VERIFICATION REPORT FOR SANDYFORTH FARM ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD, NEAR WIGAN

S. KANGH
Resource Planning Team
ADAS Statutory Group
Wolverhampton

ADAS Reference 25/RPT/0759
Job Number 141/95
MAFF Reference EL44/11093

VERIFICATION REPORT FOR SANDYFORTH FARM ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD, NEAR WIGAN

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ADAS Statutory have been commissioned to carry out a desk verification of the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) report prepared by ADAS Commercial for Sandyforth Farm, Ashton-In-Makerfield, Near Wigan.

1.2 The 60.1 ha area is a proposed open cast coal site.

1.3 In December 1995, ADAS Statutory received an ALC report from ADAS Commercial for the site dated September 1995.

1.4 This verification is purely a desk exercise and no fieldwork by ADAS Statutory has been carried out in order to confirm the findings presented by ADAS Commercial, for this reason only the way the soil data has been used within the ALC system by ADAS Commercial can be assessed.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 The report presented by ADAS Commercial, dated September 1995, showed the site to be Grade 2, Subgrades 3a and 3b, with Subgrade 3b covering 79.1% of the site.

2.2 From the limited information provided in the auger boring schedule of the report, ADAS Statutory would consider a larger area of Subgrade 3a to be present than mapped by ADAS Commercial. To confirm this a detailed ALC survey would have to be undertaken on this site by ADAS Statutory.

3.0 VERIFICATION

3.1 The auger boring schedule given (Appendix 2 of the ADAS commercial report) does not include information on Munsell Soil Colours, which are required to verify gleyed horizons. Munsell Soil Colours are given for the 3 pits dug to determine subsoil characteristics. ADAS Statutory have interpolated these colours across to the auger boring details.

3.2 ADAS Commercial have assumed profiles with medium clay loam (MCL) and sandy clay loam (SCL) textures are slowly permeable. From experience of ADAS Statutory the presence of a slowly permeable layer would have to be confirmed from soil pit observations. This could well be the case where the soils are said to be restored but elsewhere over the site these textures could not be assumed to be slowly permeable. The absence of a slowly permeable layer would place the land in a higher grade.

3.3 Information is lacking for areas of the site where the auger borings did not reach 1 metres depth. ADAS Commercial appear to have made several assumptions in these areas with regard to the likely soil profile and the permeability of the lower horizon. ADAS Statutory consider it necessary to dig representative soil pits in these locations in order to ascertain the nature of the soil profile beyond the depth to which the area had previously been augured.

3.4 Access to 2 discrete areas within the site boundary had not been granted and for this reason the following auger borings were not carried out by ADAS Commercial: 35, 36, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48 and 53. These areas appear on the final ALC map as Subgrade 3b based on interpolated information from surrounding borings (page 1 of the report). This area of Subgrade 3b adjoins areas of grade 2 and Subgrade 3a. Further boring information is required.

3.5 Page 2 paragraph 2.2 of the ADAS Commercial Report states that an area of non-agricultural land use is found in the South West corner of the site, this area appears as urban on the final ALC map. As this land is used for soil storage, ADAS Statutory would have to investigate this area further.

3.6 Page 2 paragraph 2.3 of the ADAS Commercial Report refers to the climate and relief. The number of points used to collect the relevant climatic data has not been detailed. The altitude of the site is said within the report (Page 3) to range from 100m (AOD) to 90m (AOD). On examination by ADAS Statutory of the relevant Ordnance Survey maps the site altitude was found to range from 90m (AOD) to 115m (AOD) .

3.7 Within the ADAS Commercial report no sources are detailed for the geology and soils information. Details of the drift geology are lacking. ADAS Statutory used geology sheet 84 Wigan 1 inch to 1 mile which showed the drift geology to be boulder, clay and middle coal measures and the solid geology to be Middle Carboniferous Coal Measures.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The ALC grades given for borings 35, 36, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48 and 53 are in areas of Subgrade 3b. These areas were in effect not surveyed by ADAS Commercial. ADAS Statutory consider that these areas should have been mapped as "not surveyed".

4.2 From the limited information available, a greater area of the site i.e. 20 ha in total is present as Subgrade 3a. A previous survey carried out by MAFF Resource Planning Group in 1984 over the north western corner of this site mapped the land as predominantly Subgrade 3a. This area has been surveyed by ADAS Commercial and mapped as Subgrade 3b.

4.3 This commission has only been a desk appraisal. To validate soil data and ALC grades accurately a full detailed ALC survey is recommended.

S. KANGH
Resource Planning Team
ADAS Statutory Group
Wolverhampton
January 1996