

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

LICHFIELD LOCAL PLAN, ELFORD

Summary

The Elford site comprises 168.6 ha of which 160.4 ha is agricultural land. Of this land 1.25% is grade 1, 9.7% grade 2, 28% grade 3a and 60.86% grade 3b. The soils are mostly clayey and the major agricultural limitation is wetness. Other land consists of 2.5 ha of non-agricultural land, which includes farm tracks, 1.7 ha of woodland, 3.7 ha of agricultural buildings and 0.3 ha of open water.

Introduction

The Elford site is located 1km south of the village of Elford and is bounded to the west by the A513 Tamworth Road. The site was surveyed by the Resource Planning Team in May 1993 to provide information for the Lichfield Local Plan. A grid survey method was used at a scale of 1:25000 with a sampling density of 1 per 4 hectares. Final mapping was at a scale of 1:25000 and enlargements of the map would not be accurate.

At the time of survey the southern portion of the site was under cereals and oilseed rape, while north of Upfields Farm the land was under grass to be cut for silage and used for grazing.

Climate

The average altitude of the site is 62m and the average annual rainfall within the vicinity of the site is 639mm. The accumulated temperature above 0°C for January to June is 1405 day °C. There are no climatic limitations to the agricultural use of the site.

Relief

The site mostly consists of a low-lying and nearly level basin above which rise three areas of higher ground; around Elfordlow Farm, in the north corner of the site and in the south-east around Birdsley Farm. Slopes are gentle and gradient is not limiting.

Geology and Soil

The solid geology of the site is predominantly Red Marl with sandy beds. In the north part of the site this has been mantled by boulder clay. The south western margin consists of terrace deposits.

The soils developed on the Red Marls have clay textured subsoils with a slowly permeable layer. The topsoils are mostly heavy clay loams, however an area of lighter textured topsoils occurs in the centre of the site, west and north of Birdsley Farm. Over the boulder clay the soils are more varied. Along the low lying ground near to

the stream heavy clay loams overlie gleyed grey clays, while on the hill in the north east corner the red clay subsoils are overlain by lighter textured topsoils. At the western margin of this hill medium sandy loams overlie sandy clay loams. On the hill top around Elfordlow Farm the soils are sandy loams over sand with sandy clay at depth. On the hill slopes the soils are sandy clay loams over red clays.

Over the terrace deposits there again is variation in soil type. In the south west heavy clay loams and clays overlie gleyed, brown clays while on the western margin around Mere Pits Cottages sandy clay loams overlie stony sand subsoils. Below the terrace peaty horizons occur in the subsoil with peat soils occurring west of the A513.

The major soil limitations to agriculture are wetness on the clay soils and peats and droughtiness on the sandy soils.

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Grade 1

This grade is limited to 1.2% of the site and is restricted to a narrow band at the north end. The soils are sandy loams over sandy clay loams with a low stone content. There are no limitations to the agricultural use of land in this grade.

Grade 2

This grade covers 9.2% of the site. The largest extent occurs on the slopes of the hill below Elfordlow Farm where the soils are sandy clay loams over clays. A smaller area of this grade occurs on the peat soils on the western edge of the site. The main limitation to the agricultural use of the land is wetness.

Sub-grade 3a

This grade covers 26.8% of the site and occurs in four areas. The most extensive area is towards the centre of the site where sandy and medium clay loams overlie clays. Similar soils occur on the hill at the north end of the site. Wetness is the major limitation to agriculture in these areas.

The next most extensive area of this grade occurs on the hill top around Elfordlow Farm where the soils are sandy loams over sand and slightly to moderately stony. Droughtiness is the major limitation to agricultural use. The fourth area of this grade occurs as a narrow strip along the western boundary. The soils are clay loams over moderately stony sands and soil droughtiness is the major factor limiting agricultural use.

Sub-grade 3b

This is the most extensive grade on the site and covers 57.9% of the area. The soils are predominantly red clays with heavy clay loam topsoils, except for gleyed grey clays along the watercourse in the north of the site. Wetness is the major agricultural limitation throughout this grade.

Land not in agriculture

Non-agricultural land is restricted to farm tracks and an area around a pond at the north end of the site. Woodland is restricted to an area around Upfields Farm.

Grade/Sub-grade	Area (ha)	% of agricultural land	% of total land
1	1.99	1.25	1.18
2	15.56	9.70	9.23
3a	45.20	28.19	26.82
3b	97.59	60.86	57.89
Non agricultural	2.53		1.49
Woodland	1.68		0.99
Agricultural buildings	3.66		2.17
Open water	<u>0.34</u>		
TOTAL	168.55		

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