

**LAND SOUTH OF SAPCOTE ROAD,
BURBAGE**

AGRICULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

August 2022





LAND SOUTH OF SAPCOTE ROAD BURBAGE

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report considers the agricultural considerations relevant to non-agricultural development of land south of Sapcote Road, Burbage.
- 1.2 In particular the report considers the agricultural land quality of the site, and the farming circumstances, in the context of national and local planning policy.
- 1.3 It is concluded that the area comprises a mixture of subgrades 3a and 3b quality agricultural land. As such only part of the site falls into the category of “**best and most versatile**” agricultural land as defined in planning policy. Much of the edge of Burbage is expected to be of similar quality, with better quality land to the south.
- 1.4 Accordingly agricultural issues should not be a constraint to development of the area.

This Report

- 1.5 This report is structured as follows:
- **section 2** sets out national and local planning policy of relevance;
 - **section 3** describes the site and the known agricultural circumstances;
 - **section 4** assesses the site in the context of the relevant policy;
 - ending with conclusions in **section 5**.

The Author

- 1.6 This report has been prepared by Tony Kernon of Kernon Countryside Consultants Ltd. KCC specialise in assessing agricultural land quality and agricultural business impacts, nationwide.

2 PLANNING POLICY OF RELEVANCE

National Planning Policy

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was most recently revised in July 2021 and accordingly forms the starting point.
- 2.2 Paragraph 174 notes that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, inter alia, recognising **“the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land”**.
- 2.3 The best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as that in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.
- 2.4 In the context of a paragraph about plan making, footnote 58 of the NPPF identifies that **“where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality should be preferred to those of a higher quality”**.
- 2.5 There is no definition of what constitutes “significant” development. However the “Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land” (Natural England, February 2021) advises local planning authorities to **“take account of smaller losses (under 20 hectares) if they’re significant when making your decision”**, suggesting that 20 ha is a suitable threshold for defining “significant” in many cases.

Local Policy

- 2.6 There is no policy relating to the protection of agricultural land within the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy (2009), or the “Sites Allocation and Development Management Policies DPD” (2016).

Guidance

- 2.7 BMV land is not rare. Natural England’s Technical Information Note 049, reproduced in **Appendix KCC1**, sets out that an estimated 42% of agricultural land is predicted to be of BMV quality.

3 THE SITE AND KNOWN CIRCUMSTANCES

The Site

- 3.1 The area the subject of this report is shown edged red on the Google Earth image below.

Insert 1: The Study Area



- 3.2 The area extends to approximately 16 hectares. It comprises 11.7 ha south of Aston Flamville Road, and 4.3 ha to the north. The northern parcel comprises a single field, currently in grassland. The land to the south comprises three fields, all currently in grassland use.

The Agricultural Land Classification System

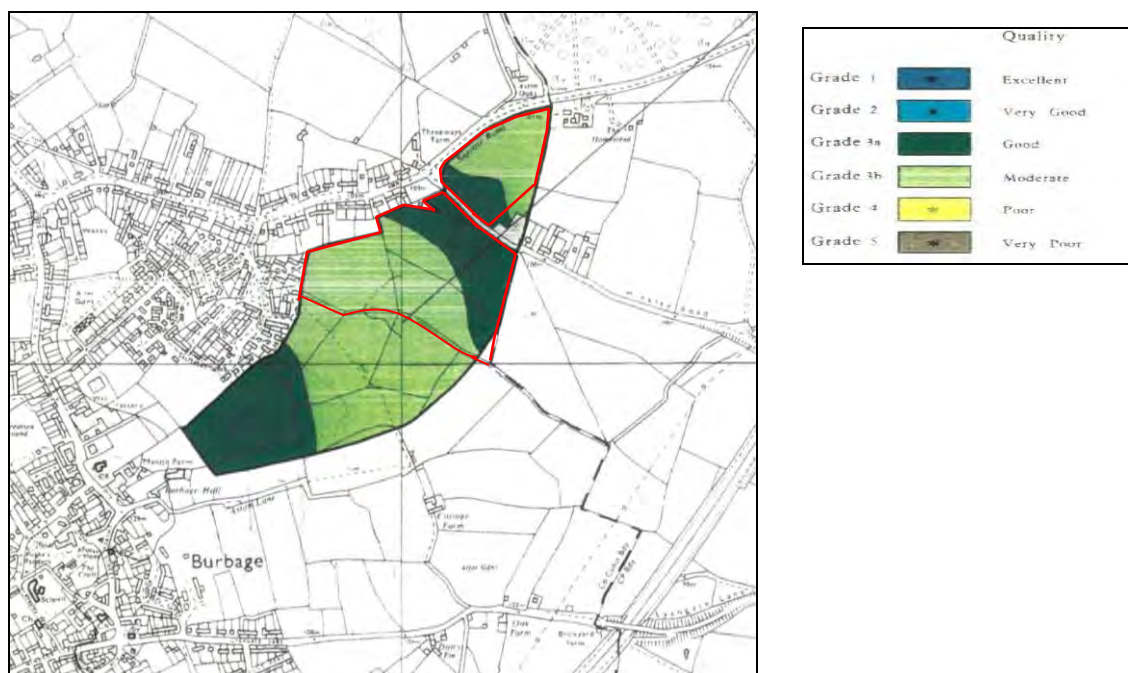
- 3.3 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system provides a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. The ALC system divides agricultural land into five grades. Grade 1 of the ALC is described as being of excellent quality and Grade 5, at the other end of the scale, is described as being of very poor quality. The current guidelines and criteria for ALC were published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in 1988 ('Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land'¹).
- 3.4 The ALC system is described in Natural England's Technical Information Note, reproduced in **Appendix KCC1**.

¹ Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land', October, 1988. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) was incorporated within the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in June 2001

Agricultural Land Quality

- 3.5 The whole of the site has been the subject of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC). The survey was carried out by MAFF in 1997, and accordingly under the current ALC guidelines (1988). The survey results are therefore still valid.
- 3.6 The ALC covered a wider area than this report considers. The detailed report is set out in **Appendix KCC2**.
- 3.7 The results for the area the subject of this report are shown below.

Insert 2: The Results for the Area (edged red)



- 3.8 The land quality for the study area is as follows.

Table 1: ALC Results

Grade	Area (ha)	Proportion (%)
Subgrade 3a	5.7	35.6
Subgrade 3b	10.2	63.8
Other Land and Not Surveyed	0.1	0.6
Total	16.0	100

- 3.9 Other land in the area that has been surveyed is shown on www.magic.gov.uk. The results for the immediate areas, including the application site, are shown on the plan in **Appendix KCC3**.

Farming Circumstances

- 3.10 All of the land is farmed, currently as grassland used for making hay / silage and the grazing of livestock. There are no farm buildings within the site.

4 ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 Planning policy in the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that development management decisions should recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, poorer quality land should be used in preference.
- 4.2 Accordingly in this analysis I consider:
- what the economic and other benefits of the BMV land within the proposed development are;
 - whether this amounts to “**significant development**” of BMV land;
 - and whether poorer quality land is available in preference.

Economic and Other Benefits

- 4.3 There is no research that analyses the productive or economic differences between BMV and non-BMV land. Within grade 3 land, subgrade 3a is described as consistently capable of producing moderate to high yields of a narrow range of arable crops, or moderate yields of a wide range of crops including cereals and grass. Subgrade 3b is described as producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, principally cereals or grass, or lower yields of a wider range of crops.
- 4.4 Across a field that includes both subgrades, a whole-field pattern is normal, and the cropping is limited by the poorer quality land within the field. For the purposes of attempting an analysis of the economic implications, we have assumed that a grassland or cereal crop is being grown, and that the subgrade 3a land yields higher, or can carry more livestock per hectare.
- 4.5 Accordingly any economic assessment is inevitably crude. Taking standard budgeting books (reproduced in **Appendix KCC4**) and being “high” and “average” yields to represent the BMV and non BMV land differences, the economic benefits are as follows. This is likely to overstate the benefit.
- 4.6 For both crops the difference is in the yield or the stocking rate, or for cattle in the purchase and sale price. The figures show the Gross Margin, which is the margin before any fixed costs including the farmer’s own labour, power and machinery, depreciation etc.

Table 2: Estimate of Economic Benefits

Item	Winter Wheat		Single-suckling Cows	
	High	Average	High	Average
Yield/stocking rate	9.75t/ha	8.60t/ha	1.5/ha	1.5/ha
Gross Margin (£/ha)	1,017	833	231	126

4.7 For the 5.7 ha of BMV land involved here, the economic difference is thus as follows:

- winter wheat benefit of £184/ha, so £1,050 for the 5.7 ha involved;
- cattle benefit of £105/ha, so £600 for the 5.7 ha involved.

Whether this is “Significant” Development

4.8 This is not “significant” development of agricultural land in the context of footnote 58 to the NPPF.

4.9 Paragraphs 174 and 175 of the NPPF consider whether poorer quality land is available, with the trigger for assessment being that the proposal involves “**significant development of agricultural land**”.

4.10 What constitutes “**significant development**” is not defined in the NPPF. One threshold for determination of what is significant is the threshold for consultation with Natural England, which is set at the loss of 20 ha or more of BMV land (see TIN049 in **Appendix KCC1**). This has been the threshold for consultation with MAFF since 1987.

4.11 The site, at 5.7 ha BMV, is only 28.5% of this threshold. As such it is not “**significant development of agricultural land**”.

4.12 The “Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land” (2021) (**Appendix KCC5**) does not define a threshold but does provide some guidance. This adds to my view that 20 ha is a reasonable threshold for defining what is significant development:

- para 6 states: “**you should take account of smaller losses (under 20 ha) if they are significant when making your decision**”, which suggests that losses of under 20 ha would not be significant unless there are particular local circumstances. What those particular local circumstances are is not defined, but it would be reasonable to consider that the loss of less than 20 ha might be significant in an area where BMV land is rare, for example. That is not the case here, where the predictive maps have the whole area as >60% BMV;
- para 7.1 notes that you can use Natural England’s chargeable discretionary advice system “**if your proposal is large, for example 20 ha or more, and requires more**

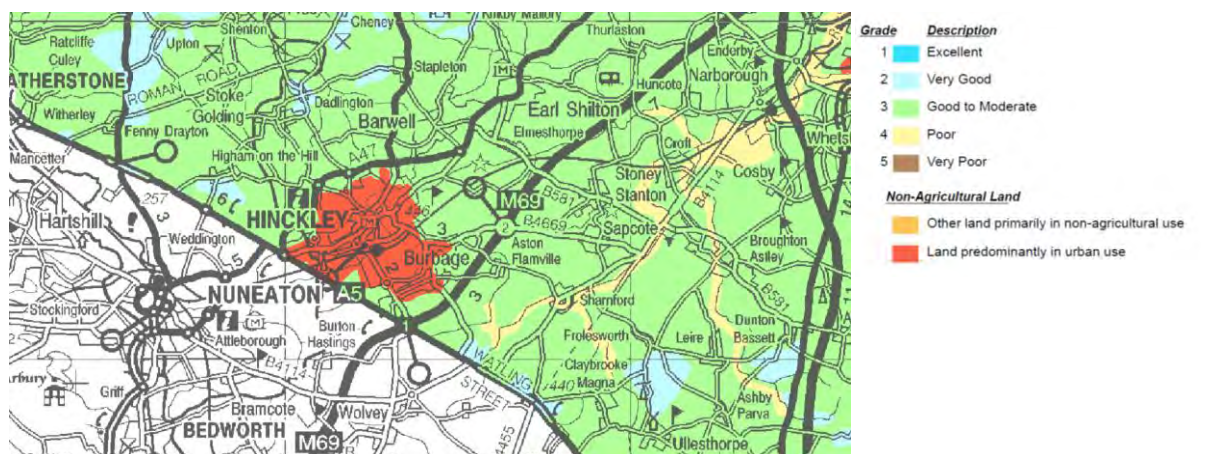
detailed advice". The definition of large as being more than 20 ha suggests that under 20 ha is small, and hence not significant.

- 4.13 We have carried out a study of appeal and Secretary of State decisions relating to the loss of agricultural land. The full details are set out in **Appendix KCC6**.
- 4.14 It is evident from the analysis that in very few cases is the loss of less than 10 ha considered to be a significant development of agricultural land. Decisions on sites involving the loss of less than 20 ha of BMV generally afford only limited weight to the loss of BMV land.
- 4.15 It is also clear that Inspectors consider the loss of BMV land in the local context. In areas where there is a lot of BMV land and the loss of such land is a likely or even an inevitable consequence of development to meet housing needs then the weight given to the loss is reduced accordingly. The recent guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land makes a similar point, as analysed above.

Whether Poorer Quality Land is Available

- 4.16 The "provisional" ALC maps from the 1970's are of limited use, but the extract below shows that around Hinckley and Burbage all the land is shown as undifferentiated Grade 3.

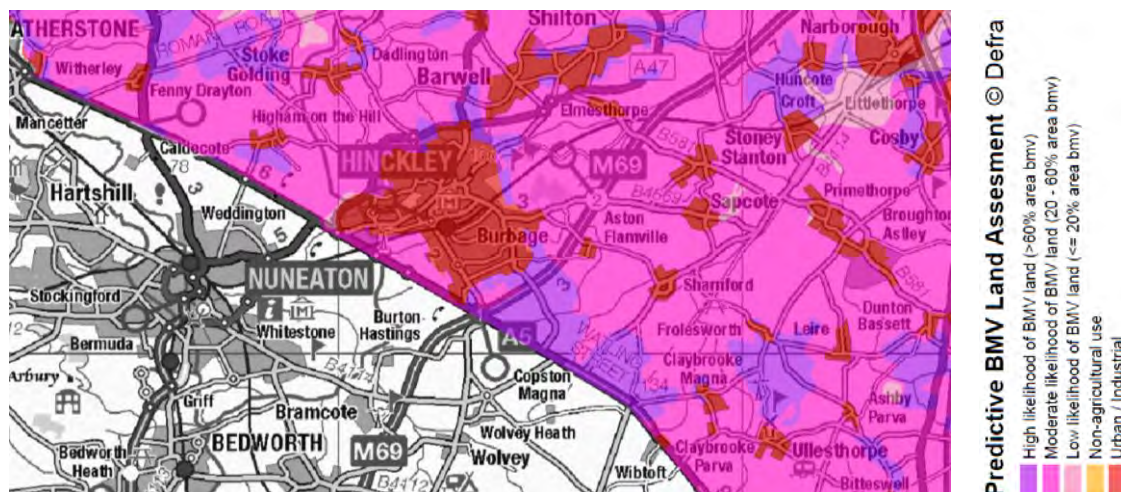
Insert 3: The Provisional ALC Map



- 4.17 In 2017 Natural England produced maps which show the probability of land being of best and most versatile quality. The extract is shown below. This shows that around the immediate periphery about half the land falls into the "**high (>60% area BMV)**" category.
- 4.18 The site falls into the "**moderate (20-60% area BMV)**" category.

- 4.19 There is very little land in the “low” category, restricted to only a small area to the west of Hinckley.

Insert 4: The Predictive BMV Map



- 4.20 In 2020 the Council published its Agricultural Land Survey. The relevant extracts from the Agricultural land Quality Report May 2020 Part 2 are set out in **Appendix KCC7**. The Council commissioned Land Research Associates to survey land around Hinckley and Burbage, which they did on a semi-detailed basis where access was permitted, or estimated quality where permission for access was not available.
- 4.21 South of Burbage the survey and estimations showed a mixture of Grades 1, 2 and 3a with subgrade 3b. Some 73% of the area surveyed was estimated to be BMV.
- 4.22 The application site, with 35.6% BMV, is poorer than the surveyed area in the Council’s study, and so compares favourably.

Commentary

- 4.23 Accordingly:
- the economic benefits of the BMV land in this case are modest;
 - this is not “significant development” of agricultural land triggering the need to seek to use poorer quality land in preference;
 - and in any event the evidence indicates that this is representative of the poorest quality land available;
 - such that the loss of this small area of BMV land should not be given significant weight in the planning balance.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This report considers the agricultural land quality of land west of Burbage, and then assesses the planning considerations relevant to the non-agricultural development of that site.

Land Quality

- 5.2 The land was surveyed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1997. The survey remains relevant. It identified the site to comprise two parcels of subgrade 3a totalling 5.7 ha, with the majority of the site (64%) comprising moderate quality (subgrade 3b) land.

Planning Policy

- 5.3 Planning policy requires that the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile land be recognised. Where significant development of agricultural land is necessary, poorer quality land should be used in preference.

Analysis and Comments

- 5.4 It is evident that:
- (i) land quality is a matter to weigh in the balance;
 - (ii) a suitable threshold for what constitutes significant development of agricultural land is 20 ha;
 - (iii) a smaller area may be significant in some circumstances, such as where there is little BMV in the area;
 - (iv) small sites involving the loss of less than 10 ha of BMV such as this are not “**significant development**” triggering the paragraph 174 footnote 58 requirement to consider poorer quality land in preference, irrespective of the quantum of such land locally (as per the analysis of Inspector’s decisions);
 - (v) on what Government defines as “**smaller losses**” (below 20ha) (as per the recent Government Guide) the loss of BMV land is given limited weight where there is a lack of available alternatives, such as is the case here (as per the analysis of Inspector’s and SoS decisions);
 - (vi) and even on larger sites the loss of BMV in excess of 20ha is likely to be only moderate weight against the proposal in the planning balance (as per the analysis of decisions);
 - (vii) with small sites generally accorded no weight or limited weight.

- 5.5 In this case, the economic benefits are very limited. If the land continues to be used for rearing cattle or was used for cereals, the economic benefits of the BMV are at best of the order of £1,050 for the 5.7 ha of BMV involved.
- 5.6 The site, at 5.7 ha of BMV, is not “**significant development**” of BMV agricultural land. This is concluded following analysis of planning policy, and of recent planning appeal decisions.
- 5.7 Therefore the requirement to consider poorer quality land in preference is not triggered.
- 5.8 Even if it were triggered, however, it is evident that poorer quality land is not available.
- 5.9 Accordingly the existence of a small area of best and most versatile agricultural land within the site, should be accorded only limited weight.

Appendix KCC1
Natural England Technical Information
Note TIN049

Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land

Most of our land area is in agricultural use. How this important natural resource is used is vital to sustainable development. This includes taking the right decisions about protecting it from inappropriate development.

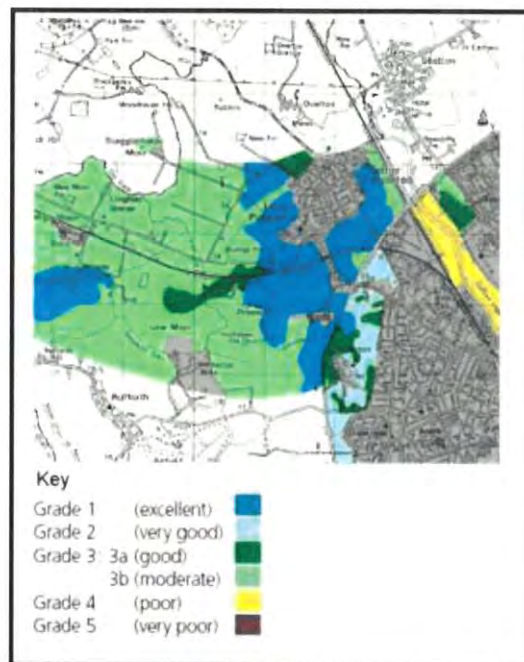
Policy to protect agricultural land

Government policy for England is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 (paragraph 112). Decisions rest with the relevant planning authorities who should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality. The Government has also re-affirmed the importance of protecting our soils and the services they provide in the Natural Environment White Paper *The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature* (June 2011), including the protection of best and most versatile agricultural land (paragraph 2.35).

The ALC system: purpose & uses

Land quality varies from place to place. The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland to enable informed choices to be made about its future use within the planning system. It helps

underpin the principles of sustainable development.



Agricultural Land Classification - map and key

Second edition 19 December 2012

www.naturalengland.org.uk



Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land

The ALC system classifies land into five grades, with Grade 3 subdivided into Subgrades 3a and 3b. The best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a by policy guidance (see Annex 2 of NPPF). This is the land which is most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs and which can best deliver future crops for food and non food uses such as biomass, fibres and pharmaceuticals. Current estimates are that Grades 1 and 2 together form about 21% of all farmland in England; Subgrade 3a also covers about 21%.

The ALC system is used by Natural England and others to give advice to planning authorities, developers and the public if development is proposed on agricultural land or other greenfield sites that could potentially grow crops. The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (as amended) refers to the best and most versatile land policy in requiring statutory consultations with Natural England. Natural England is also responsible for Minerals and Waste Consultations where reclamation to agriculture is proposed under Schedule 5 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The ALC grading system is also used by commercial consultants to advise clients on land uses and planning issues.

Criteria and guidelines

The Classification is based on the long term physical limitations of land for agricultural use. Factors affecting the grade are climate, site and soil characteristics, and the important interactions between them. Detailed guidance for classifying land can be found in: *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land* (MAFF, 1988):

- **Climate:** temperature and rainfall, aspect, exposure and frost risk.
- **Site:** gradient, micro-relief and flood risk.
- **Soil:** texture, structure, depth and stoniness, chemical properties which cannot be corrected.

The combination of climate and soil factors determines soil wetness and droughtiness.

Wetness and droughtiness influence the choice of crops grown and the level and consistency of yields, as well as use of land for grazing livestock. The Classification is concerned with the inherent potential of land under a range of farming systems. The current agricultural use, or intensity of use, does not affect the ALC grade.

Versatility and yield

The physical limitations of land have four main effects on the way land is farmed. These are:

- the range of crops which can be grown;
- the level of yield;
- the consistency of yield; and
- the cost of obtaining the crop.

The ALC gives a high grading to land which allows more flexibility in the range of crops that can be grown (its 'versatility') and which requires lower inputs, but also takes into account ability to produce consistently high yields of a narrower range of crops.

Availability of ALC information

After the introduction of the ALC system in 1966 the whole of England and Wales was mapped from reconnaissance field surveys, to provide general strategic guidance on land quality for planners. This Provisional Series of maps was published on an Ordnance Survey base at a scale of One Inch to One Mile in the period 1967 to 1974. These maps are not sufficiently accurate for use in assessment of individual fields or development sites, and should not be used other than as general guidance. They show only five grades: their preparation preceded the subdivision of Grade 3 and the refinement of criteria, which occurred after 1976. They have not been updated and are out of print. A 1:250 000 scale map series based on the same information is available. These are more appropriate for the strategic use originally intended and can be downloaded from the Natural England [website](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/). This data is also available on 'Magic', an interactive, geographical information website <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>.

Since 1976, selected areas have been re-surveyed in greater detail and to revised

Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land

guidelines and criteria. Information based on detailed ALC field surveys in accordance with current guidelines (MAFF, 1988) is the most definitive source. Data from the former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) archive of more detailed ALC survey information (from 1988) is also available on <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>. Revisions to the ALC guidelines and criteria have been limited and kept to the original principles, but some assessments made prior to the most recent revision in 1988 need to be checked against current criteria. More recently, strategic scale maps showing the likely occurrence of best and most versatile land have been prepared. Mapped information of all types is available from Natural England (see *Further information* below).

New field survey

Digital mapping and geographical information systems have been introduced to facilitate the provision of up-to-date information. ALC surveys are undertaken, according to the published Guidelines, by field surveyors using handheld augers to examine soils to a depth of 1.2 metres, at a frequency of one boring per hectare for a detailed assessment. This is usually supplemented by digging occasional small pits (usually by hand) to inspect the soil profile. Information obtained by these methods is combined with climatic and other data to produce an ALC map and report. ALC maps are normally produced on an Ordnance Survey base at varying scales from 1:10,000 for detailed work to 1:50 000 for reconnaissance survey.

There is no comprehensive programme to survey all areas in detail. Private consultants may survey land where it is under consideration for development, especially around the edge of towns, to allow comparisons between areas and to inform environmental assessments. ALC field surveys are usually time consuming and should be initiated well in advance of planning decisions. Planning authorities should ensure that sufficient detailed site specific ALC survey data is available to inform decision making.

Consultations

Natural England is consulted by planning authorities on the preparation of all development

plans as part of its remit for the natural environment. For planning applications, specific consultations with Natural England are required under the Development Management Procedure Order in relation to best and most versatile agricultural land. These are for non agricultural development proposals that are not consistent with an adopted local plan and involve the loss of twenty hectares or more of the best and most versatile land. The land protection policy is relevant to all planning applications, including those on smaller areas, but it is for the planning authority to decide how significant the agricultural land issues are, and the need for field information. The planning authority may contact Natural England if it needs technical information or advice.

Consultations with Natural England are required on all applications for mineral working or waste disposal if the proposed afteruse is for agriculture or where the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land agricultural land will be 20 ha or more. Non-agricultural afteruse, for example for nature conservation or amenity, can be acceptable even on better quality land if soil resources are conserved and the long term potential of best and most versatile land is safeguarded by careful land restoration and aftercare.

Other factors

The ALC is a basis for assessing how development proposals affect agricultural land within the planning system, but it is not the sole consideration. Planning authorities are guided by the National Planning Policy Framework to protect and enhance soils more widely. This could include, for example, conserving soil resources during mineral working or construction, not granting permission for peat extraction from new or extended mineral sites, or preventing soil from being adversely affected by pollution. For information on the application of ALC in Wales, please see below.

Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land

Further information

Details of the system of grading can be found in: *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land* (MAFF, 1988).

Please note that planning authorities should send all planning related consultations and enquiries to Natural England by e-mail to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk. If it is not possible to consult us electronically then consultations should be sent to the following postal address:

Natural England
Consultation Service
Hornbeam House
Electra Way
Crewe Business Park
CREWE
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

ALC information for Wales is held by Welsh Government. Detailed information and advice is available on request from Ian Rugg (ian.rugg@wales.gsi.gov.uk) or David Martyn (david.martyn@wales.gsi.gov.uk). If it is not possible to consult us electronically then consultations should be sent to the following postal address:

Welsh Government
Rhodfa Padarn
Llanbadarn Fawr
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3UR

Natural England publications are available to download from the Natural England website: www.naturalengland.org.uk.

For further information contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0300 060 0863 or e-mail enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk.

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Appendix KCC2
MAFF ALC Report 1997

**HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH
LOCAL PLAN
Sapcote Road, Burbage - 1768/1/2
Agricultural Land Classification
February 1997**

**Resource Planning Team
Eastern Statutory Centre
ADAS Cambridge**

**ADAS Reference: 95/960
MAFF Reference: EL 22/01519B
LUPU Commission: 02633**

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH LOCAL PLAN

Sapcote Road, Burbage - 1768/1/2

INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of 33.9 ha of land south of Sapcote Road, Burbage in Leicestershire. The survey was carried out during February 1997.
2. The survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Land Use Planning Unit, Cambridge in connection with Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan. This survey supersedes previous ALC surveys on this land.
3. The work was conducted by members of the Resource Planning Team in the Eastern Statutory Centre in ADAS. The land has been graded in accordance with the published MAFF ALC guidelines and criteria (MAFF, 1988). A description of the ALC grades and subgrades is given in Appendix I.
4. At the time of survey the agricultural land at the site was entirely permanent pasture. A small area of other land has been mapped in the north of the site and this comprises a road and a house and associated garden.

SUMMARY

5. The findings of the survey are shown on the enclosed ALC map. The map has been drawn at a scale of 1:10 000 it is accurate at this scale but any enlargement would be misleading.
6. The area and proportions of the ALC grades and subgrades on the surveyed land are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Area of grades and other land

Grade/Other land	Area (hectares)	% Total site area
3a	12.0	35
3b	21.3	63
Other land	0.6	2
Total surveyed area	33.9	100

7. The fieldwork was conducted at an average density of 1 boring per hectare. A total of 34 borings and 3 soil pits were described.

8. The agricultural land at the site has been graded 3a (good quality agricultural land) due to moderate droughtiness and wetness/workability limitations, with a larger area of subgrade 3b land (moderate quality agricultural land) which is limited due to significant wetness and workability limitations.

FACTORS INFLUENCING ALC GRADE

Climate

9. Climate affects the grading of land through the assessment of an overall climatic limitation and also through interactions with soil characteristics.

10. The key climatic variables used for grading this site are given in Table 2 and were obtained from the published 5 km grid datasets using the standard interpolation procedures (Met. Office, 1989).

Table 2: Climatic and altitude data

Factor	Units	Values
Grid reference	N/A	SP 450 932 *
Altitude	m, AOD	100
Accumulated Temperature	day°C (Jan-June)	1362
Average Annual Rainfall	mm	651
Field Capacity Days	days	150
Moisture Deficit, Wheat	mm	99
Moisture Deficit, Potatoes	mm	88

11. 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.

12. The main parameters used in the assessment of an overall climatic limitation are average annual rainfall (AAR), as a measure of overall wetness, and accumulated temperature (AT0, January to June), as a measure of the relative warmth of a locality.

13. The combination of rainfall and temperature at this site mean that it is relatively warm and dry. These climatic characteristics are such that in themselves they impose no limitation to land quality at the site and therefore the climate grade for this site is 1.

Site

14. The site occupies gently undulating land which ranges in height from 123 m AOD on a hill in the southwest of the site, to 100 m AOD on the virtually flat land in the northeast. Therefore neither gradient nor altitude impose limitations to land quality.

Geology and soils

15. The published 1:63 360 scale geology map, sheet 169, Coventry (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1948) shows the site as comprising mainly glacial boulder clay drift, with a small area of glacial sand and gravel deposits in the southwest of the site.

16. On the 1:250 000 scale published soils map, sheet 3, Soils of Midland and Western England (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983) the majority of the site is shown as comprising soils of the Beccles 3 Association soils which are briefly described as slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils and similar soils with only slight seasonal waterlogging. Some calcareous clayey soils especially on steeper slopes. A small area in the western part of the site is mapped as soils of the Flint Association. These soils are briefly described as reddish fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonally waterlogging. Some similar fine loamy soils and some slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils.

17. The present survey of the site identified two main soil types.

18. The first soil type occurs over the majority of the site and typically comprises non-calcareous medium or heavy clay loam (or occasionally sandy clay loam) topsoils over clay or clay loam upper subsoils which become slowly permeable clays at depth. Most commonly slowly permeable clay is present directly below the topsoil. These profiles were typically very slightly stony and non-calcareous throughout, although occasionally lower subsoils were calcareous.

19. The second soil type occurs in a small area on the hill in southwest of the site. Profiles typically comprise medium sandy loam topsoils which overlie loamy medium sand upper subsoils which become medium sands at depth below 45/80 cm. These soils were typically free draining, very slightly or slightly stony and non-calcareous throughout

Agricultural Land Classification

20. The details of the classification of the site are shown on the attached ALC map and the area statistics of each grade are given in Table 1, page 1.

21. The location of the auger borings and pits is shown on the attached sample location map.

Subgrade 3a

22. Adjacent to Hinckley Road land graded 3a corresponds with the better drained, lighter textured variants of the soils described in paragraph 18. The wetness class of these soils has typically been assessed as III (for definition of wetness classes see Appendix II). This factor in combination with the generally medium clay loam topsoil textures restricts the land to subgrade 3a due to moderate wetness and workability limitations.

23. Land graded 3a also occurs in a small area in the southwest of the site and is associated with the free draining (wetness class I) light textured soils described in paragraph 19. The presence of light textures and stones within these profiles combine to reduce the

water reserves available for crop growth, and moisture balance calculations indicate that these soils suffer from moderate droughtiness limitations which excludes the land from a higher grade.

Subgrade 3b

24. The remainder of the land at the site has been graded 3b, and corresponds with the fine loamy over clay soils described in paragraph 17. These soils are poorly drained and have been assessed as wetness class IV. This factor combines with the heavy and medium clay loam (occasionally sandy clay loam) topsoil textures to limit land quality to subgrade 3b due to significant wetness and workability constraints.

Ruth Tarrant
Resource Planning Team
Eastern Statutory Centre
ADAS Cambridge

SOURCES OF REFERENCE

Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) (1948) *Sheet 169, Coventry*.
BGS: London.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1988) *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land*. MAFF: London.

Met. Office (1989) *Climatological Data for Agricultural Land Classification*.
Met. Office: Bracknell.

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) *Sheet 3, Soils of Midland and Western England*.
SSEW: Harpenden.

Soil Survey of England and Wales (1984) *Soils and their Use in Midland and Western England*.
SSEW: Harpenden

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 that 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 that restricts use to permanent pasture or rough grazing, except for occasional pioneer forage crops.

APPENDIX II

SOIL WETNESS CLASSIFICATION

Definitions of Soil Wetness Classes

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.

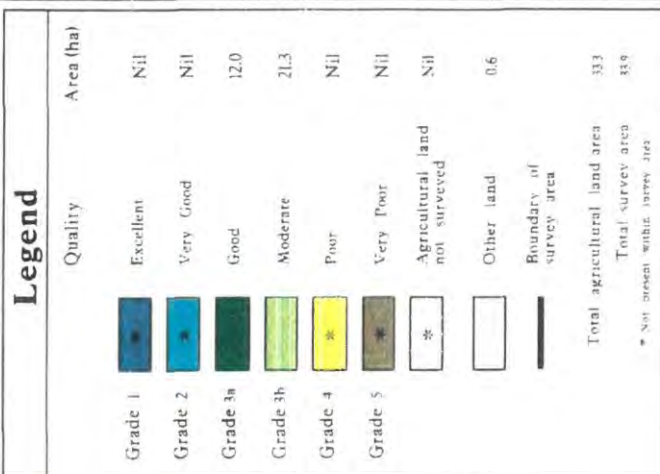
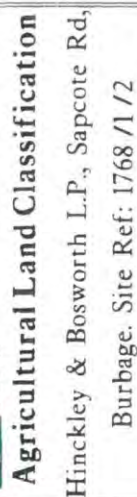
Wetness Class	Duration of waterlogging ¹
I	The soil profile is not wet within 70 cm depth for more than 30 days in most years. ²
II	The soil profile is wet within 70 cm depth for 31-90 days in most years or, if there is no slowly permeable layer within 80 cm depth, it is wet within 70 cm for more than 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.

Assessment of Wetness Class

Soils have been allocated to wetness classes by the interpretation of soil profile characteristics and climatic factors using the methodology described in *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land* (MAFF, 1988).

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

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



Scale = 1:10,000

Further details contained in MAFF (1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land. MAFF (publications), London SE99 7TP.

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Agricultural Land Classification

Hinckley & Bosworth L.P., Sapcote Rd,

Burbage. Site Ref: 1768 /1 /2

Sample Point Map

Legend

Location of soil pit

Location of auger sample point

Boundary of survey area

Agricultural land not surveyed

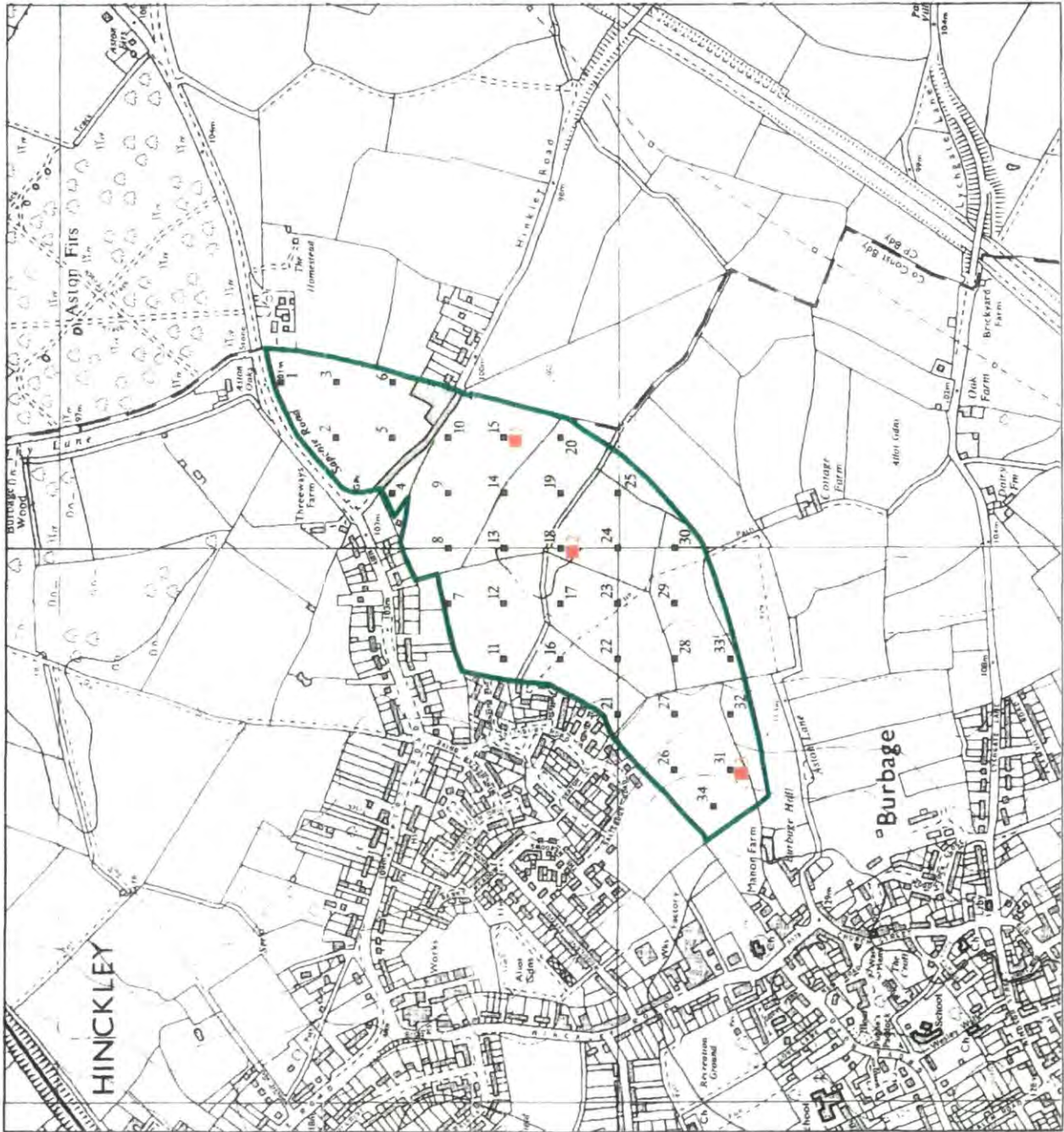
Other land

Scale - 1:25,000

Further details contained in MAFF (1982) Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land. MAFF (Publications), London, S199 7117.

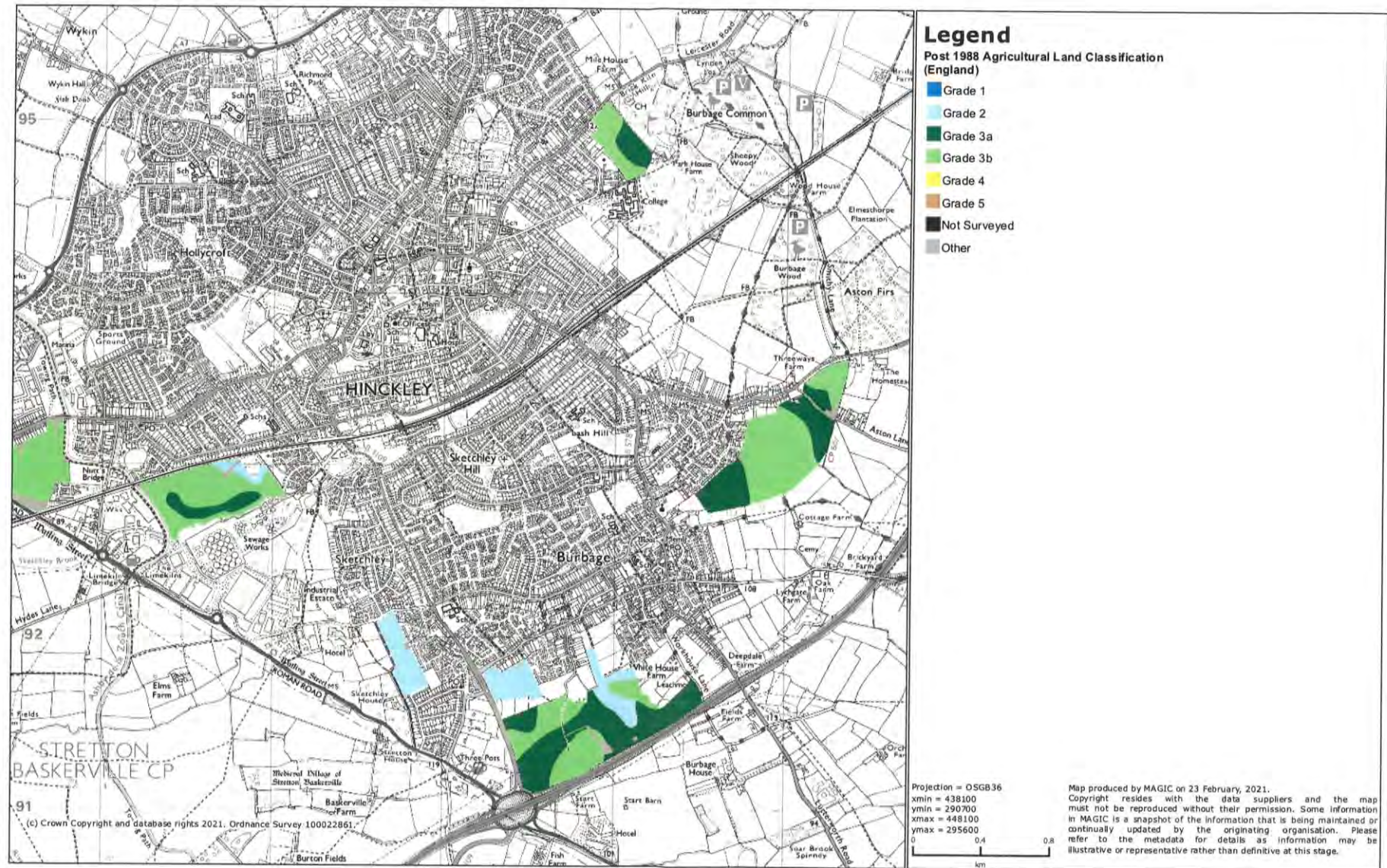
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Appendix KCC3

ALC of Local Area (www.magic.gov.uk)



Appendix KCC4
Extracts from John Nix Pocketbook for
Farm Management



John Nix Pocketbook

FOR FARM MANAGEMENT



2022 52ND
EDITION

The most comprehensive business information in British agriculture

Graham Redman

II. ENTERPRISE DATA

1. CROPS

WHEAT

Feed Winter Wheat

Production level	Low	Average	High	
Yield: t/ha (t/ac)	7.25 (2.9)	8.60 (3.5)	9.75 (3.9)	
	£	£	£	£/t
Output at £160/t	1,160 (470)	1,376 (557)	1,560 (632)	160
Variable Costs £/ha (£/ac) :				
Seed.....		68 (28)		8
Fertiliser.....		220 (89)		26
Sprays.....		255 (103)		30
Total Variable Costs		543 (220)		63
Gross Margin £/ha (ac)	617 (250)	833 (337)	1,017 (412)	97

Fertiliser Basis 8.6t/ha				Seed:		Sprays £/ha:	
Nutrient	Kg/t	Kg/Ha	£/Ha	£/t C2	£430	Herbicides	£103
N	22	190	£151	Kg/Ha	175	Fungicides	£121
P	6.5	56	£49	% HSS	30%	Insecticides	£8
K	5.5	47	£20	£/t HSS	£301	PGRs	£18
						Other	£6

1. *Yields.* The average yield is for all winter feed wheat, i.e. all varieties and 1st and subsequent wheats. See over for more on First and Second Wheats. The overall yield used for feed and milling wheats including spring varieties calculates as 8.4t/ha, the national average all-wheat yield (ex-2020).
2. *Straw* is costed as incorporated. Average yield and price are approximately 4.2 tonnes per hectare at £55/tonne (£5 more in small bales); variable costs (string) approx. £3.70 per tonne. Unbaled straw (sold for baling): anything from £50/ha (£20/acre) to £100/ha (£40/acre), national average around £85/ha (£34/acre). Account for minerals and organic matter taken from soil if removing straw.
3. *Seed* is costed with a single purpose dressing. Up to a third of growers require additional seed treatments, specifically to suppress BYDV. This can add £140 per tonne of seed (£24.80/ha). This has not been added in the gross margins so should be considered.
4. This schedule does not account for severe *grass weed infestations* such as Black Grass or Sterile Brome. Costs associated with managing such problems can amount to up to £160/hectare additional agrochemical costs. Yield losses increase as infestation rises:

Yield losses from Black Grass Infestations

Grass plants/m ²	Yield loss t/Ha	% yield loss	References:
8-12	0.2-0.4	2-5%	Roebuck, J.F. (1987).
12-25	0.4-0.8	5-15%	B.C.P.C. and
100	1-2	15-25%	Blair A, Cussans J,
>300	+3	37%	Lutman P (1999).

Suckler Cows**Single Suckling (per Cow): Lowland**

System	Spring Calving 8 months		Autumn Calving 12 Months	
	Average	High	Average	High
Performance Level	£	£	£	£
Value of Store Calf Sold	615	695	815	866
Calf Sales per year	523	619	693	754
Less Cow and Bull Depreciation	114	114	129	129
Calf Purchases & Bull Maint.	13	13	15	15
Output £/cow/year	396	492	548	609
Variable Costs £/cow/yr:				
Concentrate (Cow and Calf)	48	40	82	74
Vet & Med	34	34	36	36
Bedding	42	42	48	48
Miscellaneous	35	36	38	41
Variable Costs (ex. forage)	159	152	204	199
Gross Margin £/Cow/yr				
ex. Forage	237	340	344	410
Forage Variable Costs	97	97	97	97
Purchased Bulk Feeds	14	12	22	18
Gross Margin £/Cow	126	231	226	296
Stocking Rate: Cows/Ha. (Acre)	1.50 (0.6)	1.50 (0.6)	1.50 (0.6)	1.50 (0.6)
Gross Margin £/Forage Ha (Acre)	189 (76)	347 (140)	338 (137)	443 (179)

1. *System*: Relates to performance per year. Assumed 390 days average calving interval, showing figures per 365-day period. Calves sold at approximately 8-months for spring calvers and 12-months for autumn calvers.
2. *Performance level*: relates to variations in both outputs and inputs.

Calving Period Performance Level	Spring Calving		Autumn Calving	
	Average	High	Average	High
Calf Sale Weights (kg)	280	309	371	385
Sale Age (Days)	250	240	365	340
Sale Prices (£/kg)	£2.20	2.25	£2.20	2.25
Calves reared per 100 cows mated	85	89	85	87

3. *Cow & Bull Depreciation*:

	Spring C.	Autumn C.	Bull
Purchase Price - £	£1,600	£1,600	£2,000
Cull Price - £	£750	£750	£850
Animal Life (Years)	8	7	5
Depreciation £/cow	£106	£121	£8

4. *Calf Purchases*: £211 each, 3 per 100 cows mated (spring calving) 4 per 100 cows mated (autumn calving). Bull maintenance £192/year per 30 cows.

Appendix KCC5
Guide to Assessing Development
Impacts on Agricultural Land (2021)

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(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>)

Guidance

Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land

Updated 5 February 2021

Applies to England

Contents

1. Policies to protect agricultural land and soil
2. [LPAs: consult Natural England](#)
3. LPAs: how to use agricultural land classification (ALC)
4. About ALC grades
5. LPAs: carry out ALC assessments to support your planning decisions
6. Use ALC to support your planning decisions

7. Developers: check if your proposal affects agricultural land



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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development/guide-to-assessing-development-proposals-on-agricultural-land>

1. Policies to protect agricultural land and soil

Developers and local planning authorities (LPAs) should refer to the following government policies and legislation when considering development proposals that affect agricultural land and soils. They aim to protect:

- the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals
- all soils by managing them in a sustainable way

Natural England uses these policies to advise on development proposals as a [statutory consultee](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-pre-decision-matters#Statutory-consultees) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-pre-decision-matters#Statutory-consultees>) in the planning process.

1.1 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to improve the Environment 2018

[A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>) sets out the government's 25-year plan to improve the health of the environment by using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently. It plans to:

- protect the best agricultural land
- put a value on soils as part of our natural capital
- manage soils in a sustainable way by 2030
- restore and protect peatland

1.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

LPAs should use the NPPF to make decisions about the natural and local environment to:

- protect and enhance landscapes, biodiversity, geology and soils
- recognise soils as a natural capital asset that provide important ecosystem services
- consider the economic and other benefits of BMV agricultural land, and try to use areas of poorer quality land instead of higher quality land
- prevent soil, air, water, or noise pollution, or land instability from new and existing development

Read [Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/15-conserving-and-enhancing-the-natural-environment) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/15-conserving-and-enhancing-the-natural-environment>) for full details.

1.3 Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) Order) (DMPO) 2015

Planning authorities must consult Natural England on all non-agricultural applications that result in the loss of more than 20 hectares (ha) of BMV land if the land is not included in a [development plan](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/3-plan-making) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/3-plan-making>). For example, this includes the likely cumulative loss of BMV land from the proposed development if it's part of a phased development.

This is required by [schedule 4\(y\) of the Order](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/595/schedule/4/made) (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/595/schedule/4/made>).

1.4 Planning Practice Guidance for the Natural Environment

[Paragraphs 001 and 002: Planning Practice Guidance for the Natural Environment](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#brownfield-land-soils-and-agricultural-land) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#brownfield-land-soils-and-agricultural-land>) explain why planning decisions should take account of the value of soils and [agricultural land classification \(ALC\)](#) to enable informed choices on the future use of agricultural land within the planning system.

2. LPAs: consult Natural England

You must consult Natural England for development proposals that are both:

- likely to cause the loss (or likely cumulative loss) of 20ha or more of BMV land
- not in accordance with an approved development plan

Natural England will advise you on the level of impact the proposal may have on BMV agricultural land. Natural England will take into account the type of development and its likely long-term effects.

Email consultations@naturalengland.org.uk or write to:

Natural England consultation service
Hornbeam House
Electra Way
Crewe Business Park
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

3. LPAs: how to use agricultural land classification (ALC)

You can use ALC to help inform decisions on the appropriate sustainable development of land.

ALC uses a grading system to enable you to assess and compare the quality of agricultural land in England and Wales.

A combination of climate, topography and soil characteristics and their unique interaction determines the limitation and grade of the land. These affect the:

- range of crops that can be grown
- yield of crop
- consistency of yield
- cost of producing the crop

4. About ALC grades

ALC is graded from 1 to 5.

The highest grade goes to land that:

- gives a high yield or output
- has the widest range and versatility of use
- produces the most consistent yield
- requires less input

BMV agricultural land is graded 1 to 3a.

4.1 Grade 1 – excellent quality agricultural land

Land with no or very minor limitations. A very wide range of agricultural and horticultural crops can be grown and commonly includes:

- top fruit, for example tree fruit such as apples and pears
- soft fruit, such as raspberries and blackberries
- salad crops
- winter harvested vegetables

Yields are high and less variable than on land of lower quality.

4.2 Grade 2 – very good quality agricultural land

Land with minor limitations that affect crop yield, cultivations or harvesting. A wide range of agricultural and horticultural crops can usually be grown. 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.

4.3 Grade 3 – good to moderate quality agricultural land

Land with moderate limitations that 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.

4.4 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 crops including:

- cereals
- grass
- oilseed rape
- potatoes
- sugar beet
- less demanding horticultural crops

4.5 Subgrade 3b – moderate quality agricultural land

Land capable of producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, principally:

- cereals and grass
- lower yields of a wider range of crops
- high yields of grass which can be grazed or harvested over most of the year

4.6 Grade 4 – poor quality agricultural land

Land with severe limitations which significantly restrict the range of crops or level of yields. It is mainly suited to grass with occasional arable crops (for example 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 using the land. The grade also includes arable land that is very dry because of drought.

4.7 Grade 5 – very poor quality agricultural land

Land with very severe limitations that restrict use to permanent pasture or rough grazing, except for occasional pioneer forage crops.

5. LPAs: carry out ALC assessments to support your planning decisions

For an overview of ALC use:

- [1:250,000 scale regional ALC maps](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5954148537204736) (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5954148537204736>) (grade 3 land is not divided into subgrades 3a and 3b)
- [1:250,000 scale regional maps predicting the likelihood of BMV agricultural land](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5208993007403008) (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/5208993007403008>)

These maps are not at a scale suitable or accurate for assessment of individual fields or sites.

You can assess if a development proposal is likely to affect BMV agricultural land by using the [post 1988 ALC Magic map](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?chosenLayers=dudleystampIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europeIndex,vmlBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=449447:459357:467834:470294&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false) (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?chosenLayers=dudleystampIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europeIndex,vmlBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=449447:459357:467834:470294&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false>) and [detailed site survey reports](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6249382855835648) (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6249382855835648>).

If no site survey reports are available, a [new detailed survey](#) may be necessary.

6. Use ALC to support your planning decisions

Use ALC survey data to assess the loss of land or quality of land from a proposed development. You should take account of smaller losses (under 20ha) if they're significant when making your decision. Your decision should avoid unnecessary loss of BMV land.

6.1 Protect soil

You should make sure development proposals include plans to:

- [manage soils in a sustainable way during construction](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-sustainable-use-of-soils-on-construction-sites) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-sustainable-use-of-soils-on-construction-sites>)

- avoid peat extraction
- protect soils from contamination
- [reclaim land after mineral working or landfilling](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reclaim-minerals-extraction-and-landfill-sites-to-agriculture)
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reclaim-minerals-extraction-and-landfill-sites-to-agriculture>)

6.2 Carry out new surveys

If there's not enough information from previous data, you may need to have a new field survey to plan for development or to inform a planning decision. You should use soil scientists or experienced soil specialists to carry out new surveys. They should be:

- members of the British Society of Soil Science, the British Institute of Agricultural Consultants or similar professional body
- knowledgeable about the [ALC 1988 guidelines](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6257050620264448)
(<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6257050620264448>)
- experienced in soil description and ALC assessments

6.3 Survey requirements

For a detailed ALC assessment, a soil specialist should normally make boreholes:

- every hectare on a regular grid on agricultural land in the proposed development area
- up to 1.2m deep using a hand-held auger

They should:

- dig small inspection pits by hand to a minimum depth of 1m to add supporting evidence to the borehole data
- dig pits where there's a change in main soil type and ALC grade to provide a good depiction of the site
- combine the survey results with local climate and site data to plot on an Ordnance Survey (OS) base map
- use a base map at an appropriate scale for detailed work, such as 1:10,000 scale

7. Developers: check if your proposal affects agricultural land

Use the [post 1988 ALC Magic map](http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?chosenLayers=dudleystampIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europeIndex,vmlBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=449447:459357:467834:470294&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false) (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?chosenLayers=dudleystampIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europeIndex,vmlBWIndex,25kBWIndex,50kBWIndex,250kBWIndex,miniscaleBWIndex,baseIndex&box=449447:459357:467834:470294&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false>) and [detailed site survey reports](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6249382855835648) (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6249382855835648>) to help you assess whether a development proposal is likely to affect BMV agricultural land. If no suitable data exists, you may need to carry out a [detailed survey](#) to support your planning application.

7.1 Free and chargeable advice

Natural England offers advice for proposals. Some initial advice is free. More [detailed advice is chargeable](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/developers-get-environmental-advice-on-your-planning-proposals#when-you-can-pay-for-agency-advice) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/developers-get-environmental-advice-on-your-planning-proposals#when-you-can-pay-for-agency-advice>), for example if your proposal is 20ha or more and requires more detailed advice.

Email: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

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Appendix KCC6
Analysis of Appeal Decisions

Local Planning Authority	Appeal Ref	Decision Date	Grades	Ha	Inspector	Paragraph reference	Secretary of State	Decision
Dover	APP/X2220/W/17/3187592	28/09/2018	2 and 3a	1	Majority of land in district BMV. Therefore loss of BMV inevitable. Loss is very limited having regard to wider district. Complies with paragraph 170.	13-16		Allowed
South Derbyshire DC	APP/F1040/W/20/3261872	30/03/2021	3a	1	Development would moderately harm the availability of BMV land. The scheme conflicts with the agricultural and economic aims of LP2 policies BNE4, BNE5 and requirements of the Framework.	25		Dismissed
Milton Keynes	APP/Y0435/W/18/3214365	26/09/2019	3a	1.6	Considered to be loss of significant amount of BMV. Unacceptable loss of BMV. Disregards site would be small in context of whole borough.	33-35		Allowed
North Devon	APP/X1118/W/16/3154193	06/01/2017	2	2	Not significant re para 112 given ALC of area	41 - 43		Allowed
Cheshire East	APP/R0660/A/14/2216767	14/01/2015	2 and 3a	2	Does not weigh heavily against	32 - 33		Allowed
Malvern Hills	APP/J1860/W/17/3192152	08/08/2018	2	2	Refers to grade 3b being BMV? No evidence of alternative sites of lower quality. Unacceptable loss of significant amount of agricultural land.	13-18		Dismissed
Warrington	APP/M0655/W/19/3222603	02/11/2020	2	2	Minor weight and not unacceptable impact on land in area	MR 416	Agreed – minor weight	Dismissed
N W Leicestershire	APP/G2435/W/16/3153781	07/07/2017	3a	3	Less than 20ha is low amount of land	41		Dismissed
Flyde	APP/M2325/W/17/3166394	18/08/2017	2	3	Significant Grade 2 locally. Limited weight against	59		Allowed
Uttlesford	APP/C1570/W/16/3156864	11/07/2017	2 and 3a	3	Significant development and greater weight	18 - 24		Dismissed
South Cambridgeshire	APP/W0530/W/16/3144909	07/06/2016	2	3	No evidence of availability of lesser quality. Moderate weight against	27 - 29		Dismissed

Local Planning Authority	Appeal Ref	Decision Date	Grades	Ha	Inspector	Paragraph reference	Secretary of State	Decision
Cheshire East	APP/R0660/A/13/2197532		2 & 3a	3	The loss here cannot be judged as significant.	14	SoS agrees proposed development would result in loss of BMVAL. Further agrees area of land is modest and predominantly at lower grade, and that its loss cannot be judged significant.	SoS agreed with the Inspector Allowed
Thanet DC	APP/Z2260/W/20/3252380	18/12/2020	1 & 2	3	Proposal would result in the loss of BMVL. LP Policy E16 requires that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm resulting in the loss of land.	20		Dismissed
Havant BC	APP/X1735/W/20/3259067	13/07/2021	1 & 2	4	No evidence regarding agricultural quality of the site in comparison to other land in the borough, relatively small area, minor impact.	82 - 83		Dismissed
Cheshire East Council	APP/R0660/A/13/2189733	18/10/2013	BMV (grades not specified)	4	Loss of BMV land would be modest at worst. Whilst the loss of some BMV land is a disbenefit, in the context of this proposal the loss is of minor weight	57		Allowed
Cheshire East	APP/R0660/W/15/3132073	18/08/2016	2 and 3a	5	Not significant development, BMV locally, localised harm	53 - 55		Allowed
Forest of Dean	APP/P1615/A/14/2228822	08/05/2017	2 and 3a	5	Relatively small area, limited weight	72 - 73		Allowed
Vale of White Horse	APP/V2130/W/15/3141276	20/05/2016	2 and 3	5	Not significant in context of 20ha consultation threshold and para 112	22 - 26		Allowed
Vale of White Horse	APP/V3120/W/15/3129361	19/02/2016	1, 2 and 3a	5	Not significant in terms of para 112, but still slight harm	5 - 8		Allowed
Cheshire East	APP/R0660/W/17/3173355	07/07/2017	3a	5	Would not be significant in terms of the Framework, matter for the planning balance	34 - 35		Dismissed
South Gloucestershire	APP/P0119/W/17/3191477	06/09/2018	3a	5	Having regard to the amount of BMV land that will be required for development, insignificant.	57		Allowed

Local Planning Authority	Appeal Ref	Decision Date	Grades	Ha	Inspector	Paragraph reference	Secretary of State	Decision
Braintree	APP/Z1510/V/17/3180729	8/06/2019	Assumed 2	5	Does not deal with significance but identifies that there would be little opportunity to use poorer quality land. Does not conflict with paragraph 112.	505 - 509	Development would not protect BMV as required by Policy CS8 but that this policy is inconsistent with paragraphs 170,171 and footnote 53 of framework. Limited weight given to conflict with CS8.	Allowed
Central Beds	APP/P0240/W/17/3176387	9/06/2018	3a	5	Would not pass 20ha consultation threshold. District has high proportion of BMV. Loss of BMV would not be significant in economic terms and afforded limited weight.	53 - 57		Allowed
Durham	APP/X1355/W/16/3165490	29/09/2017	2 and 3a	5	Not significant on any reasonable assessment	89 - 95		Allowed
Fareham	APP/A1720/W/16/3156344	14/08/2017	1 and 2	6	Not significant where sequential approach engaged. Limited harm	28 - 30		Allowed
North Hertfordshire	APP/X1925/W/17/3184846	18/01/2019	3a	6.5	Loss of this amount of BMV would have relatively minor adverse economic and environmental effects.	48		Dismissed
Suffolk Coastal	APP/J3530/W/15/3011466	25/04/2016	3a	7	A factor to be weighed in the balance	59		Allowed
South Oxfordshire	APP/Q3115/W/17/3188474	27/06/2018	2 and 3a	7	Parties agreed to give moderate weight. Not significant in context of high quantities of BMV land around Didcot.	52		Dismissed
South Oxfordshire	APP/Q3115/W/17/3186858	29/05/2018	2 and 3a	7	Less than Natural England 20 ha consultation threshold. High proportion of BMV land in SODC. Concluded that development is not significant.	60 - 61		Allowed
South Staffordshire	APP/C3430/W/18/3213147	3/05/2019	2 and 3a	8	Does not deal with 'significance' but sets out that harm caused by loss of grade 2 would be limited.	54		Allowed
Boston	APP/Z2505/W/17/3170198	25/10/2017	1	10	Limited by difficulties of delivering housing in area of high quality land	51		Allowed

Local Planning Authority	Appeal Ref	Decision Date	Grades	Ha	Inspector	Paragraph reference	Secretary of State	Decision
Flyde	APP/M2325/W/16/3144925	23/01/2017	3a	11	Large amount of grade 2 and 3 in area, minor weight against	15		Allowed
Forest of Dean	APP/P1615/W/15/3005408	11/04/2018	2 and 3a	11	Weight depends upon level of need. In this case limited weight	14.15, 14.56	Agrees limited weight	Allowed
Teignbridge	APP/P1133/A/12/2188938	10/09/2013	1 and 2	11	Loss would be small in terms of overall proportions.	12.58 – 12.60	Harm lessened as small in terms of proportions	Allowed
Uttlesford	APP/C1570/A/14/2221494	02/06/2015	2 and 3a	12	Loss modest in context of land quality in area. Limited weight against	49 - 51		Dismissed
West Lancashire	APP/P2365/W/15/3132596	22/03/2018	2 and 3a	13	Loss of small proportion of overall BMV in the Borough. However, will involve loss of significant area of BMV land.	29 - 32		Dismissed
East Hertfordshire	APP/J1915/A/14/2220854	03/03/2016	2	14	Loss of 14ha Grade 2 noted, no weight attributed	76	Moderate weight against	Allowed
South Gloucestershire	APP/P0119/W/17/3182296	3/05/2018	BMV (grades not specified)	14	Any development around local town likely to lead to some loss of BMV. No economic arguments put forward to indicate significant harm and conflict with para 112. Identified that there would be harm but does not quantify this.	53, 74		Allowed
Forest Heath	APP/H3510/V/14/2222871	28/07/2015	Not stated	20	Adverse factor that weighs against	468	Adverse effect that carries moderate weight against	Refused by SoS contrary to Inspector
Warwick	APP/T3725/A/14/2229398	14/01/2016	2	22	No evidence housing need can be met avoiding BMV	452	Moderate weight against	Allowed
East Staffordshire	APP/B3410/W/15/3134848	18/11/2016	2 and 3a	23	Significant development and BMV reasonably scare locally, development not demonstrated to be necessary, some weight to harm	11.1 – 11.10	Moderate weight against	Dismissed
Eastleigh	APP/W1715/A/14/2228566	09/11/2016	2 and 3a	23	Not substantial weight against	115	Moderate weight against	Dismissed
Suffolk Coastal	APP/J3530/W/15/3138710	31/08/2017	1 and 2	31	No specific consideration given		Moderate weight against (para 28)	Allowed

Local Planning Authority	Appeal Ref	Decision Date	Grades	Ha	Inspector	Paragraph reference	Secretary of State	Decision
Uttlesford	APP/C1570/A/14/2213025	25/08/2016	2 and 3a	40	Much of the area around is BMV and it would be difficult not to use if using greenfield land	15.47	SoS affords the loss limited weight against given much of land in area is BMV	Dismissed in line with recommendation
Tewkesbury	APP/G1630/V/14/2229497	04/12/2015	2 and 3a	42	Inevitable where large scale urban extensions required. Moderate degree of harm	15.41	Moderate weight against	Allowed
Guildford	APP/Y3615/W/16/3159894	13/06/2018	2 and 3a	44	Loss of BMV weighs against the proposals	20.152	Loss of BMV weighs against and is given considerable weight.	Dismissed
Aylesbury Vale	APP/J0405/A/14/2219574	09/08/2016	2 and 3a	55	Grade 2 relatively sparse locally. Moderate weight against	7.74 – 7.80	Moderate weight against	Dismissed

APPENDIX KCC7
Extracts from the Agricultural Land
Quality Report May 2020 Part 2

**AGRICULTURAL QUALITY OF LAND
SURROUNDING SETTLEMENTS IN THE
HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH DISTRICT**

Report 1454/2

7th May, 2020

Land
Research
ASSOCIATES
www.lra.co.uk

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Land Research Associates have been commissioned by the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) to provide details on the agricultural quality of land across the District. This study addresses land quality surrounding fourteen settlements in the District (see Map 1 at the end of this Section):

Bagworth	Hinckley
Barlestone	Market Bosworth
Barwell	Markfield
Burbage	Newbold Verdon
Desford	Ratby
Earl Shilton	Stoke Golding
Groby	Thornton

- 1.2** Information from this report and the desk study (see report 1454/1) will be reviewed in a non-technical report (see report 1454/3).

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

- 1.3** Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is a system used in England and Wales to grade the quality of land for agricultural use, according to the extent by which physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations. The ALC system¹ classifies land into five grades numbered 1 to 5, with grade 3 divided into two sub-grades (3a and 3b). Best and most versatile (BMV) land is considered land grades 1, 2 and subgrade 3a; this land is of high agricultural quality and protected in National Planning Policy. The system was devised and introduced in the 1960s and revised in 1988.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 1.4** This piece of work will act as an evidence base to allow the Council, where possible, to guide development away from best and most versatile land in line with National Planning Policy. The applicable legislative framework is summarised as follows from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019):

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local

¹Agricultural Land Classification for England and Wales: Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land. MAFF, 1988.

environment by:

“a) ...protecting and enhancing... soils (in a manner commensurate with their... identified quality in the development plan)

b)...recognising the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land”

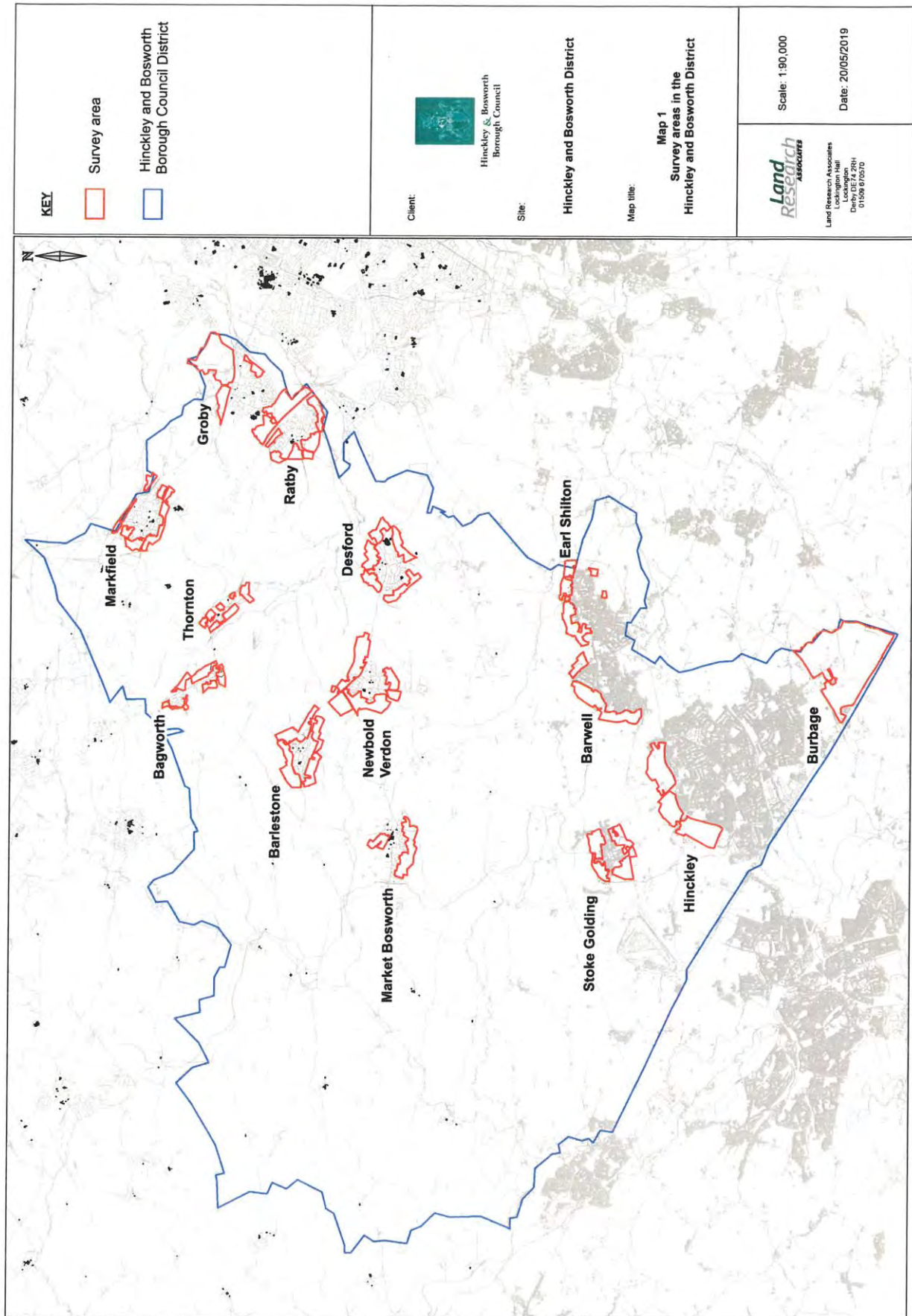
“Plans should:...allocate land with the least environmental...value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework...Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.”

METHODOLOGY

- 1.5** The ALC survey was carried out on foot and based on shallow soil pits and augerings to 1 m depth (where not stopped by impenetrable layers) at each observation point, located using GPS. Observations were conducted at alternate intersects of a 100 m grid, providing a sampling density of one observation every two hectares. Survey was conducted strictly in accordance with the Agricultural Land Classification for England and Wales (1988).
- 1.6** The survey was carried out between October 2018 and March 2019 with the permissions of landowners and tenant farmers for access. Where land access was not obtained (landowner not identified or access not granted), ALC grades were interpolated using nearby observations and published soils and geological information.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

- 1.7** The observation density of the ALC survey provides semi-detailed land quality information. While this gives a useful overview of broad land grades for directing development towards lower quality land, Natural England recommend detailed (1 observation per hectare) ALC mapping for LPAs to base their final planning decisions.
- 1.8** Estimated grading should not be assumed to meet the required degree of accuracy required for planning applications and in all cases detailed survey to Natural England guidelines is recommended.



5.0 Agricultural land quality around Burbage

SURVEY RESULTS

- 5.1** The agricultural quality of the land is determined by wetness or droughtiness. Land of grades 1, 2 and 3 has been identified; see Map 5 at the end of this Section for their distribution.

Grade 1

- 5.2** This land is found in the south of the site and comprises deep sandy loams with no significant limitations to agricultural use.

Grade 2

- 5.3** Land of this quality is found across the area. Where the land grade has medium loamy soil, the moderately high clay content of the topsoils, combined with slight drainage impedance, limits access with machinery during wet winters under the local climate.
- 5.4** In other areas soils with sandy subsoils form grade 2 land; these are limited by droughtiness, as the subsoils have a limited moisture storage capacity that will lead to reduced crop yields in dry years under the local climate.

Subgrade 3a

- 5.5** Where sandy clay loams overlie slowly permeable clay at depth (around 50 cm) land is limited by wetness to subgrade 3a. The moderate clay content of the topsoil, in combination with the impeded drainage of the lower subsoil can restrict the access of machinery to land in spring during wet years.

Subgrade 3b

- 5.6** Land of subgrade 3b agricultural quality is mainly present in the north and east of the site where heavy clay loam topsoil directly overlies slowly permeable clay. The poor drainage and high topsoil clay content of these soils combine to restrict access by farm machinery to autumn, constraining arable land use to combinable autumn sown crops in most years.

ESTIMATED LAND GRADES

Estimated Grade 2

- 5.7** Grade 2 quality land was found to be formed over superficial sand and gravel deposits which provides deep loamy soils. These deposits are also mapped in inaccessible areas in the north and a small area in the south of the survey area, which are therefore predicted to be of the same quality.

Estimated Subgrade 3a

- 5.8 This land grade was encountered where Oadby till is mapped and is therefore also predicted on unsurveyed areas with this geology. It is also interpolated the boundary between sands and gravel deposits and Bosworth Clay.

Estimated Subgrade 3b

- 5.17 Subgrade 3b land is predicted over areas of Bosworth Clay Member superficial drift, which typically gives heavy slowly permeable soils with wetness limitations.

Table 4: Areas occupied by the different land grades surrounding Burbage

<i>Grade/subgrade</i>	<i>Area (ha)</i>		<i>% of the land</i>	
	Surveyed land	Surveyed and estimated land	Surveyed land	Surveyed and estimated land
Grade 1	21.6	21.6	10	8
Grade 2	79.2	91.4	36	33
Subgrade 3a	65.1	89.9	29	32
BMV land total	165.9	202.9	75	73
Subgrade 3b	56.2	74.7	25	27
Total land area	222.1	277.6	100	100

SURVEY RESULTS

- 9.1. The agricultural quality of the land is determined by wetness or droughtiness. Land of grades 2 and 3 has been identified: see Map 9 at the end of this Section for their distribution.

Grade 2

- 9.2. Land of this agricultural quality is mainly found in the east of the site. Where the land has sandy clay loam soils, their moderate clay content causes slight wetness constraints which restricts access with machinery for the cultivation/harvesting of winter crops in wet years.
- 9.3. Land with sandy loam or loamy sand subsoils also forms grade 2 land. The moderately high sand content of the subsoils means they have a limited moisture storage capacity that will lead to slightly reduced crop yields in dry years under the local climate.

Subgrade 3a

- 9.4. Land of this quality is mainly found where sandy clay loams overlie slowly permeable clay at depth (around 50 cm). The moderate clay content of the topsoil in combination with the impeded drainage of the lower subsoil restricts access of machinery to land in spring during wet years.

Subgrade 3b

- 9.5. Land of subgrade 3b agricultural quality is mainly found in the centre and south of the area, where heavy slowly permeable soils are present. The combination of high clay content topsoil and impeded drainage means access with farm machinery is restricted, with spring cropping rarely possible and arable use mainly limited to autumn sowings.

ESTIMATED LAND GRADES

Estimated Grade 2

- 9.6. A small area of grade 2 is predicted in the south of the area, where the recorded sand and gravel deposits are likely to give freely-draining soils with slight droughtiness limitations.

Estimated Subgrade 3a

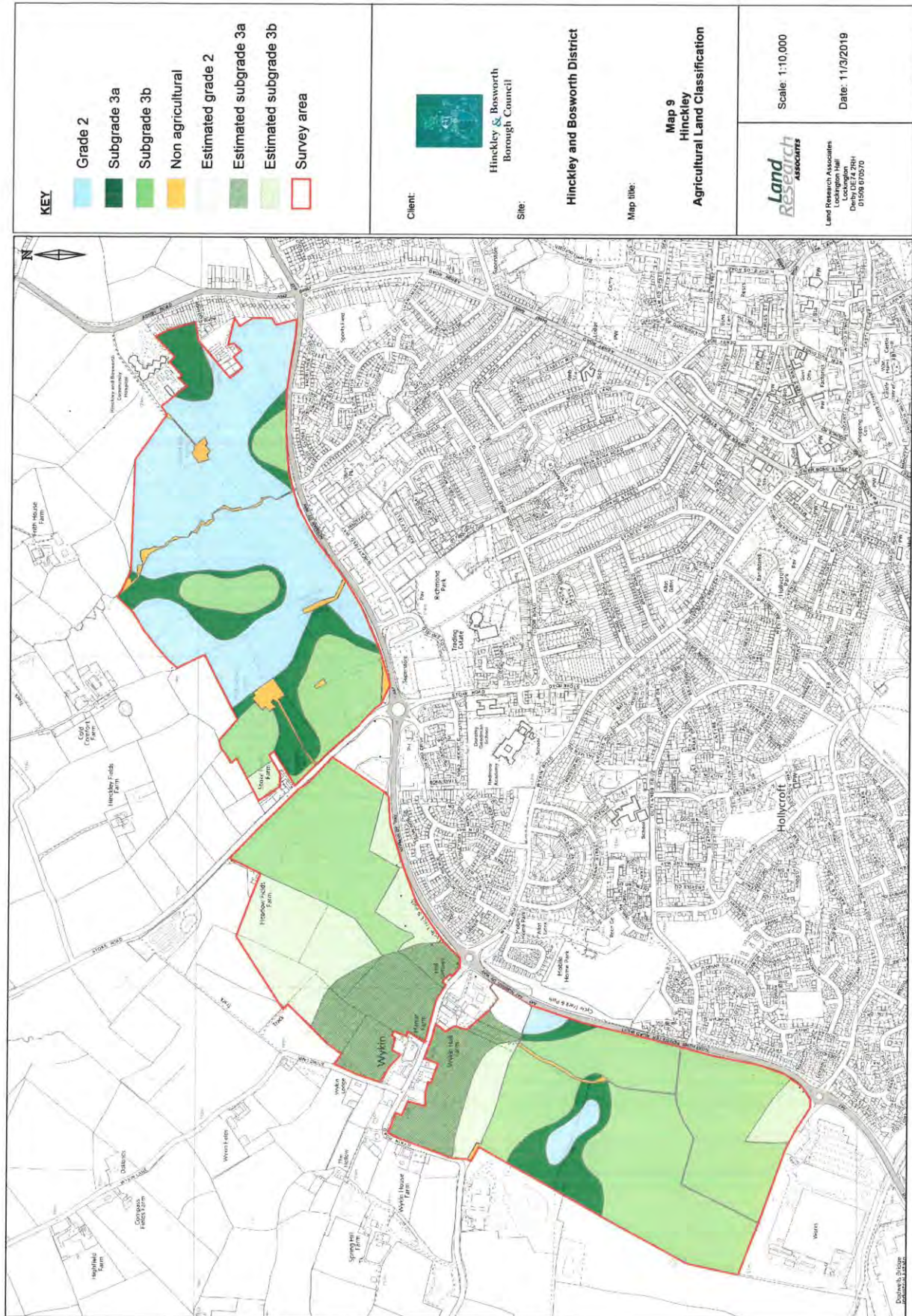
- 9.7. This land grade was encountered in the area where Oadby till is mapped and is also estimated where similar geology is recorded in the south of the site near Wykin Hall Farm.

Estimated Subgrade 3b

- 9.8. Subgrade 3b land is predicted over recorded Bosworth Clay Member in the centre of the site, which mainly gives heavy clay soils with significant wetness limitations.

Table 8: Areas occupied by the different land grades surrounding Hinckley

Grade/subgrade	Area (ha)		% of the land	
	Surveyed land	Surveyed and estimated land	Surveyed land	Surveyed and estimated land
Grade 1	0	0	0	0
Grade 2	39.6	40.6	32	25
Subgrade 3a	16.6	33.7	14	21
BMV land total	56.2	74.3	46	46
Subgrade 3b	65.9	85.3	54	54
Total land area	122.1	159.6	100	100





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