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Maidstone Borough Local Plan
Site 33 Land at Back Lane,
Chart Sutton
Agricultural Land Classification
ALC Map and Report
October 1994

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN SITE 33 LAND AT BACK LANE, CHART SUTTON

1 Summary

- 1.1 ADAS was commissioned by MAFF's Land Use Planning Unit to provide information on land quality for a number of sites in the borough of Maidstone in Kent. The work forms part of MAFF's statutory input to the preparation of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
- 1.2 Site 33 comprises 0.3 hectares of land to the north of Back Lane in the village of Chart Sutton. An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey was carried out during October 1994. The survey was undertaken at a detailed level of approximately nine borings per hectare. A total of 3 borings 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 the survey all of the land on the site comprised unmanaged rough grassland.
- 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 1:10,000. It is accurate at this scale but any enlargement would be misleading. This map supersedes any previous survey information for this site.

Table 1 Distribution of Grades and Subgrades

Grade	Area (ha)	% of Site
2	0.3	100%
Total area of site	<u>0.3</u>	<u>100%</u>

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

- 1 7 All of the land on the site has been classified as Subgrade 3a good quality land with soil droughtiness as the main limitation. Soil profiles typically comprise a medium clay loam which becomes heavier and moderately stony with depth. These soils show a restriction on the profile available water such that a classification of Subgrade 3a is appropriate.

2 Climate

- 2 1 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.
- 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 gridpoint 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. However the field capacity days for the site are relatively low in a national context and therefore the likelihood of any soil wetness problems may be decreased.
- 2 4 No local climatic factors such as exposure or frost risk are believed to affect the site.

Table 2 Climatic Interpolation

Grid Reference	TQ 790 504
Altitude (m)	105
Accumulated Temperature (degree days Jan June)	1389
Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	693
Field Capacity (days)	143
Moisture Deficit Wheat (mm)	110
Moisture Deficit Potatoes (mm)	103
Overall Climatic Grade	1

3 Relief

- 3 1 The site is flat lying at an altitude of approximately 105m AOD.

4 Geology and Soils

- 4 1 The relevant geological sheet (BGS 1976) shows the entire site to be underlain by head deposits
- 4 2 The published Soil Survey map (SSEW 1983) shows the soils on the site to comprise those of the Marlow association. These are described as 'well drained fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils. Some coarse and fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (SSEW 1983)
- 4 3 Detailed field examination found the soils on the site to comprise loamy textures becoming stony and clayey with depth and impenetrable over sandy limestone at variable depths

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 All of the land on the site has been classified as Subgrade 3a with soil droughtiness as the key limitation. Soil profiles typically comprise a very slightly stony (5% total hard limestone) topsoil overlying a slightly stony (10% total hard limestone) heavy clay loam upper subsoil extending to a depth of approximately 55cm. Subsoils were found to be impenetrable to the auger at depths of 50 and 70cm due to the presence of hard sandy limestone. Soil pits described elsewhere in the area indicate that soils commonly pass into hard sandy limestone at this depth. Where the profile proved deeper the lower subsoil was found to comprise a moderately stony clay (containing 20% total hard limestone). Profiles tend to be well drained and are assigned to Wetness Class I. However the combination of soil textures, stone contents and the local climatic regime means that there is a restriction on the amount of profile available water which in turn will have an affect upon the level and consistency of crop yields. Therefore a classification of Subgrade 3a is appropriate due to a moderate droughtiness limitation. It should be noted that an isolated soil observation in the south west of the site comprised a different and more poorly drained soil type of lower quality. However this is not considered sufficiently significant to warrant mapping as a separate unit

ADAS Ref 2007/223/94
MAFF Ref EL 20/328

Resource Planning Team
Guildford Statutory Group
ADAS Reading

SOURCES OF REFERENCE

British Geological Survey (1976) Sheet No 288 Maidstone 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

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 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 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.

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

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

APPENDIX III

SOIL PIT AND SOIL BORING DESCRIPTIONS

Contents

Soil Abbreviations - Explanatory Note

Soil Pit Descriptions

Database Printout - Boring Level Information

Database Printout - Horizon Level Information

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 **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:

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 **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

HR	all hard rocks and stones	SLST	soft oolitic or dolomitic 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 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

SAMPLE NO	GRID REF	ASPECT USE	--WETNESS--		-WHEAT		-POTS-		M REL		EROSN EXP	FROST DIST	CHEM LIMIT	ALC	COMMENTS	
			GRDNT	GLEYS	CLASS	GRADE	AP	MB	AP	MB						DRT
1	TQ79025034	RGR			1	1	074	-37	074	-29	3B			DR	3A	IMPEN 50
2	TQ79045032	RGR			1	1	098	13	107	4	3A			DR	3A	IMPEN 75
3	TQ79005033	RGR	S29	029	4	3B		0		0				WE	3B	

SAMPLE	DEPTH	TEXTURE	COLOUR	-- MOTTLES		- PED		----STONES--		STRUCT/	SUBS	SPL	CALC
				COL	ABUN	CONT	COL	GLEY	>2				
1	0-27	mc1	10YR42 00					0	0	HR	5		IMP
	27-50	hc1	10YR54 68					0	0	HR	10	M	SANDY LIMESTONE
2	0-30	mc1	10YR42 00					0	0	HR	10		Y
	30-55	hc1	10YR54 68					0	0	HR	10	M	IMP
	55-75	c	10YR54 68					0	0	HR	20	M	SANDY LIMESTONE
3	0-29	hc1	10YR42 00					0	0	HR	5		
	29-60	c	05YR56 00	05YR58	00	C		S	0	0	HR	10	P