 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.

12. 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 (ATO, January to June), as a measure of the relative warmth of a locality.

13. The combination of rainfall and temperature at this site means that there is no overall climatic limitation. The site is climatically Grade 1.

Site

14. The site lies at an altitude of approximately 5 metres AOD.

15. The three site factors of gradient, microrelief and flooding are considered when classifying the land.

16. These factors do not impose any limitations on the agricultural use of this land.

Geology and Soils

17. The solid geology of the area is comprised of Mercia Mudstone. This is overlain with deposits of peat and Downholland Silt - British Geological Survey (1989).

18. The soils that have developed on this geology are generally of a peaty or an organic sandy clay loam texture over sandy clay loam and silty clay loam.

Agricultural Land Classification

19. The details of the classification of the site are shown on the enclosed ALC map and the area statistics of each grade are given in Table 1, page 1.

Subgrade 3a

20. Land of good quality occupies 13.9 hectares (71%) of the site area.

21. In the south of the site the soil has an organic sandy clay loam topsoil over silty clay and sandy clay loam to depth. These soils are placed in Wetness Class III.

22. In the north and west of the site the soil has either a sandy peat or an organic sandy loam topsoil texture over peat, silty clay loam and sandy silt loam to depth. These soils are placed in Wetness Class III.

23. There are isolated borings of Grade 2 quality in this unit which cannot be illustrated separately at this scale of mapping.

24. The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil wetness.

Other Land

25. Other land occupies 5.7 hectares (29%) of the site area and includes allotments, Long Acres Farm and derelict land.

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SOURCES OF REFERENCE

British Geological Survey (1989) Sheet 74, Southport Solid and Drift Edition.
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.

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