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Ministry of
Agriculture
Fisheries
and Food

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Newbury District Local Plan
Site 24: Stretton Close,
Southend, Bradfield
Agricultural Land Classification
ALC Map and Summary Report
February 1994

**NEWBURY DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN
SITE 24: STRETTON CLOSE, SOUTHEND, BRADFIELD
AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION, SUMMARY REPORT**

1. Summary

- 1.1 ADAS was commissioned by MAFF's Land Use Planning Unit to provide information on agricultural land quality for a number of sites in the Newbury District of Berkshire. The work forms part of MAFF's statutory input to the preparation of the Newbury District Local Plan.
- 1.2 Site 24 comprises 1.0 hectare of land in the village of Southend, near Bradfield in Berkshire. An Agricultural Land Classification, (ALC), survey was carried out during February 1994, 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 long term limitations on its use for agriculture.
- 1.3 At the time of survey the site was found to be entirely non-agricultural, comprising areas of scrub and a building site.
- 1.4 Appendix 1 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.

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ADAS Reading

APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTION OF THE GRADES AND SUBGRADES

The ALC grades and subgrades are described below in terms of the types of limitation which can occur, typical cropping range and the expected level and consistency of yield. In practice, the grades are defined by reference to physical characteristics and the grading guidance and cut-offs for limitation factors in Section 3 enable land to be ranked in accordance with these general descriptions. The most productive and flexible land falls into Grades 1 and 2 and Subgrade 3a and collectively comprises about one-third of the agricultural land in England and Wales. About half the land is of moderate quality in Subgrade 3b or poor quality in Grade 4. Although less significant on a national scale such land can be locally valuable to agriculture and the rural economy where poorer farmland predominates. The remainder is very poor quality land in Grade 5, which mostly occurs in the uplands.

Descriptions are also given of other land categories which may be used on ALC maps.

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 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 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 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 parkland, 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.

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 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.