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Maidstone Borough Local Plan
Site 15 Land at Lime Farm,
Heath Rd, Boughton Monchelsea
Agricultural Land Classification
ALC Map and Report
July 1994

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

SITE 15 LIME FARM, HEATH ROAD, BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA

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 Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
- 1.2 The site comprises approximately 7 hectares of land south of Heath Road at Boughton Monchelsea in Kent. An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey was carried out in July 1994. The survey was undertaken at a detailed level of approximately one boring per hectare. A total of 5 borings and two soil inspection pits were assessed 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 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 the majority of the agricultural land on the site was under permanent grassland with a small area of ploughed land in the north. The land marked as urban includes foundations for a building. The area marked as woodland includes a chestnut coppice in the west of the site. The agricultural building marked is a hay store.
- 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.

Table 1 Distribution of Grades and Subgrades

Grade	Area (ha)	% of Site	% of Agricultural Land
3a	2.9	40.3	100%
Woodland	4.3	59.7	
Urban	<0.1	0.0	
Agricultural buildings	<0.1	0.0	
Total area of Site	<u>7.2</u>	<u>100%</u>	

- 1.6 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.

1 7 All of the agricultural land on the site has been classified as Subgrade 3a with soil droughtiness and wetness as the main limitations. Soil profiles typically comprise silty clay loam textures that become stonier with depth, proving impenetrable to the auger in some cases. Subsoil stone contents vary across the site, being commonly more stony in the south. The clay lower subsoil in the north of the site is slowly permeable, causing a moderate drainage imperfection. Soil textures and stone contents throughout the site mean that there is an overall restriction on the amount of profile available water, such that a classification of Subgrade 3a is appropriate due to moderate droughtiness limitation.

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 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.

2 4 However, climatic and soil factors do interact to influence soil wetness and droughtiness limitations. The field capacity days for this site are relatively low in a national context, therefore the likelihood of any soil wetness problems will be decreased.

Table 2 Climatic Interpolation

Grid Reference	TQ 769507
Altitude (m AOD)	110
Accumulated Temperature (°days Jan June)	1383
Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	706
Field Capacity Days	143
Moisture deficit wheat (mm)	111
Moisture deficit potatoes (mm)	104
Overall Climatic Grade	1

3 Relief

3 1 The site is relatively flat, lying at an altitude of about 110-115 metres. Nowhere on the site do gradient or relief pose any limitation to agricultural use.

4 Geology and Soils

- 4.1 The published geological information (BGS 1976) shows the entire site to be underlain by Head
- 4.2 The published soils information (SSEW 1983) shows the site to be underlain by soils 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 slight seasonal waterlogging (SSEW 1983). Detailed field examination broadly confirms this although profiles were found to be stonier than as described.

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 agricultural land on the site has been classified as Subgrade 3a good quality land with soil droughtiness and wetness as the main limitations. There are some variations in soil profiles across the site particularly with regards to stone contents. The relatively high stone contents that do exist on this site mean that droughtiness is the overall limiting factor. Soil augerings in some areas did prove impenetrable at reasonably shallow depths therefore two soil inspection pits were dug to assess the nature of the subsoil. Pit no 1 is typical of the more stony profiles that occur on the site. A moderately stony (8% > 2cm 17% total flints v/v) medium silty clay loam topsoil overlies a similar textured upper subsoil (containing 35% total flints v/v) extending to 45cm. This in turn rests upon a very stony (40% total flints v/v) heavy silty clay loam horizon extending to 56 cm. The lower subsoil consists of a clay containing 30% total flints. The profile is gleyed from below the topsoil and is accordingly placed into Wetness Class II. The combination of soil textures, structural conditions and stone contents means that there is a moderate restriction on the amount of profile available water for plant growth. The consequent restriction that this will have upon crop yields means that a classification of Subgrade 3a is appropriate. Pit no 2 in the north of the site shows similar textures albeit of a less stony nature. This is of particular relevance when considering the slightly gleyed clay subsoil which has a lower stone content and is slowly permeable. Such drainage characteristics equate this profile to Wetness Class III with a resultant classification of Subgrade 3a. Poorly drained soils restrict plant and root development and may be more susceptible to damage through poaching by grazing livestock or trafficking by agricultural machinery.

ADAS Ref 2007/163/94
MAFF Ref EL20/328

Resource Planning Team
Guildford Statutory Group
ADAS Reading

SOURCES OF REFERENCE

British Geological Survey (1976) Sheet 288 Maidstone 1 50 000 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) Climatic datasets for Agricultural Land Classification

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) Sheet No 6 Soils of South East England 1 250 000 and Accompanying Legend

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1984) Soils and their use in South East England Bulletin No 15

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 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 GLEY 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 dolimitic 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)

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		

- 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

SOIL PIT DESCRIPTION

Site Name MAIDSTONE LP SITE 15 Pit Number 1P

Grid Reference TQ76905060 Average Annual Rainfall 706 mm
 Accumulated Temperature 1383 degree days
 Field Capacity Level 143 days
 Land Use Permanent Grass
 Slope and Aspect degrees

HORIZON	TEXTURE	COLOUR	STONES >2	TOT STONE	LITH	MOTTLES	STRUCTURE	CONSIST	SUBSTRUCTURE	CALC
0- 29	MZCL	00ZZ00 00	0	17	HR					
29- 45	MZCL	00ZZ00 00	0	35	HR				M	
45- 56	HZCL	00ZZ00 00	0	40	HR				M	
56-120	C	00ZZ00 00	0	30	HR				M	

Wetness Grade 1 Wetness Class I
 Gleying cm
 SPL cm
 Drought Grade 3A APW 110mm MBW -1 mm
 APP 92 mm MBP -12 mm

FINAL ALC GRADE 3A
 MAIN LIMITATION Droughtiness

SOIL PIT DESCRIPTION

Site Name MAIDSTONE LP SITE 15 Pit Number 2P

Grid Reference TQ76855068 Average Annual Rainfall 706 mm
 Accumulated Temperature 1383 degree days
 Field Capacity Level 143 days
 Land Use Ploughed
 Slope and Aspect degrees

HORIZON	TEXTURE	COLOUR	STONES >2	TOT STONE	LITH	MOTTLES	STRUCTURE	CONSIST	SUBSTRUCTURE	CALC
0- 29	MZCL	10YR42 00	8	12	HR					
29- 41	MZCL	10YR54 00	0	20	HR	C	MDCSAB	FR	M	
41- 70	C	05YR54 00	0	20	HR	C	WKCSAB	FM	P	
70-120	C	05YR54 00	0	30	HR	C		FM	P	

Wetness Grade 3A Wetness Class III
 Gleying cm
 SPL 041 cm

Drought Grade 3A APW 112mm MBW 1 mm
 APP 96 mm MBP -8 mm

FINAL ALC GRADE 3A

MAIN LIMITATION Soil Wetness/Droughtiness

SAMPLE NO	GRID REF	ASPECT USE	- WETNESS -		WHEAT-		-POTS		M REL		EROSN	FROST		CHEM	ALC	COMMENTS
			GRDNT	GLEY	SPL	CLASS	GRADE	AP	MB	AP	MB	DRT	FLOOD	EXP	DIST	
1P	TQ76905060	PGR				1	1	110	-1	92	-12	3A				DR 3A DR 120 PIT TO
2	TQ76945053	PGR	025	045		3	3A	94	-17	105	1	3A				WE 3A IMP70 SEE 2P
2P	TQ76855068	PLO		041		3	3A	112	1	96	8	3A				WD 3A DR SL GLEY 29
3	TQ76835070	PGR	026	045		3	3A	114	3	105	1	3A				WE 3A IMP100 SEE2P
4	TQ76905070	PGR				1	1	52	-59	52	-52	4				DR 3A IMP30 SEE PITS
5	TQ76855058	PGR	030			2	2	87	-24	87	-17	3B				DR 3A IMP50 SEE1P
6	TQ76905060	PGR	030			2	2	66	-45	66	38	3B				DR 3A IMP40 SEE1P

SAMPLE	DEPTH	TEXTURE	COLOUR	--- MOTTLES ---		-- PED		GLEYS	---STONES---			STRUCT/ CONSIST	SUBS						
				COL	ABUN	CONT	COL		2	>6	LITH		TOT	STR	POR	IMP	SPL	CALC	
1P	0-29	mzc1	10YR53 00						0	0	HR	17							
	29-45	mzc1	10YR52 00	75YR58	00	C		Y	0	0	HR	35		M					
	45-56	hzc1	75YR63 00	75YR68	00	C		S	0	0	HR	40		M					
	56-120	c	75YR54 00	75YR68	73	C		S	0	0	HR	30		M					
2	0-25	mzc1	10YR42 00						6	0	HR	10							
	25-45	mzc1	10YR42 41	10YR58	00	C		Y	0	0	HR	5		M					
	45-70	c	75YR54 00	75YR68	00	C		S	0	0	HR	10		P		Y		IMPEN GRAVEL	
2P	0-29	mzc1	10YR42 00						8	0	HR	12							
	29-41	mzc1	10YR54 00	75YR68	00	C		S	0	0	HR	20	MDCSAB	FR	M				
	41-70	c	05YR54 00	75YR58	00	C		S	0	0	HR	20	WKCSAB	FM	P		Y		
	70-120	c	05YR54 00	75YR58	00	C		S	0	0	HR	30		FM	P		Y		
3	0-26	mzc1	10YR42 00						6	0	HR	10							
	26-45	mzc1	10YR53 00	10YR68	00	C		Y	0	0	HR	10		M					
	45-100	c	05YR54 00	05YR66	00	C		S	0	0	HR	5		P		Y			
4	0-30	mzc1	10YR43 00						6	0	HR	10							IMPEN GRAVEL
5	0-30	mzc1	10YR42 00						0	0	HR	5							
	30-50	mzc1	10YR53 00	10YR58	00	C		Y	0	0	HR	5		M					IMPEN GRAVEL
6	0-30	mzc1	10YR43 00						6	0	HR	10							
	30-40	mzc1	10YR53 00	10YR58	00	C		Y	0	0	HR	15		M					IMPEN GRAVEL