

The West Midlands Rail Freight Interchange Order 201X  
Technical Appendix 6.1 - Agricultural Land Classification  
Regulation 5(2)(a)  
Askew Land and Soil Ltd - March 2018



## **Agricultural Land Classification:**

West Midlands Interchange,  
Four Ashes, Staffordshire

Prepared for:  
**Ramboll Environ UK Ltd**

On Behalf Of:  
**Four Ashes Ltd**

Prepared by:  
**R W Askew BSC(Hons) MSc MISoilSci CSci**  
**Askew Land and Soil Ltd**

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*Our interpretation of the site characteristics is based on available data made during our desktop study and soil survey. This desktop study and soil survey has assessed the characteristics of the site in relation to the assessment of its Agricultural Land Classification. It should not be relied on for alternative end-uses or for other schemes. This report has been prepared solely for the benefit of Ramboll Environ UK Ltd and Four Ashes Ltd. No warranty is provided to any third party and no responsibility or liability will be accepted for any loss or damage in the event that this report is relied upon by a third party or is used in circumstances for which it was not originally intended.*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

1.1.1 This report was commissioned by Ramboll Environ UK Ltd on behalf of Four Ashes Ltd to determine the quality of agricultural land at an approximately 296.9 hectare (ha) Site proposed for the West Midlands Interchange at Four Ashes, Staffordshire ('the Site'). The assessment is made in accordance with the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system for England and Wales (see 'Methodology' below). A detailed description of the Site is provided in Section 2.3.

## 1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 The work has been carried out by experienced Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) surveyors and led by a Chartered Scientist (CSci), who is a Member of the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists (IPSS). The IPSS is the chartered and professional body of the British Society of Soil Science (BSSS). In addition, this ALC survey has been carried out by soil scientists who meet the requirements of the IPSS Professional Competency Scheme for ALC (see IPSS PCSS Document 2 'Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales', given as Appendix A). The IPSS Professional Competency Scheme is endorsed, amongst others, by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Natural England, the Science Council, and the Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management (IEMA) (see Appendix A also).

1.2.2 This assessment is based upon the findings of a study of published information on climate, geology and soil in combination with a soil investigation carried out in accordance with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF)<sup>1</sup> 'Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land', October, 1988 (henceforth referred to as the 'the ALC Guidelines').

1.2.3 The 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 'Excellent' to Grade 5 'Very Poor'), with Grade 3 subdivided into Subgrade 3a 'Good' and Subgrade 3b 'Moderate'. Agricultural land classified as Grade 1, 2 and Subgrade 3a falls in the 'best and most versatile' category in Paragraph 112 and Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of March 2012. Further details of the ALC system and national planning policy implications are set out by Natural England in its Technical Information Note 049, given as Appendix B, and in Section 2.0 of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) was incorporated within the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in June 2001

- 1.2.4 A detailed ALC survey of the Site was completed in three parts on (i) the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August 2016, (ii) 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016, and (iii) 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The detailed survey involved examination of the soil's physical properties at 182 locations on previously un-surveyed agricultural land, at a density of one auger boring per hectare (ha), as shown on Figure 1. The remainder of the study area is either non-agricultural land (i.e. buildings, roads, woodland, water bodies), or has been the subject of a previous, detailed ALC survey carried out by the former MAFF in connection with a mineral quarry in the south east of the Site (this described in more detail in Section 2.0 of this report).
- 1.2.5 The sample locations were located using a hand-held Garmin E-Trec Geographic Information System (GIS) to enable the sample locations to be relocated for verification, if necessary.
- 1.2.6 The soil profile was examined at each sample location to a maximum depth of approximately 1.2 m by hand with the use of a 5 cm diameter Dutch (Edleman) soil auger.
- 1.2.7 The soil profile at each sample location was assessed and described using the 'Soil Survey Field Handbook: Describing and Sampling Soil Profiles' (Ed. J.M. Hodgson, Cranfield University, 1997). Each soil profile was ascribed an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grade following the MAFF ALC Guidelines.
- 1.2.8 A sample of topsoil was collected at auger locations 56, 72, 108, 124, 158, 162, and 179. All seven samples were sent to an accredited laboratory for analysis of particle size distribution (PSD), i.e. the proportions of sand, silt and clay. This is to determine the definitive texture class of the topsoil, especially with regard to distinguishing between medium clay loams (i.e. <27% clay), heavy clay loams (27% to 35% clay) and clays (>35% clay). The results of the laboratory PSD analysis are presented in Section 2.4, and on Certificates of Analysis given in Appendix D.

### 1.3 Structure of the Remainder of this Report

1.3.1 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 – Agricultural Land Classification;
  - Climate;
  - Site (Gradient, Micro-relief, Risk of Flooding);
  - Soil (Geology, Soil Properties);
  - Interactive Limitations (Soil Droughtiness, Soil Wetness);
  - ALC Grading at the Site.
- Section 3 – ALC at the Site in a Wider Geographical Context; and
- Section 4 – Summary and Conclusions.

## 2 AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

### 2.1 Background

2.1.1 This section of the report sets out the findings of the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC). It is based on a desktop study of relevant published information on climate, topography, geology, and soil in conjunction with a soil survey carried out on Site by experienced ALC surveyors, led by a Chartered Soil Scientist, in three parts on (i) the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> August 2016, (ii) 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016, and (iii) 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The detailed survey involved examination of the soil's physical properties at 182 locations, as shown on Figure 1 (see 'Methodology' above).

2.1.2 As described in the ALC Guidelines, the main physical factors influencing agricultural land quality are:

- climate;
- site;
- soil; and
- interactive limitations.

2.1.3 These factors are considered in turn below.

### 2.2 Climate

2.2.1 Interpolated climate data relevant to the determination of the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grade of land at the Site is given in Table 2.1 below.

<b>Table 2.1: Interpolated ALC Climate Data for the land at Four Ashes, Staffordshire</b>	
<b>Climate Parameter</b>	<b>National Grid Reference SJ 920 098</b>
Average Altitude (m)	107
Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	700
Accumulated Temperature above 0°C (January – June)	1360
Moisture Deficit (mm) Wheat	93
Moisture Deficit (mm) Potatoes	80
Field Capacity Days (FCD)	164
Best ALC Grade According to Climate Limitation	1

- 2.2.2 With reference to Figure 1 ‘Grade according to climate’ on page 6 of the ALC Guidelines, the quality of agricultural land at the Site is not limited by overall climate, meaning that agricultural land at the Site could be graded as high as Grade 1 in the absence of any other limiting factor, i.e. site, soil, and/or interactive limitations (as described below).
- 2.2.3 The average annual rainfall at the Site (i.e. 700 mm) is comparable to the mean for central, lowland England (i.e. 700 mm). Likewise, agricultural land at the Site is predicted to be at field capacity (i.e. near saturation point) for 164 days per year, mainly over the late autumn, winter and early spring. This is also comparable to central, lowland England (i.e. approximately 150 FCD)<sup>2</sup> and may, in combination with heavier topsoil textures and slowly permeable subsoils, cause an ‘interactive’ soil wetness limitation.
- 2.2.4 Corresponding with the average amounts of precipitation, the predicted soil moisture deficits (MD) for the two reference crops used for ALC (i.e. MD for winter wheat is 93 mm, and the MD for maincrop potatoes is 80 mm) are comparable to those found in central, lowland England (i.e. the mean MD for winter wheat is approximately 100 mm – no mean data for maincrop potatoes)<sup>3</sup>. In combination with lighter profile textures, higher stone content and poor subsoil structure, this may cause an ‘interactive’ soil droughtiness limitation.

## 2.3 Site

- 2.3.1 The approximately 296 ha Site is located directly to the north of Four Ashes, Staffordshire and 10 km north of Wolverhampton, as shown on Figure 1. It is centred at National Grid Reference SJ 920 098. The Site is bordered by the A5 to the north, Calf Heath Reservoir and the M6 to the east, the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to the south, and the A449 Stafford Road to the west. At the time of the ALC survey the Site was mainly under arable (including barley or barley stubble), with some areas of potatoes, rough grassland and set-aside land. The Rugby–Birmingham–Stafford railway line passes from north to south through the western half of the Site.
- 2.3.2 With regard to the ALC Guidelines, agricultural land quality can be limited by one or more of three main site factors as follows:
- Gradient;
  - Micro-relief (i.e. complex change in slope angle over short distances); and
  - Risk of flooding.

### I. Gradient and Micro-Relief

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<sup>2</sup> J.M.Ragg et al. Soil Survey of England and Wales (1984). *Soils and the Use in Midland and Western England. Bulletin No. 12. Harpenden*

<sup>3</sup> J.M.Ragg et al. Soil Survey of England and Wales (1984). *Soils and the Use in South Eastern England. Bulletin No. 15. Harpenden*



- 2.3.3 The Site lies on generally level ground, with elevation ranging between approximately 115 metres (m) Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the highest central and eastern parts of the Site, and 100 mAOD at the lowest points towards the west and south of the Site.
- 2.3.4 Gradient has been assessed on Site with the use of an Abney Level and the Site has been determined to be not limited by gradient, as no slopes exceed an angle of 7°.
- 2.3.5 Micro-relief, i.e. complex changes in slope angle and direction over short distances, does not limit the grading of the agricultural land at the Site.

## II. Risk of Flooding

- 2.3.6 From an Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map<sup>4</sup>, the entire Site falls within Flood Zone 1 (land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding (<0.1%)). Combined with the Site investigation, it is considered that the risk of flooding is not a limitation to agricultural land quality at this Site in terms of Table 2 of the ALC Guidelines 'Grade according to flood risk in summer', and Table 3 'Grade according to flood risk in winter'.

## 2.4 Soil

### I. Geology/Soil Parent Material

- 2.4.1 British Geological Survey (BGS) information available online has been utilised to show the Superficial Deposits (Drift) and Bedrock underlying the Site<sup>5</sup>. This provides information on the geological materials in which the soil has formed.
- 2.4.2 The bedrock underlying most of the site is described by the BGS (1:50,000) as sandstone of the Wildmoor Sandstone Formation. The bedrock underlying the north western tip of the site, to Croft Lane along the northern edge and to 300m south of Gravelly Way along the southern edge, is described as sandstone, pebbly (gravelly), of the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation.
- 2.4.3 The BGS Superficial Deposit map (1:50,000) indicates that the bedrock underlying much of the Site is covered by sand and gravel from Devensian Glaciofluvial Deposits. Devensian Glacial Till covers areas of bedrock at the north east and south of the Site. An area to the north west of the Site is covered by clay, silt, sand and gravel from Alluvium and small areas at the south east and west of the Site are not covered by any recorded deposits.

## II. Published Information on Soil

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<sup>4</sup> Environment Agency Flood Risk Map. Available online @ [http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?topic=floodmap&layerGroups=default&lang=\\_e&ep=map&scale=7&x=531500&y=181500#x=392266&y=309471&lg=1,2,10,&scale=9](http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?topic=floodmap&layerGroups=default&lang=_e&ep=map&scale=7&x=531500&y=181500#x=392266&y=309471&lg=1,2,10,&scale=9) Last viewed March 2018

<sup>5</sup> British Geological Survey 'Geology of Britain Viewer'. Available online @ <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html> Last viewed March 2018

- 2.4.4 Provisional information for soils at the Site was gathered from the Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW) soil map of Midland and Western England (Sheet 3) at a scale of 1:250,000 and accompanying Bulletin No. 12 '*Soils and their Use in Midland and Western England*' (J. M. Ragg *et al*, Harpenden, 1984). The provisional information indicates that agricultural land over most of the Site is covered by soils of the Clifton Association, with soils of the Wick 1 Association covering parts of the west of the Site.
- 2.4.5 The Clifton association includes slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, reddish, fine and coarse loamy soils, and similar soils with slight seasonal waterlogging, with some deep, coarse loamy soils, seasonally affected by groundwater. The association is extensive south and west of the Pennines, from south Staffordshire and Clwyd to the Scottish border. The principal Clifton series are typical stagnogley soils comprised of reddish medium loamy drift with siliceous stones. A typical profile consists of dark greyish brown, slightly stony, clay loam or sandy clay loam topsoil; over greyish brown, mottled, slightly stony, sandy loam or sandy clay loam upper subsoil, with weakly developed, medium sub-angular blocky structure; over reddish brown, mottled, slightly stony, clay loam or sandy clay loam lower subsoil, with moderately developed, coarse prismatic structure; over reddish brown, mottled, slightly stony, clay loam, with weakly developed, coarse prismatic or massive structure. The main soils have slowly permeable subsoils and are seasonally waterlogged for long periods in winter (Wetness Class IV), though drainage measures significantly reduce the duration of waterlogging (Wetness Class III). These soils have small or moderate reserves of profile available water and, in the driest areas, potatoes may suffer slightly from drought and grassland tends to scorch in dry summers.
- 2.4.6 The Wick 1 association includes deep, well drained, coarse loamy and sandy soils, locally over gravel, with some similar soils affected by groundwater. These soils have a slight risk of water erosion. The association occurs widely throughout Northern England, the Midlands and Wales. The principal Wick series soils are deep, well drained, coarse loamy, typical brown earths. A typical profile consists of dark brown, slightly stony, sandy loam or sandy silty loam topsoil; over brown, slightly stony, sandy loam or sandy silty loam upper subsoil with moderately developed, medium subangular blocky structure; over yellowish brown, slightly or moderately stony, loamy sand or sandy loam lower subsoil with weakly developed, medium angular blocky or single grain structure; over brownish yellow, slightly or moderately stony, sand or loamy sand with weakly developed, coarse angular blocky or single grain structure. The main soils are well drained (Wetness Class I) and readily absorb winter rain. Droughtiness varies with climate.

### III. Soil Survey

- 2.4.7 The findings of the detailed soil survey determined that the soil across the Site is variable but can be broadly categorised under two types. A log of the soil profiles recorded on Site is given as Appendix C.

*Soil type 1*

- 2.4.8 Soil profiles over most of the Site consist of very dark greyish brown, very dark grey or dark brown (Munsell colours 10YR 3/2, 3/1 and 7.5YR 3/2), slightly to moderately stony (8-30% hard stones), non-calcareous, medium sandy loam, sandy clay loam or loamy medium sand topsoil. The upper subsoil consists of brown, yellowish brown or dark yellowish brown (Munsell colours 7.5YR 5/4, 4/4 or 10YR 5/3, 4/3, 5/4, 4/4), often ochreous mottled (Munsell colours 7.5YR 5/6, 5/8, 6/6, 6/8 or 10YR 5/6, 5/8), very slightly to very stony (2-60% hard stones), non-calcareous, medium sandy loam, loamy medium sand or sandy clay loam with moderate structural condition. The lower subsoil consists of variably coloured, light grey to light yellowish brown to strong brown to reddish brown (Munsell colours 10YR 7/2, 6/4, 7.5YR 4/6, 5YR 5/4), often ochreous and grey mottled, stoneless to very stony (0-60% hard stones), non-calcareous, loamy medium sand, medium sandy loam or medium sand, with moderate structural condition. Many of these profiles become impossible to auger at variable depth due to very stony or iron pan layers. Type 1 profiles are usually well drained and placed in Wetness Class I.

*Soil type 2*

- 2.4.9 Some profiles across the Site include a slowly permeable layer within the upper or lower subsoil consisting of reddish brown (Munsell colours 5YR 4/4, 5/3, 5/4 or 2.5YR 4/4), grey mottled (Munsell colours 2.5Y 6/1, 6/2 and 10YR 6/1), stoneless to slightly stony (0-10% hard stone), non-calcareous, clay or sandy clay, with poor structural condition. These profiles often have similar, moderately structured, sandy clay loam or heavy clay loam layers immediately above or below the slowly permeable layer. Type 2 profiles range between well drained profiles placed in Wetness Class I and profiles which are waterlogged for long periods over the winter and placed in Wetness Class IV, depending on the depth to the slowly permeable clay layer.
- 2.4.10 A large area of land at the east of the Site lies within the boundaries of a working quarry and has not been surveyed. Auger points 38, 174 and 175 are located in areas that were inaccessible at the time of the survey.
- 2.4.11 Woodland, including Calf Heath Wood, covers a large area at the centre of the Site and several smaller areas over the Site. The rail line transecting the Site, Gravelly Way, buildings and structures at Woodside Farm, the end of Croft Lane and the southwest of the Site, and several other small areas across the Site are covered by infrastructure or hardstanding. A canal crosses the centre of the Site, and is included along with several smaller bodies of water at the Site. These areas covered by woodland, infrastructure and hardstanding, or water have been assessed as non-agricultural land.

2.4.12 In order to substantiate topsoil texture determined during the ALC survey by hand-texturing, seven samples of topsoil were collected over the Site (i.e. Auger Locations 56, 72, 108, 124, 158, 162 and 179). The topsoil samples were sent to an accredited laboratory for analysis of particle size distribution (PSD), based on the British Standard Institution particle size grades. The certificate of analysis is provided as Appendix D. The findings of the PSD analysis are shown in Table 2.3 below:

<b>Table 2.3: Topsoil Texture (re Table 10, ALC Guidelines)</b>				
<b>Topsoil Sample Location (See Fig. 1)</b>	<b>% sand 0.063-2.0 mm</b>	<b>% silt 0.002- 0.063 mm</b>	<b>% clay &lt;0.002 mm</b>	<b>ALC Soil Texture Class</b>
56	65	15	20	Sandy Clay Loam
72	79	13	8	Loamy Sand
108	80	11	9	Loamy Sand
124	63	21	16	Sandy Loam
158	70	18	12	Sandy Loam
162	79	12	9	Loamy Sand/Sandy Loam
179	78	12	10	Sandy Loam

## 2.5 Interactive Limitations

2.5.1 From the published information above, together with the findings of the detailed soil survey, it has been determined that the quality of agricultural land over the Site could be limited by soil wetness or soil droughtiness.

### I. Soil Wetness

2.5.2 From the ALC Guidelines, a soil wetness limitation exists where *‘the soil water regime adversely affects plant growth or imposes restrictions on cultivations or grazing by livestock’*. Agricultural land quality is limited by soil wetness as per Table 3.3 below (based on Table 6 ‘Grade According to Soil Wetness – Mineral Soils’ in the ALC Guidelines):

<b>Table 3.3: ALC Grade According to Soil Wetness</b>		
<b>Wetness Class</b>	<b>Texture of the Top 25 cm</b>	<b>151-175 Field Capacity Days</b>

<b>I</b>	Sand, <b>Loamy Sand, Sandy Loam</b> , Sandy Silty Loam	<b>1</b>
	Silty Loam, Medium Silty Clay Loam*, Medium Clay	<b>1</b>
	Loam*, <b>Sandy Clay Loam</b>	<b>2</b>
	Heavy Silty Clay Loam**, Heavy Clay Loam**	<b>3a</b>
	Sandy Clay, Silty Clay, Clay	
<b>II</b>	Sand, <b>Loamy Sand, Sandy Loam</b> , Sandy Silty Loam	<b>1</b>
	Silty Loam, Medium Silty Clay Loam*, Medium Clay	<b>2</b>
	Loam*, <b>Sandy Clay Loam</b>	<b>3a</b>
	Heavy Silty Clay Loam**, Heavy Clay Loam**	<b>3b</b>
	Sandy Clay, Silty Clay, Clay	
<b>III</b>	Sand, Loamy Sand, <b>Sandy Loam</b> , Sandy Silty Loam	<b>2</b>
	Silty Loam, Medium Silty Clay Loam*, <b>Medium Clay</b>	<b>3a</b>
	<b>Loam*</b> , Sandy Clay Loam	<b>3b</b>
	Heavy Silty Clay Loam**, Heavy Clay Loam**	<b>3b</b>
	Sandy Clay, Silty Clay, Clay	
<b>IV</b>	Sand, Loamy Sand, <b>Sandy Loam</b> , Sandy Silty Loam	<b>3a</b>
	Silty Loam, Medium Silty Clay Loam*, Medium Clay	<b>3b</b>
	Loam*, <b>Sandy Clay Loam</b>	<b>3b</b>
	Heavy Silty Clay Loam**, Heavy Clay Loam**	<b>3b</b>
	Sandy Clay, Silty Clay, Clay	<b>3b</b>
Key:		
* <27% clay		
** >27% clay		
*** grade for naturally calcareous soils with more than 1% CaCO <sub>3</sub> and between 18% and 50% clay content in the top 25cm is shown in brackets		

- 2.5.3 Therefore, soil profiles at the Site with loamy sand, sandy loam or sandy clay loam topsoil texture and well drained subsoil (Wetness Class I) or loamy sand or sandy loam topsoil texture and slightly seasonally waterlogged subsoil (Wetness Class II) are not limited by soil wetness and can be graded as Grade 1 in this climate area (151-175 field capacity days), in the absence of any other limiting factor.
- 2.5.4 Soil profiles with sandy clay loam topsoil and slightly seasonally waterlogged subsoil (Wetness Class II) or sandy loam topsoil and seasonally waterlogged subsoil (Wetness Class III) are limited by soil wetness to Grade 2.
- 2.5.5 Soil profiles with medium clay loam topsoil and seasonally waterlogged subsoil (Wetness Class III) or sandy loam topsoil and subsoil which is waterlogged for long periods in winter (Wetness Class IV) are limited by soil wetness to Subgrade 3a.

- 2.5.6 Soil profiles with sandy clay loam topsoil and subsoil which is waterlogged for long periods in winter (Wetness Class IV) are limited by soil wetness to Subgrade 3b.

## II. Soil droughtiness

- 2.5.7 From the ALC Guidelines, a soil droughtiness limitation exists *'in areas with relatively low rainfall or high evapotranspiration, or where the soil holds only small reserves of moisture available to plant roots.'* The ALC grade according to soil droughtiness is shown in Table 2.4 below (based on Table 8 'Grade According to Droughtiness' in the ALC Guidelines). To be eligible for Grades 1 to 3b the moisture balances (MBs) must be equal to, or exceed, the stated minimum values for *both* wheat and potatoes. If the MB for *either* crop is less (i.e. more negative) than that shown for Subgrade 3b, the soil is Grade 4 on droughtiness):

Grade/Subgrade	Moisture Balance (MB) Limits (mm)	
	Wheat	Potatoes
<b>1</b>	+30	+10
<b>2</b>	+5	-10
<b>3a</b>	-20	-30
<b>3b</b>	-50	-55
<b>4</b>	<-50	<-55

- 2.5.8 Soil profiles across the Site are very varied, with stoneless to moderately stony, loamy medium sand, medium sandy loam, sandy clay loam or medium clay loam topsoil. Subsoil horizons range from stoneless to very stony, with textures ranging from medium sand to clay, and moderate to poor structural condition. It has been determined by calculation (re Appendix 4 of the ALC Guidelines) that soil moisture balance (MB) values across the Site range between +51 and -35mm for winter wheat (i.e. ranging between Grade 2 and Subgrade 3b where limited by soil droughtiness), and between +29 and -32mm for potatoes (i.e. ranging between Grade 2 and Subgrade 3b where limited by soil droughtiness).

## 2.6 Stoniness Limitation

- 2.6.1 From the ALC Guidelines, a stoniness limitation is concerned with mechanical limitations caused by stone content within the top 25cm of the soil profile. Increased stone content *'can increase production costs by causing extra wear and tear to implements and tyres. Crop quality may also be reduced in stony soil by causing, for example, the distortion of root crops or bruising of potatoes during harvesting. Stones can impair crop establishment by causing reduced plant populations in precision-drilled crops, and they reduce the nutrient capacity of*

*the soil*'. The ALC grade according to stoniness is shown in Table 3.5 below (based on Table 5 'Grade according to stoniness' in the ALC Guidelines). The size limits specified are for volumes of stones which will not pass through sieves with 2 cm or 6 cm square mesh. Grade limits have been specified for stones retained on a 6 cm sieve because they usually have a more detrimental effect than smaller stones. The limits apply to hard stones, and where the stones are of soft lithology, such as soft chalk, weakly cemented sandstones or siltstones, the limits are relaxed by one grade or subgrade. Both stone percentage columns are expressed in terms of the percentage of total volume of the top 25 cm of the soil, and either can be most limiting and determine the grade. Thus, if 30% of the top 25 cm comprises hard stones larger than 2 cm, the land cannot be graded higher than 3b. However, if that same soil layer contains 25% stones larger than 6 cm the land cannot be graded higher than Grade 4. Small numbers of large boulders or stones which can be removed easily should be ignored. Stones smaller than 2 cm, which have no or only minor effects on cultivation, should also be ignored.

<b>Table 2.5: ALC Grade According to Stoniness</b>		
<b>Grade/Subgrade</b>	<b>Limiting percentages (volume) of hard stones in the top 25cm of soil</b>	
	<b>Stones larger than 2cm</b>	<b>Stones larger than 6cm</b>
<b>1</b>	5	5
<b>2</b>	10	5
<b>3a</b>	15	10
<b>3b</b>	35	20
<b>4</b>	50	35
<b>5</b>	>50	>35

- 2.6.2 Most profiles across the Site have a topsoil stone content of greater than or equal to 6% hard stones larger than 2 cm, therefore limiting the grade by stoniness to Grade 2 at best. These profiles ranged in stone content between 6% and 25% hard stones greater than 2cm (i.e. limited by stoniness to between Grade 2 and Subgrade 3b), and between 6% and 12% hard stones greater than 6cm (i.e. limited by stoniness to between Subgrades 3a and 3b).

## **2.7 ALC Grading at the Site**

### *Grade 2*

- 2.7.1 Agricultural land at this Site is limited to Grade 2 due to several factors or combinations of them, as follows: (i) where the volumetric content of hard stones greater than 2cm size in the

top 25cm of the profile is estimated to be between 6% and 10%, the profiles are limited by stone content to Grade 2 (re Table 5 of the ALC Guidelines) (ii) where profiles have MB values for wheat greater than or equal to +5mm and MB values for potatoes greater than or equal to -10mm and either MB values for wheat less than +30mm and/or MB values for potatoes less than +10mm, the profiles are limited by soil droughtiness to Grade 2 (re Table 8 of the ALC Guidelines), (iii) where profiles have sandy clay loam topsoil and slightly seasonally waterlogged subsoil (Wetness Class II) or sandy loam topsoil and seasonally waterlogged subsoil (Wetness Class III), the profiles are limited by soil wetness to Grade 2 in this climate area (151-175 field capacity days). Grade 2 land is the predominant map unit over the southwest of the Site, and areas are found throughout rest of the Site.

### *Subgrade 3a*

- 2.7.2 Agricultural land at this Site is limited to Subgrade 3a due to several factors or combinations of them, as follows: (i) where the volumetric content of hard stones greater than 2cm size in the top 25cm of the profile is estimated to be between 11% and 15%, the profiles are limited by stone content to Subgrade 3a (re Table 5 of the ALC Guidelines) (ii) where profiles have MB values for wheat greater than or equal to -20mm and MB values for potatoes greater than or equal to -30mm and either MB values for wheat less than +5mm and/or MB values for potatoes less than -10mm, the profiles are limited by soil droughtiness to Subgrade 3a (re Table 8 of the ALC Guidelines), (iii) where profiles have medium clay loam topsoil and seasonally waterlogged subsoil (Wetness Class III) or sandy loam topsoil and subsoil which is waterlogged for long periods in winter (Wetness Class IV), the profiles are limited by soil wetness to Subgrade 3a. Isolated profiles of Grade 2 and Subgrade 3b (i.e. auger points 28, 52, 85, 117 and 139) have been subsumed within contiguous areas of Subgrade 3a as it would be unreasonable to manage them differentially to the surrounding land. Subgrade 3a land is the predominant map unit over the north of the Site and areas are found throughout the rest of the Site.

### *Subgrade 3b*

- 2.7.3 Agricultural land at this Site is limited to Subgrade 3b due to several factors or combinations of them, as follows: (i) where the volumetric content of hard stones greater than 2cm size in the top 25cm of the profile is estimated to be between 16% and 35%, the profiles are limited by stone content to Subgrade 3b (re Table 5 of the ALC Guidelines) (ii) where profiles have MB values for wheat greater than or equal to -50mm and MB values for potatoes greater than or equal to -55mm and either MB values for wheat less than -20mm and/or MB values for potatoes less than -30mm, the profiles are limited by soil droughtiness to Subgrade 3b (re Table 8 of the ALC Guidelines), (iii) where profiles have sandy clay loam topsoil and subsoil



which is waterlogged for long periods in winter (Wetness Class IV), the profiles are limited by soil wetness to Subgrade 3b. Areas of this land are found throughout the north of the Site.

*Non-agricultural*

- 2.7.4 Areas across the Site covered by woodland, infrastructure and hardstanding, or water, including Calf Heath Wood, the railway line transecting the Site, Gravelly Way, and a section of canal, have been classified as non-agricultural land.
- 2.7.5 The area and proportion of agricultural land in each ALC grade has been measured from an ALC map given as Figure 2. The findings are reported in Table 2.6 below.

<b>Table 2.6: Agricultural Land Classification – WMI, Four Ashes, Staffordshire</b>		
<b>ALC Grade</b>	<b>Total (Ha)</b>	<b>Total (% of Site)</b>
Grade 1 (Excellent)	0	0
Grade 2 (Very Good)	51.1	17.2
Subgrade 3a (Good)	121.9	41.0
<i>Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land (i.e. ALC Grades 1, 2 and Subgrade 3a)</i>	<i>173.0</i>	<i>58.2</i>
Subgrade 3b (Moderate)	38.2	12.9
Grade 4 (Poor)	0	0
Grade 5 (Very Poor)	0	0
Other Land / Non-agricultural	85.7	28.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>296.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 3 ALC AT THE SITE IN A WIDER GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The aim of this section is to examine agricultural land quality at the Site in a national, regional, county and local context.

#### 3.2 Pre-1988 ALC Information

3.2.1 As described in Appendix B, during the 1960's and 1970's MAFF produced a series of maps to show the provisional ALC grade of agricultural land over the whole of England and Wales at a scale of 1:250,000. These provisional ALC maps are suitable for strategic land use planning only, i.e. they appropriate for land areas greater than 80 ha.

3.2.2 The provisional MAFF ALC map of the Midlands Region (1:250,000, 1984) indicates that the quality of agricultural land at the Site is entirely ALC Grade 3 (not differentiated between Subgrades 3a and 3b). The proportion of agricultural land in each of the ALC grades (derived from MAFF provisional or pre-1988 ALC information) in England, West Midlands Region, Staffordshire County, and South Staffordshire District is shown for comparison in Table 3.1 below.

<b>ALC Grade</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>Staffordshire</b>	<b>South Staffordshire District</b>
1 (excellent)	2.7	1.1	0.1	0.6
2 (very good)	14.2	17.1	10.2	18.4
3 (good to moderate)	48.2	53.3	52.1	69.4
4 (poor)	14.1	14.6	24.9	5.7
5 (very poor)	8.4	2.5	3.9	0.0
Non-Agricultural	5.0	2.3	3.3	2.2
Urban	7.3	8.6	5.5	3.7

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Land and Water Service, Technical Notes, Resource Planning (February 1983) 'Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales – The Distribution of the Grades' (TN/RP/01 TFS 846)

### **3.3 Post-1988 ALC Information**

- 3.3.1 From the MAGIC<sup>7</sup> website, and Appendix E 'MAFF Agricultural Land Classification: Four Ashes (Site 64), Staffordshire Aggregates Local Plan (Ref. 079/94)', part of the Site in the east has been covered by a Post 1988 ALC survey. The MAFF Post 1988 ALC survey determined mainly Grade 2 and Subgrade 3a, with a small amount of Subgrade 3b on the eastern tip.

### **3.4 Overview**

- 3.4.1 South Staffordshire District has no Grade 1 agricultural land. Approximately 18.4 % of the District comprises Grade 2, which is higher than the national average (14.2 %). The majority (i.e. 69.4 %) of agricultural land in the District is in Grade 3 (not differentiated between Subgrade 3a and 3b), which is also higher than the national average (48.2 %). Therefore, the presence of Grade 2 and Grade 3 agricultural land at the Site is to be expected, as these grades of agricultural land are widespread in the District.

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<sup>7</sup> MAGIC.gov.uk Last viewed May 2017

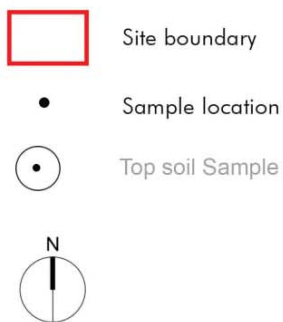
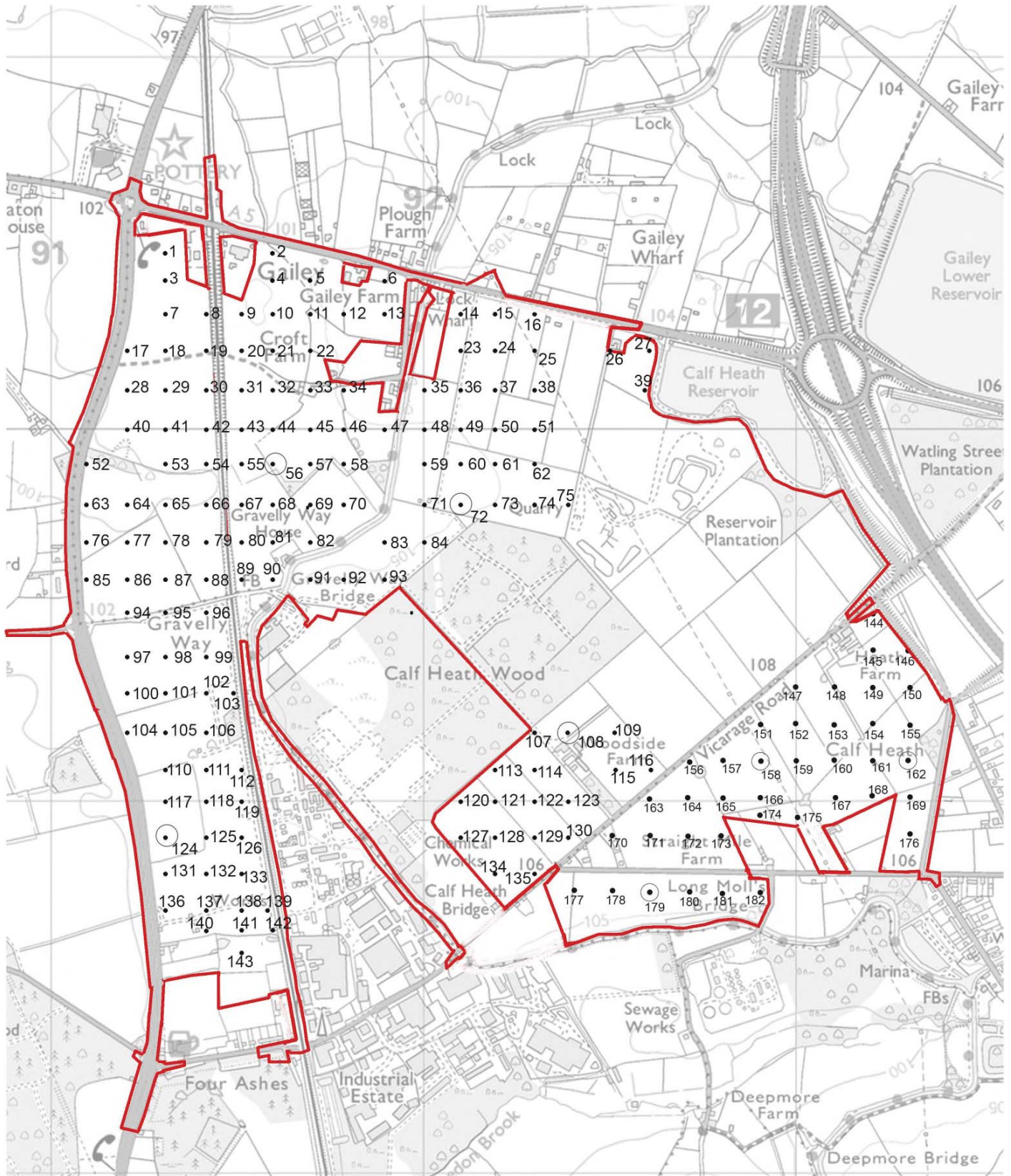
## 4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 An assessment of agricultural land quality, involving a desktop study and a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey, has been undertaken to determine quality of agricultural land at a site proposed for the West Midlands Interchange at Four Ashes, Staffordshire ('the Site'). The assessment was made in accordance with the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system for England and Wales, October 1988 ('the ALC Guidelines').
- 4.1.2 The approximately 296.9 ha Site is located directly to the north of Four Ashes, Staffordshire and 10km north of Wolverhampton, as shown on Figure 1. It is centred at National Grid Reference SJ 920 098. The Site is bordered by the A5 to the north, Calf Heath Reservoir and the M6 to the east, the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to the south, and the A449 Stafford Road to the west. At the time of the ALC survey the Site was mainly under arable (including barley or barley stubble), with some areas of potatoes, rough grassland and set-aside land. The Rugby–Birmingham–Stafford railway line passes from north to south through the western half of the Site.
- 4.1.3 Bedrock underlying most of the site is described by the BGS (1:50,000) as sandstone of the Wildmoor Sandstone Formation. The bedrock underlying the north-western tip of the site, to Croft Lane along the northern edge and to 300m south of Gravelly Way along the southern edge, is described as sandstone, pebbly (gravelly), of the Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation. The BGS Superficial Deposit map (1:50,000) indicates that the bedrock underlying much of the Site is covered by sand and gravel from Devensian Glaciofluvial Deposits. Devensian Glacial Till covers areas of bedrock at the north east and south of the Site. An area to the north west of the Site is covered by clay, silt, sand and gravel from Alluvium and small areas at the south east and west of the Site are not covered by any recorded deposits.
- 4.1.4 Provisional information for soils at the Site was gathered from the Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW) soil map of Midland and Western England (Sheet 3) at a scale of 1:250,000 and accompanying Bulletin No. 12 '*Soils and their Use in Midland and Western England*' (J. M. Ragg *et al*, Harpenden, 1984). The provisional information indicates that agricultural land over most of the Site is covered by soils of the Clifton Association, with soils of the Wick 1 Association covering parts of the west of the Site.
- 4.1.5 The findings of a detailed soil/ALC survey at 182 locations determined that the soil across the Site is variable, but can be broadly categorised under two types.
- 4.1.6 Soil profiles over most of the Site consist of very dark greyish brown, very dark grey or dark brown (Munsell colours 10YR 3/2, 3/1 and 7.5YR 3/2), slightly to moderately stony (8-30% hard stones), non-calcareous, medium sandy loam, sandy clay loam or loamy medium sand topsoil. The upper subsoil consists of brown, yellowish brown or dark yellowish brown

(Munsell colours 7.5YR 5/4, 4/4 or 10YR 5/3, 4/3, 5/4, 4/4), often ochreous mottled (Munsell colours 7.5YR 5/6, 5/8, 6/6, 6/8 or 10YR 5/6, 5/8), very slightly to very stony (2-60% hard stones), non-calcareous, medium sandy loam, loamy medium sand or sandy clay loam with moderate structural condition. The lower subsoil consists of variably coloured, light grey to light yellowish brown to strong brown to reddish brown (Munsell colours 10YR 7/2, 6/4, 7.5YR 4/6, 5YR 5/4), often ochreous and grey mottled, stoneless to very stony (0-60% hard stones), non-calcareous, loamy medium sand, medium sandy loam or medium sand, with moderate structural condition. Many of these profiles become impossible to auger at variable depth due to very stony or iron pan layers. Type 1 profiles are usually well drained and placed in Wetness Class I.

- 4.1.7 Some profiles across the Site include a slowly permeable layer within the upper or lower subsoil consisting of reddish brown (Munsell colours 5YR 4/4, 5/3, 5/4 or 2.5YR 4/4), grey mottled (Munsell colours 2.5Y 6/1, 6/2 and 10YR 6/1), stoneless to slightly stony (0-10% hard stone), non-calcareous, clay or sandy clay, with poor structural condition. These profiles often have similar, moderately structured, sandy clay loam or heavy clay loam layers immediately above or below the slowly permeable layer. Type 2 profiles range between well drained profiles placed in Wetness Class I and profiles which are waterlogged for long periods over the winter and placed in Wetness Class IV, depending on the depth to the slowly permeable clay layer.
- 4.1.8 The detailed ALC survey, combined with post-1988 survey data for part of the Site, has determined that 51.1 ha (17.2%) of the Site is limited to Grade 2 by combinations of slight soil droughtiness, soil wetness, or stoniness. Approximately 121.9 ha (41.0%) of the Site is limited to Subgrade 3a by combinations of moderate soil droughtiness, soil wetness, or stoniness. A further 38.2 ha (12.9%) is limited to Subgrade 3b by combinations of more severe soil droughtiness, soil wetness, or stoniness. Approximately 85.7 ha (28.9%) of the Site has been classified as non-agricultural land (i.e. working mineral quarry, railway line, buildings, hard-standing, road, woodland and water-bodies).
- 4.1.9 South Staffordshire District has no Grade 1 agricultural land. Approximately 18.4 % of the District comprises Grade 2, which is higher than the national average (14.2 %). The majority (i.e. 69.4 %) of agricultural land in the District is in Grade 3 (not differentiated between Subgrade 3a and 3b), which is also higher than the national average (48.2 %). Therefore, the presence of Grade 2 and Grade 3 agricultural land at the Site is to be expected, as these grades of agricultural land are widespread in the District.
- 4.1.10 In terms of mitigating for the loss of agricultural land at the Site, and disturbing the soil resources thereon, current best practice set out in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) 'Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Management of Soil on Construction Sites, September 2009. Opportunities exist to strip and store soil resources (i.e. topsoil and subsoil) on Site for re-use in landscaping areas and open space.

## Figures



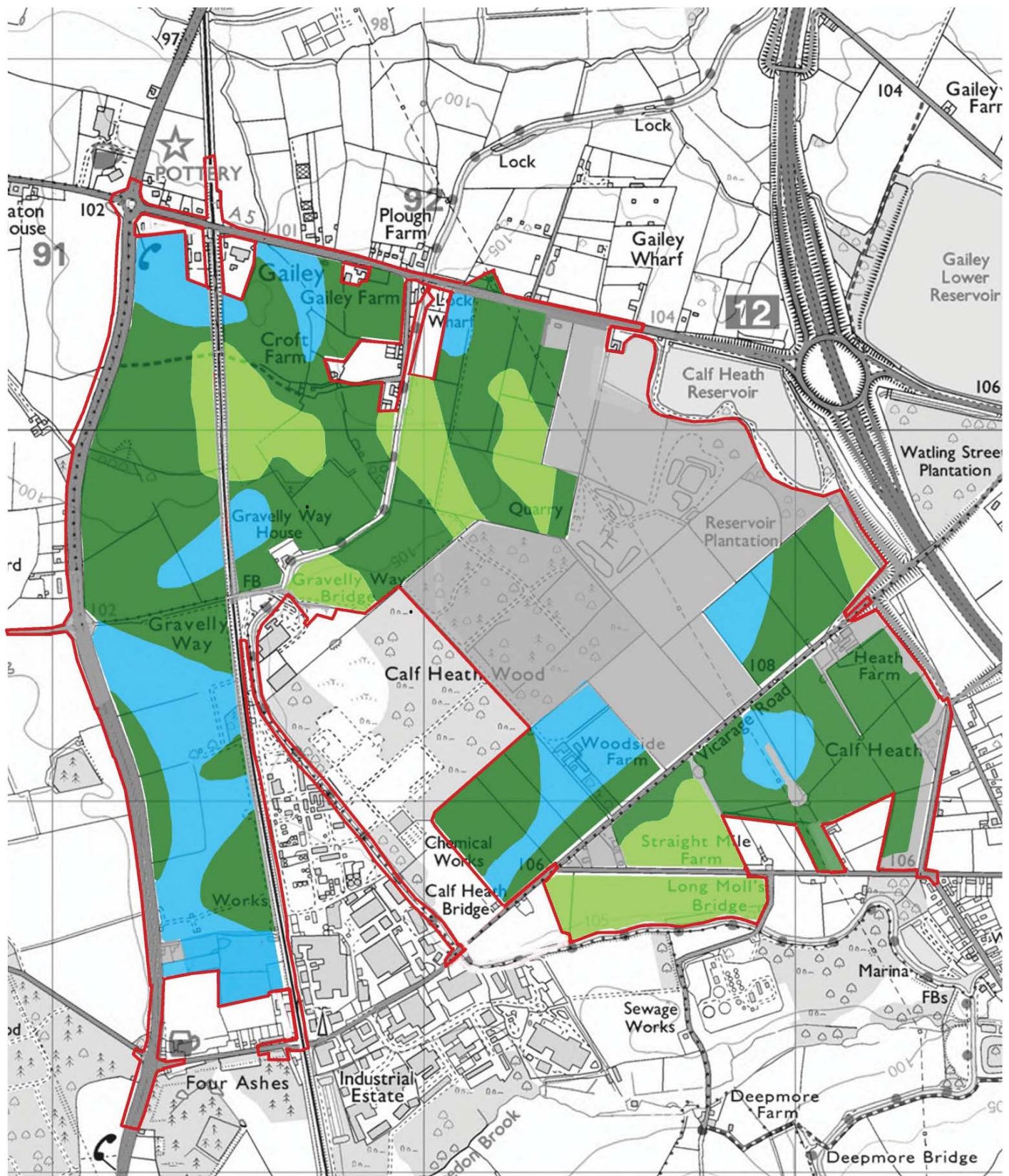
Client  
Four Ashes Ltd

Project No C497  
Dwg. No 9  
Scale NTS  
Date 6/03/2018  
Drawn By RWA

Figure 1:  
Sample Locations

Project Name  
West Midlands Interchange,  
Four Ashes, Staffordshire

R W Askew BSc(Hons) MScSoilSci MSc CSCi  
The Old Stables, Upexe, Exeter, EX5 5ND  
Tel: 07753 227 224  
Email: rw.askew@btinternet.com



**ALC Grade**

- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Subgrade 3a
- Subgrade 3b
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Other land

Site boundary



Client

West Midlands Interchange

Project No C497  
 Dwg. No 10  
 Scale NTS  
 Date 6/03/2018  
 Drawn By RWA

Figure 2:

Agricultural Land Classification

Project Name

West Midlands Interchange  
 Four Ashes, Staffordshire

R W Askew BSc(Hons) MSc CSci  
 The Old Stables, Upexe, Exeter, EX5 5ND  
 Tel: 07753 227 224  
 Email: rw.askew@btinternet.com



**Appendix A:**  
**IPSS Professional Competency Scheme Doc. 2 –**  
**Agricultural Land Classification**

# Agricultural Land Classification (England and Wales)

## Background

The evaluation of land for its agricultural potential in England and Wales<sup>1</sup> is accomplished by application of the Agricultural Land Classification<sup>2</sup> (ALC). Professional competence in Agricultural Land Classification builds upon foundation skills in field soil investigation, description and interpretation (IPSS PCSS Document 1). This system of professional competence is based upon a detailed written procedures document developed by the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency<sup>3</sup>.

## Qualifications

Professional soil scientists with competence in Agricultural Land Classification will have graduated in a relevant science subject. They will also have a number of years of relevant field experience and will have, or be adequately qualified for, membership of a relevant professional body such as the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists.

## Minimum competencies

### Skills and Knowledge:

These are described under a number of subheadings that relate to different tasks. A professionally competent contractor should have the skills and knowledge identified under the **General heading** and **all other headings that are relevant** to the tasks required.

#### General

- 1 A general knowledge and understanding of natural soil development and of world, European and national soil taxonomy
- 2 A detailed knowledge and understanding of the Agricultural Land Classification system relevant to the site and of the classification of land according to the current published Guidelines and other documents<sup>1,2</sup> and the ability to apply it accurately and consistently in the classification of an area of land

<sup>1</sup> Similar systems are employed in Scotland and Northern Ireland

<sup>2</sup> ALC Revised Guidelines and Criteria for the Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land (MAFF, 1988) and Climatological Datasets for ALC (Met. Office, 1989)

<sup>3</sup> A former Executive Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (now Defra)

# Agricultural Land classification (England and Wales)

- 3 An awareness and knowledge of existing published and unpublished, paper-based and digital ALC information and sources
- 4 A knowledge of paper and digital topographic, geology and soil maps, mineral assessment reports and memoirs and other technical sources of reference; and of their role in ALC work
- 5 An understanding of map scales and of the Ordnance Survey National Grid
- 6 The ability to investigate, sample, describe and interpret soils in the field in a consistent manner and to professional standards (IPSS PCSS Document 1)
- 7 Knowledge of relevant European and national regulations and policies including national and local land use planning policy and guidance, and soil protection policy
- 8 The ability to effectively communicate soil information in a simple and relevant form to developers, planners and other relevant professionals with clear statements as to the reliability and certainty of the results
- 9 The ability to write accurate, concise reports in clear English and in line with best practice examples of ALC survey that communicate the relevant information to all relevant communicants
- 10 An awareness of the importance of systems of quality assurance and control in all aspects of professional work

## Preparations prior to field survey

- 1 The ability to compile background site physical data (e.g. relief, geology, soils, climate, flood-risk, exposure and grade from published and unpublished sources) and understanding of the limitations of the data obtained
- 2 An understanding of scale and of how different survey sampling densities may impact on the certainty of results obtained. A knowledge of how to tailor survey density appropriately to the requirements of the client, and understanding of the limitations that might impose

- 3 The ability to compute gradients from map contours
- 4 A thorough knowledge of climatic data interpolation procedures (and any available associated bespoke computer software), and the ability to obtain representative site values
- 5 An understanding of soil maps, the concepts of soil associations and soil series and their limitations as a background to ALC grading
- 6 A knowledge of GPS and data logger technology and its uses and limitations for field survey work
- 7 A knowledge and understanding of relevant Health and Safety legislation requirements for work in the field
- 8 An understanding of basic biosecurity requirements and any animal or plant health restrictions which may be in force

## Field survey for Agricultural Land Classification

- 1 The ability to determine, lay out and work to a relevant sampling strategy
- 2 Competency in the Foundation Skills (field soil investigation, sampling, description and interpretation) as per IPSS PCSS Document 1
- 3 The ability to accurately and consistently apply the ALC system to soil and other data collected during the field survey

## Reporting

- 1 The knowledge and ability to compile an ALC map from background information and data collected during the field survey
- 2 The ability to write an ALC survey report according to an agreed format
- 3 Understanding of the principles of quality assurance and the ability to apply these as required by the client
- 4 The ability to convey the findings of the survey verbally such that they are understood by the client

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The following organisations have given their support to the Institute of Professional Soil Scientist's Working with Soils Professional Competency Initiative:



'Defra welcomes initiatives, such as the IPSS Working with Soils Competency Statements, that aim to improve the quality of professional soils advice'



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**Appendix B:**  
**Natural England**  
**Technical Information Note 049 –**  
**Agricultural Land Classification**

# 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.

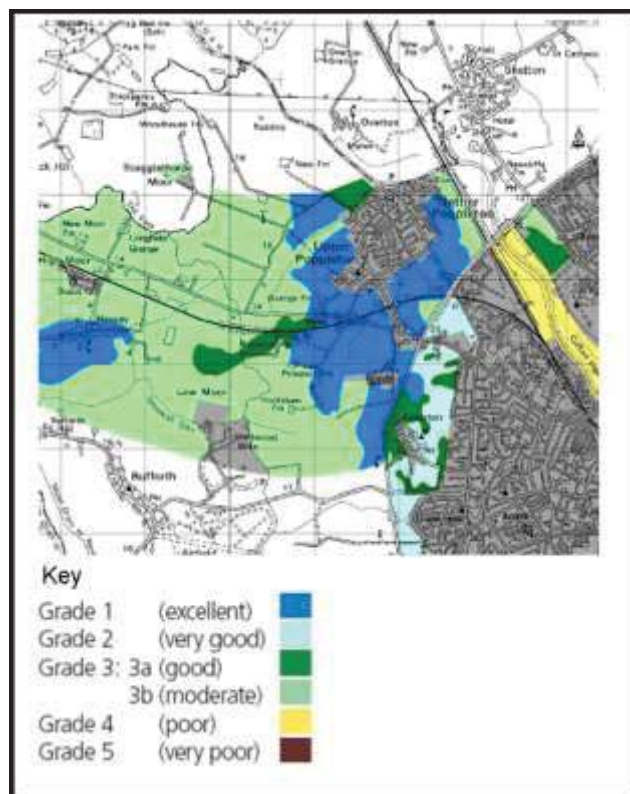
## Policy to protect agricultural land

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

## 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](#). 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](mailto: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](mailto:ian.rugg@wales.gsi.gov.uk)) or David Martyn ([david.martyn@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto: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  
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**Appendix C:  
Soil Profile Log**

Code	Location		Parcel
C497	Four Ashes, Staffordshire		Application Site
Date(s)	Surveyor(s)	Company	
(i) 24-25 Aug16; (ii) 07-08Sep16; (iii) 24-25Apr17	Adrian Rochford, Tim Bearder, Rob Askew	Askew Land and Soil Ltd	
Weather	Relief	Land use and vegetation	
Fair	Gently undulating	Arable, grass, some non-agricultural	
Grid square	Easting	Northing	Postcode
SJ	920	98	ST19 5PY
Altitude	Area		
107	268.2		
MAFF prov	MAFF detailed		
3	Eastern end: 2 and 3a, with some 3b		
Flooding	Flood Zone 1 (<0.1%)		
AAR	AT0	MDw	MDp
700	1360	93	80
FCD	Climate grade		
164	1		
Bedrock	Superficial deposits		
Sandstone; Sandstone, pebbly (gravelly)	Glacio-fluvial drift, glacial till, alluvium		
Soil data	Soil association(s)		
1:250,000	Clifton Association; Wick 1 Association		













Point	Grid ref.		Alt	Grad	Aspect	Land use	Depth (cm)			Soil matrix	Mottle.1		Mottle.2		Gley	Texture	Stones		SUBS STR	Calc.	Mn C SPL	Drought		Wet	ALC GRADE		Point notes	
	NGR	X					Y	Top	Bottom		Thick	Form	Munsell colour	Form			Munsell colour	%				Type	M/Bw		M/Bp	Gd		WC
41	SJ	913	100	107	1	S	ARA	0	40	40	10YR32	CD	10YR56	FD	10YR56	MSL	15	HR	M	N	-1	2	3a	I	1	3a	DR,ST	12>2,2>6 Limed topsoil
42	SJ	914	100	1	S	STB	0	35	35	7.5YR32					MSL	25	HR	M	N	4	-3	3a	I	1	3b	ST	18>2,6>6	
43	SJ	915	100	98	1	S	STB	0	32	32	10YR31				MSL	30	HR	M	N	-24	-21	3b	I	1	3b	DR,ST	20>2,8>6	
44	SJ	916	100	104	2	S	BAR	0	30	30	10YR32	CD	7.5YR58	MD	10YR64	MSL	24	HR	M	N	-20	-15	3b	I	1	3b	ST	18>2,2>6
45	SJ	917	100	102	1	SW	BAR	0	35	35	10YR31				MSL	20	HR	M	N	-30	-27	3b	I	1	3b	DR	15>2	
46	SJ	918	100	107	1	S	STB	0	50	50	10YR32	CD	10YR68		MSL	20	HR	M	N	-4	-1	3a	I	1	3a	DR,ST	12>2,2>6	
47	SJ	919	100	105	0		FLW	0	25	25	10YR32	FF	7.5YR66		MSL	22	HR	M	N	-28	-26	3b	I	1	3b	DR	12>2,2>6	
48	SJ	920	100	104	1	S	POT	0	25	25	10YR32				MSL	18	HR	M	N	-27	-24	3b	I	1	3b	DR	12>2,1>6	



Point	Grid ref.		Alt	Grad	Aspect	Land use	Depth (cm)			Soil matrix		Mottle 1		Mottle 2		Gley	Texture		Stones	SUBS STR	Calc.	Mn	C	SPL	Drought		Wet	ALC GRADE		Point notes	
	NGR	X					Y	Top	Btm	Thick	Munsell colour	Form	Munsell colour	Form	Munsell colour		M/Bw	M/Bp							Gd	WC		Gw	Grade		Limitation
56	SJ	91610	099	104	0	FLW	0	30	30	10YR32	CF	10YR56				SCL	15	HR	M											Moved due to ditch 8>2,1>6 Water table @ 45cm Topsoil sample	
57	SJ	917	099	99	0	BAR	0	35	35	10YR31	CD	10YR56				MSL	20	HR	M											16>2,6>6	
58	SJ	918	099	107	2	S	0	33	33	10YR32						MSL	15	HR	M											10>2,1>6	
59	SJ	920	099	106	0	POT	0	30	30	10YR32						MSL	20	HR	M											12>2,2>6	
60	SJ	921	099	107	0	STB	0	30	30	10YR32	CD	7.5YR66				MSL	20	HR	M												12>2,2>6
61	SJ	922	099	108	0	STB	0	30	30	10YR32	FF	7.5YR66				MSL	20	HR	M												10>2,1>6
62	SJ	923	099	107	0	STB	0	30	30	10YR32	FF	7.5YR66				MSL	20	HR	M												12>2,1>6
63	SJ	911	098	0		SAS	0	30	30	10YR32						MSL	12	HR	M											8>2,4>6 Clay lenses, 40-50cm Water table?	

Point	Grid ref.		Alt	Grad	Aspect	Land use	Depth (cm)		Soil matrix	Mottle.1		Mottle.2		Gley	Texture	Stones		SUBS STR	Calc.	Mn C SPL	Drought		Wet	ALC GRADE		Point notes			
	NGR	X					Y	Top		Bttm	Thick	Form	Munsell colour			Form	Munsell colour				%	Type		Mbw	MBp		Gd	WC	Gw
64	SJ	912	098	0		STB	0	30	10YR32 10YR61 10YR61	CD	10YR56			Y	MSL MS MS MS	15 0 0 60	HR HR HR HR	M M M M	N N N N			-7	-8	3a	I	1	3a	DR,ST	12>2,6>6
65	SJ	913	098	103	2	N	0	32	10YR32 10YR64,56 10YR61 5YR44	CD	10YR52 10YR56 2.5Y61	CD	7.5YR46	Y	SCL SCL SCL C	20 4 4 2	HR HR HR HR	M M M P	N N N N		Y	32	19	1	II	1	3a	ST	12>2,3>6
66	SJ	914	098	107	2	N	0	30	10YR32 10YR56	CD	10YR64	CD	10YR68	Y	SCL LMS LMS	15 20 60	HR HR HR	M M M	N N			-19	-16	3a	I	1	3a	DR	8>2,2>6
67	SJ	915	098	97	3	N	0	36	10YR31 10YR53 2.5Y62 5Y54	CD MP CD	10YR56 7.5YR56 10YR72				MSL MS LMS LMS	12 0 0 0	HR HR HR HR	M M M M	N N N N			13	1	2	I	1	2	DR,ST	8>2,2>6
68	SJ	916	098	106	0	BAR	0	30	10YR32 7.5YR53	CD	7.5YR66				MSL MSL MSL	20 20 60	HR HR HR	M M M	N N			5	-2	3a	I	1	3a	ST	12>2,1>6
69	SJ	917	098	103	0	BAR	0	38	10YR31 7.5YR63 7.5YR53 5YR53	CD CD CD	5YR56 7.5YR56 2.5Y61	CD	2.5Y62		LMS MS MSL SCL	18 5 0 0	HR HR HR HR	M M M M	N N N N			20	-13	3a	I	1	3a	DR,ST	12>2
70	SJ	918	098	105	0	BAR	0	30	10YR32 10YR64 10YR64 10YR64 10YR61 7.5YR63	CD CD CD CD MD	10YR58 10YR61 10YR58 10YR58	CD CD	10YR58 10YR58		MSL MSL LMS SCL LMS	22 30 20 10 10 0	HR HR HR HR HR HR	M M M M M M	N N N N N N			24	0	2	I	1	3a	ST	14>2,4>6 Water table @87
71	SJ	920	098	0		FLW	0	38	10YR31 7.5YR44						LMS LMS LMS	20 20 60	HR HR HR	M M M	N N			-27	-24	3b	I	1	3b	DR	12>2,6>6









Point	Grid ref.		Alt	Grad	Aspect	Land use	Depth (cm)		Soil matrix	Mottle.1		Mottle.2		Gley	Texture	Stones		SUBS STR	Calc.	Mn	C	SPL	Drought		Wet	ALC GRADE	Point notes
	NGR	X					Y	Top		Bottom	Form	Munsell colour	Form			Munsell colour	%						Type	MBw			
96	SJ	914	095	106	0	STB	0	30	10YR32	FD	2.5Y62			MSL	14	HR	35	17	1	III	2	3a	ST			11>2	
							30	45	10YR63	CD	2.5Y52		Y	MSL	10	HR											
							45	95	5YR44					C	0	HR											
							95	120	5YR54					MSL	8	HR											
							0	0	0						0												
							0	0	0						0												
97	SJ	912	094	0	STB	0	40	7.5YR31	7.5YR31	CD	7.5YR56			MSL	10	HR	23	5	2	I	1	2	DR,ST			8>2,3>6	
							40	50	7.5YR43,53	CD	7.5YR56			LMS	0	HR											
							50	100	5YR44	CD	2.5Y62	CD	10YR56	MS	0	HR											
							100	120	5YR44	CD	2.5Y62		Y	SCL	0	HR											
							0	0	0						0												
							0	0	0						0												
98	SJ	913	094	0	STB	0	35	7.5YR31	7.5YR31	CD	10YR56			MSL	10	HR	24	20	2	I	1	2	DR,ST			8>2,5>6	
							35	65	10YR54,44	CD	10YR56			MSL	5	HR											
							65	120	0					MSL	60	HR											
							0	0	0						0												
							0	0	0						0												
99	SJ	914	094	108	0	ARA	0	27	10YR32	CD	10YR62		S	MSL	14	HR	10	21	2	I	1	3a	ST			11>2	
							27	65	5YR54	CD	10YR62			HCL	4	HR											
							65	70	7.5YR64					MS	20	HR											
							70	120	0					MS	60	HR											
							0	0	0						0												
							0	0	0						0												
100	SJ	912	093	0	STB	0	36	10YR32	10YR32	CD	10YR56			MSL	8	HR	35	24	1	III	2	2	WE			5>2,1>6	
							36	55	10YR63	CD	10YR56			MSL	1	HR											
							55	80	5YR44	CD	2.5Y62			C	1	HR											
							80	120	2.5YR44					C	1	HR											
							0	0	0						0												
							0	0	0						0												
101	SJ	913	093	0	STB	0	32	10YR32	10YR32	CP	7.5YR56			MSL	10	HR	25	22	2	I	1	2	DR,ST			6>2,2>6	
							32	70	10YR63					MSL	8	HR											
							70	120	0					MSL	60	HR											
							0	0	0						0												
							0	0	0						0												
102	SJ	914	093	107	0	ARA	0	32	10YR32	CD	10YR62		S	MSL	12	HR	11	22	2	I	1	2	DR,ST			10>2	
							32	65	5YR54					HCL	4	HR											
							65	70	7.5YR54	CD	10YR62			MS	30	HR											
							70	120	0					MS	60	HR											
							0	0	0						0												
							0	0	0						0												
103	SJ	915	093	108	0	FLW	0	30	10YR22					MSL	12	HR	12	18	2	I	1	2	DR,ST			10>2	

Point	Grid ref.	X	Y	Alt	Grad	Aspect	Land use	Depth (cm)		Soil matrix		Mottle.1		Mottle.2		Gley	Texture	Stones		SUBS STR	Calc.	Mn C	SPL	Drought		Wet	ALC GRADE		Point notes	
								Top	Bottom	Thick	Munsell colour	Form	Munsell colour	Form	Munsell colour			%	Type					Mbw	MBp		Gd	WC		Grade
								30 65 75 120	35 35 10 45 0 0 0	10YR33 10YR53	CD CD	2.5Y71	7.5YR66	S Y	MSL LMS LMS	8 20 60	HR HR HR	N N N												
104	SJ	912	092	0		STB		0 40 55 80 120	40 15 25 40 0 0 0	10YR32 10YR58,54 2.5YR44	CD	5YR53	7.5YR58	Y	MSL MSL SC SC	18 3 5 60	HR HR HR HR	N N N N					20	17	2	I	1	3a	ST	12>2,8>6
105	SJ	913	092	0		STB		0 35 55 80 100	35 20 25 20 0 0 0	10YR32 10YR58,54 5YR44 5YR46	FF FF	10YR56 2.5Y62			MSL MSL SC MS MS	12 5 0 5 60	HR HR HR HR HR	N N N N N		C			21	21	2	I	1	2	DR,ST	10>2,5>6 OR Clay
106	SJ	914	092	106	0	ARA		0 30 40 50 110	30 10 10 60 10 0 0	10YR32 7.5YR32 7.5YR54 5YR54 7.5YR64	CD FD	7.5YR52 10YR62	7.5YR58	Y	MSL MSL SCL C MS	12 8 4 2 20	HR HR HR MSST MSST	N N N N N					26	19	2	III	2	2	WD,ST	10>2
107	SJ	923	092	110	0	STB		0 32 40 60 120	32 8 20 60 0 0 0	10YR31 10YR44 7.5YR54 5YR54					MSL LMS LMS MS	10 10 3 3	HR HR HR HR	N N N N					7	0	2	I	1	2	DR,ST	6>2
108	SJ	924	092	98	0	STB		0 55 70 120	55 15 50 0 0 0 0	10YR31 10YR44					LMS MSL MSL	15 5 60	HR HR HR	N N N					8	3	2	I	1	2	DR,ST	8>2,4>6 Buried topsoil? ????? Check layer Topsoil sample
109	SJ	925	092	99	0	BAR		0 38 70 120	38 32 50 0 0 0 0	10YR31 2.5Y72 5YR54	CP CD	7.5YR56 10YR72			MSL LMS MS	8 2 0	HR HR HR	N N N					14	8	2	I	1	2	DR	5>2 Clay lenses
110	SJ	913	091	0		STB		0 35 50 120	35 15 70 0 0 0 0	10YR32 10YR53,63 5YR44	FD CD	10YR56 2.5Y61			MSL SCL SC	12 0 0	HR HR HR	N N N		F C			38	21	1	III	2	2	WE,ST	8>2,4>6











Point	Grid ref.		Alt	Grad	Aspect	Land use	Depth (cm)			Soil matrix	Mottle 1		Mottle 2		Gley	Texture		Stones	SUBS STR	Calc.	Mn	C	SPL	Drought		Wet	ALC GRADE		Point notes		
	NGR	X					Y	Top	Btm		Thick	Form	Munsell colour	Form		Munsell colour	%							Type	MbW		Mbp	Gd		WC	Gw
152	SJ930009200	393000	309200	109	0	MZE	55	120	65	0	0	0	0	10YR31	5Y54,53	CD	2.5Y62	MSL	5	HR	N	N		-1	-6	3a	I	1	3a	DR	
153	SJ9310009200	393100	309200	109	0	MZE	0	29	29	10YR 2/1				10YR 2/1	5Y54,53			MSL	12	HR	N	N		-4	-9	3a	I	1	3a	DR/ST	
154	SJ9320009200	393200	309200	110	0	PAS	0	30	30	10YR 2/1				10YR 2/1	5Y54,53			MSL	11	HR	N	N		-4	-8	3a	I	1	3a	DR/ST	
155	SJ9330009200	393300	309200	111	0	PAS	0	28	28	10YR 3/2				10YR 3/2	5Y54,53			MSL	12	HR	N	N		-2	-6	3a	I	1	3a	DR/ST	
156	SJ9270009100	392700	309100	110	0	PAS	0	32	32	10YR31				10YR31	5Y54,53			MSL	12	HR	N	N		9	1	2	I	1	3a	ST	
157	SJ9280009100	392800	309100	110	0	CER	0	30	30	10YR32				10YR32	5Y54,53			MSL	12	HR	N	N		9	1	2	I	1	3a	ST	
158	SJ9290009100	392900	309100	109	0	CER	0	32	32	10YR31				10YR31	5Y54,53			MSL	8	HR	N	N		32	21	1	III	2	2	WE,ST	
159	SJ9300009100	393000	309100	110	0	CER	0	30	30	10YR31				10YR31	5Y54,53			MSL	8	HR	N	N		33	21	1	III	2	2	WE,ST	
160	SJ9310009100	393100	309100	110	0	PAS	0	30	30	10YR 2/1				10YR 2/1	5Y54,53			MSL	14	HR	N	N		-5	-9	3a	I	1	3a	DR/ST	









Depth	Texture	Colour	Mottle form
<u>xx</u>	Underlining denotes depth to a slowly permeable layer		
	CS	Coarse Sand	B
	MS	Medium sand	G
	FS	Fine Sand	Y
	LCS	Loamy Coarse Sand	R
	LMS	Loamy Medium Sand	O
	LFS	Loamy Fine Sand	Bk
	CSL	Coarse Sandy Loam	Pk
	MSL	Medium sandy loam	W
	FSL	Fine Sandy Loam	Gn
	CSZL	Coarse Sandy Silt Loam	Bl
	MSZL	Medium Sandy Silt Loam	D
	FSZL	Fine Sandy Silt Loam	L
	ZL	Silt Loam	P
	SCL	Sandy Clay Loam	V
	MCL	Medium Clay Loam	S
	HCL	Heavy Clay Loam	Wk
	MZCL	Medium Silty Clay loam	Dy
	HZCL	Heavy Silty Clay Loam	
	SC	Sandy Clay	
	ZL	Silty Clay	
	C	Clay	
	P	Peat	
	SP	Sandy Peat	
	LP	Loamy Peat	
	PL	Peaty Loam	
	PS	Peaty Sand	
	MZ	Marine Light Silts	
	IMP: xx	Impenetrable by auger/spade: Reason	
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			CD
			CP
			MF
			MD
			MP
			VF
			VD
			VP
			FF
			FD
			FP
			CF

MnC (Ferrimanganous concretions)		Calcareousness		Stone type		Limitations	
F	Few	N	Non-calcareous (<0.5% CaCO3)	HR	All hard rocks and stones	NN	None
C	Common	VS	Very slightly calcareous (0.5 - 1% CaCO3)	MSST	Soft, medium or coarse grained sandstone	OC	Overall climate
M	Many	S	Slightly calcareous (1 - 5% CaCO3)	SI	Soft, weathered igneous or metamorphic rock	AE	Aspect
V	Very many	M	Moderately calcareous (5 - 10% CaCO3)	SLST	Soft oolitic or dolomitic limestone	EX	Exposure
		V	Very calcareous (>10% CaCO3)	FSST	Soft, fine grained sandstone	FR	Frost risk
		Y	Calcareous (>1% CaCO3)	ZR	Soft, argillaceous or silty rocks	GR	Gradient
				CH	Chalk or chalk stones	MR	Microrrelief
				GH	Gravel composed of non-porous (hard) stones	FL	Flood risk
				GS	Gravel composed of porous (soft) stones	TX	Texture
						DP	Soil depth
						CH	Chemical
						WT	Wetness
						WK	Workability
						DR	Droughtiness
						ER	Erosion risk
						WD	Wetness/Droughtiness
						ST	Topsoil stoniness

**Appendix D:**  
**Topsoil Particle Size Distribution (PSD)**



**ANALYTICAL REPORT**

N717

**Report Number** 32506-16  
**Date Received** 19-SEP-2016  
**Date Reported** 26-SEP-2016  
**Project** SOIL  
**Reference** ROB ASKEW  
**Order Number**

Laboratory Reference	Sample Reference	SOIL.319719		SOIL.319720		SOIL.319721		SOIL.319722	
		C497-AB56	SOIL	C497-AB72	SOIL	C497-AB108	SOIL	C497-AB124	SOIL
Determindand	Unit	SOIL		SOIL		SOIL		SOIL	
		Sand 2.00-0.063mm	% w/w	65	79	80	63		
Silt 0.063-0.002mm	% w/w	15	13	11	21				
Clay <0.002mm	% w/w	20	8	9	16				
Textural Class **		O-SCL	LS	LS	LS				

**Notes**

**Analysis Notes** The sample submitted was of adequate size to complete all analysis requested.  
 The results as reported relate only to the item(s) submitted for testing.  
 The results are presented on a dry matter basis unless otherwise stipulated.

**Document Control** This test report shall not be reproduced, except in full, without the written approval of the laboratory.

\*\* Please see the attached document for the definition of textural classes.

*Darren Whitbread*

Natural Resource Management, a trading division of Cawood Scientific Ltd.  
 Coopers Bridge, Braziers Lane, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG42 6NS  
 Tel: 01344 886338  
 Fax: 01344 890972  
 email: enquires@nrm.uk.com

Reported by



**ANALYTICAL REPORT**

<b>Report Number</b>	57594-17		<b>N717</b>				Client C497 FOURASHES WMI STAFFS				
<b>Date Received</b>	27-APR-2017 04-										
<b>Date Reported</b>	MAY-2017 SOIL										
<b>Project</b>	C497 FOURASHES WM1										
<b>Reference</b>											
<b>Order Number</b>											
<b>Laboratory Reference</b>			SOIL.340823	SOIL.340824	SOIL.340825						
<b>Sample Reference</b>			162	158	179						
<b>Determinand</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>SOIL</b>	<b>SOIL</b>	<b>SOIL</b>	<b>SOIL</b>						
Sand 2.00-0.063mm	% w/w	79	70	78							
Silt 0.063-0.002mm	% w/w	12	18	12							
Clay <0.002mm	% w/w	9	12	10							
Textural Class **		LS/SL	SL	SL							
<b>Notes</b>											
<p>The sample submitted was of adequate size to complete all analysis requested.          The results as reported relate only to the item(s) submitted for testing.          The results are presented on a dry matter basis unless otherwise stipulated.  <b>This test report shall not be reproduced, except in full, without the written approval of the laboratory.</b></p>											
<b>Document Control</b>											
<b>Reported by</b>											
<p><b><i>Darren Whitbread</i></b>          Natural Resource Management, a trading division of Cawood Scientific Ltd.          Coopers Bridge, Braziers Lane, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG42 6NS          Tel: 01344 886338          Fax: 01344 890972          email: enquires@nrm.uk.com</p>											



## Textural Class Abbreviations

The texture classes are denoted by the following abbreviations:

Class	Code
Sand	S
Loamy sand	LS
Sandy loam	SL
Sandy Silt loam	SZL
Silt loam	ZL
Sandy clay loam	SCL
Clay loam	CL
Silt clay loam	ZCL
Clay	C
Silty clay	ZC
Sandy clay	SC

For the *sand*, *loamy sand*, *sandy loam* and *sandy silt loam* classes the predominant size of sand fraction may be indicated by the use of prefixes, thus:

vf	Very Fine (more than 2/3's of sand less than 0.106 mm)
f	Fine (more than 2/3's of sand less than 0.212 mm)
c	Coarse (more than 1/3 of sand greater than 0.6 mm)
m	Medium (less than 2/3's fine sand and less than 1/3 coarse sand).

The subdivisions of *clay loam* and *silty clay loam* classes according to clay content are indicated as follows:

M	medium (less than 27% clay)
H	heavy (27-35% clay)

Organic soils i.e. those with an organic matter greater than 10% will be preceded with a letter O.

Peaty soils i.e. those with an organic matter greater than 20% will be preceded with a letter P.

**Appendix E:**  
**MAFF Agricultural Land Classification:**  
**Four Ashes (Site 64),**  
**Staffordshire Aggregates Local Plan**  
**(Ref. 079/94)**

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION**  
**FOUR ASHES ( SITE 64 )**  
**STAFFORDSHIRE AGGREGATES LOCAL PLAN**

**M J W Wood**  
**Resource Planning Team**  
**ADAS Statutory Group**  
**WOLVERHAMPTON**

**ADAS Ref: 25/RPT/0043**  
**Job No: 079/94**  
**MAFF Ref: EL 37/00034A**

## **AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT FOR FOUR ASHES ( SITE 64 ), STAFFORDSHIRE AGGREGATES LOCAL PLAN**

### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey for this site shows that the following proportions of ALC grades are present:

Grade/Subgrade	ha	% of site
2	18.5	57
3a	12.5	39
3b	1.1	3
Other Land Non-agricultural	0.3	1

- 1.2 The main limitations to the agricultural use of land in Grade 2 are topsoil stone content, soil wetness and soil droughtiness.
- 1.3 The main limitations to the agricultural use of land in Subgrade 3a are topsoil stone content and soil droughtiness.
- 1.4 The main limitation to the agricultural use of land in Subgrade 3b is soil wetness.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The site was surveyed by the Resource Planning Team in November 1994. An Agricultural Land Classification survey was undertaken according to the guidelines laid down in the "Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land" (MAFF 1988).
- 2.2 The 32.4 ha site is situated to the south west of Calf Heath Reservoir and Junction 12 of the M6 motorway. The land immediately to the south and west of the site is predominantly in agricultural use. The land immediately to the north is occupied by a reservoir and the east is bounded by an access road and the motorway.
- 2.3 The survey was requested by MAFF in connection with the Staffordshire Aggregates Local Plan.
- 2.4 At the request of the MAFF Land Use Planning Unit this was a detailed grid survey at 1: 10 000 scale with a minimum auger boring density of 1 per hectare. The attached map is only accurate at the base map scale and any enlargement would be misleading.

2.5 At the time of the survey the site was under cereals and grass.

### 3. **CLIMATE**

3.1 The following interpolated data are relevant for the site ( SJ 928 097 ):

Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	702
Accumulated Temperature above 0°C January to June (day °C)	1367

3.2 There is no overall climatic limitation on the site.

3.3 Other relevant data for classifying land include:

Field Capacity Days (days)	165
Moisture Deficit Wheat (mm)	94
Moisture Deficit Potatoes (mm)	81

### 4. **SITE**

4.1 Three site factors of gradient, micro-relief and flooding are considered when classifying land.

4.2 These factors do not impose any limitations on the agricultural use of this land.

### 5. **GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

5.1 The geology of the area is comprised of Upper Mottled Sandstone ( British Geological Survey, Sheet 153 Wolverhampton 1 Inch ). This is overlain with deposits of Quaternary boulder clay.

5.2 The underlying geology influences the soils which have a sandy or a clay texture.

## 6. AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

6.1 Grade 2 - occupies 18.5 ha ( 57 % ) of the survey area and is found in the west of the site.

6.1.1 These soils typically have a sandy loam texture overlying loamy sand and / or sandy clay loam and clay to depth, with profiles being slightly stony. Occasionally there may be lenses of lighter material such as sandy clay loam or sand in the subsoil which may be very stony in nature. Observations of gleying and the depth to the slowly permeable layer places these soils in to Wetness Class III. The moisture balance places these soils in Grade 2.

6.1.2 The main limitations to the agricultural use of this land are topsoil stone content greater than 2cm, soil wetness and soil droughtiness.

6.2 Subgrade 3a occupies 12.5 ha ( 39 % ) of the survey area and is found mainly in the south and east of the site.

6.2.1 These soils typically have a sandy loam texture over loamy sand and sand to depth, with common to many stones within the profile. In places the lower subsoil texture includes sandy clay loam and clay. Observations of gleying and the depth to the slowly permeable layer places these soils in to Wetness Class III. The moisture balance places these soils in Subgrade 3a.

6.2.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is topsoil stone content greater than 2cm in size and soil droughtiness.

6.3 Subgrade 3b occupies 1.1 ha ( 3 % ) of the survey area.

6.3.1 These waterlogged soils were difficult to texture in the field. The soil had a sandy loam texture overlying saturated ground.

6.3.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil wetness.

6.4 Other land includes non-agricultural land which occupies 0.3 ha ( 1 % ) of the survey area and is found in the north of the site as a hollow containing scrub.

6.5 **SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION GRADES**

<b>Grade/Subgrade</b>	<b>Area (Ha)</b>	<b>% of survey area</b>	<b>% of agricultural land</b>
2	18.5	57	58
3a	12.5	39	39
3b	1.1	3	3
Other Land			
Non Agricultural	0.3	1	
<hr/>			
<b>Totals</b>	32.4	100	100
<hr/>			

# Agricultural Land Classification

## Four Ashes - Site 64 - Staffs

### Aggregates Local Plan

Agricultural Land		Quality	Area (ha)
1	*	Excellent	nil
2		Very Good	18.5
3a		Good	12.5
3b		Moderate	1.1
4	*	Poor	nil
5	*	Very Poor	nil

Other Land Categories		Area (ha)
*	Urban	nil
	Non-Agricultural	0.3
W	Woodland	nil
*	Agricultural Buildings	nil
*	Open Water	nil
*	Not Surveyed	nil
Total agricultural land area		32.1
Total survey area		32.4

\* Grade/category not present within survey area

Scale 1:10,000  
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 Metres

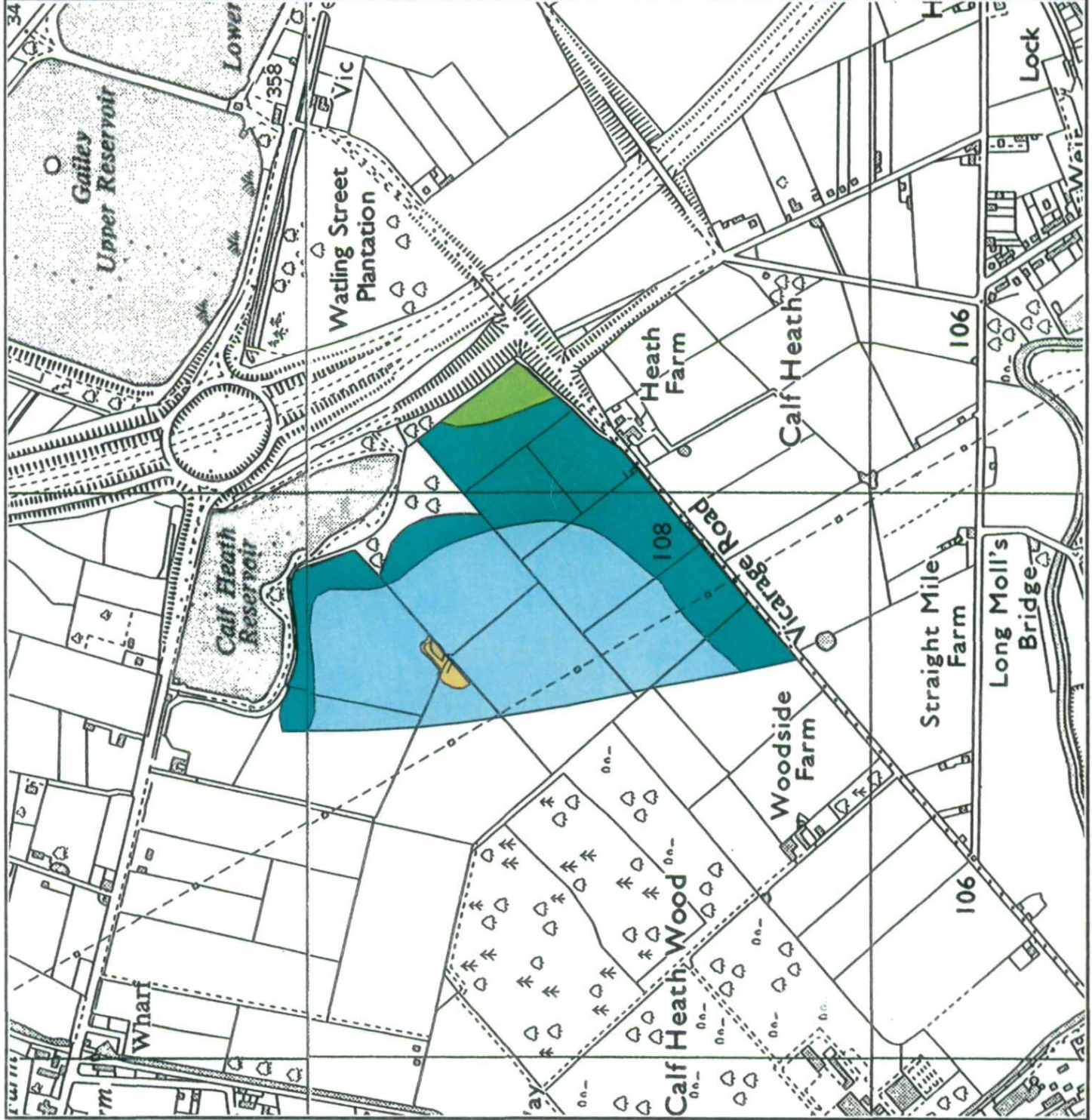
Further details contained in MAFF (1988) Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land. MAFF (Publications), London SE99 7TP.

The information is accurate at the basic map scale but any enlargement would be misleading.

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Source: Mapfile 5080950  
Reference no. 07974  
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# Agricultural Land Classification

## Four Ashes - Site 64 - Staffs Aggregates Local Plan

### AUGER BORINGS

Soil Pits ■

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 (Publication), London. SF99 71P.

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 Source Map(s): 508090  
 Reference no. 07994  
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