

# Agriculture, soils and land



### Agriculture, soils and land quality surveys

There are several things we need to know about the land surrounding the scheme and how it is farmed. We will find this information out by interviewing farmers and carrying out soil surveys.

### Farmer interviews

We need to understand how our scheme could affect the day-to-day working and productivity of farms so we can keep our impact to a minimum.

Every farmer, land owner and tenant, who could be affected by our scheme, will be interviewed by one of our agricultural specialists. We want to understand how any land we might use would affect the working and viability of a particular farm. For instance, we'd like to know if working in a particular area might cut one part of a farm off from another, or if we might affect things like

hedgerows, tracks, field accesses, buildings, drainage or water supplies.

There is a checklist attached at the end of this fact sheet, which gives you an idea of the types of topics our specialist(s) will cover in the interview, (NB the checklist gives a flavour it is not an exhaustive list). The information we gather will help us take steps to reduce the impact of our work during construction and when the road is built.

**Soil and land quality surveys** We need to know about land quality and the soil profile in all the places that we might end up working. This is important to help us to protect the land during construction and ensure that as much of the land as possible can be returned to its previous state when the works are finished.

Land quality in England and Wales is graded according to Defra's Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) scheme. There are six grades, rated 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 4 and 5, depending on the soil type, climate and topography and the way these features interact with one another. The best land, known as Best and Most Versatile, is in grades 1, 2 and 3a.

The soil profile refers to the vertical section of the soil from the ground surface downwards to where the soil meets the underlying rock. Understanding this helps us build up a picture of how much soil we will need to remove if we choose to build in an area, how we will design and manage stockpiles of soil to keep it safe and healthy, and how to

restore land to its original condition when we have finished.

Our soil surveys will be carried out by hand without the requirement for vehicles or tracked machinery, which will minimise potential disturbance.

Our surveyors will use a 5cm width hand auger to take a soil sample down to a maximum depth of 120cm (about four feet). Their detailed analysis will tell us the grade of the land and the profile of the soil, at each sample site. Sample pits may also be required to uncover and examine potential subsoil structures. We will use this to map all the ALC grades and write a report describing how these grades were assigned. We will also create an inventory of soil profiles.

## Appendix A: Farm interview checklist

Previous meetings related to the project.	
Status of farmer (tenant, owner).	
Type of tenancy and duration.	
Contact details of agent or solicitor.	
Are the land plans accurate?	Mark corrections on plan
Area farmed (Highways England).	
Type of farm (combinable arable, mixed, beef and sheep, dairy, horticultural). State if organic.	
Type of cropping (arable crop, ley, permanent grass etc.) of fields directly affected by the road for the next 3 years.	

Affected buildings (type of construction and use).	Mark on plan
Membership of Stewardship and other conservation schemes that might be affected.	Mark on plan
Identify land that will be severed and its use.	Mark on plan
Identify extra journey times created by the scheme (harvest trailers, slurry spreading, moving livestock etc.).	Mark on plan
Identify locations (approximately) and types of land drains (pipes, ditches, soakaways) and any other discharges to land or water.	Mark on plan
Identify farm and field water pipes and supplies (troughs, springs etc.).	Mark on plan
Will irrigation be affected by the scheme? Source of water and electricity. Supply and distribution network.	Mark on plan
Will slurry and dirty water disposal be affected?	Mark on plan
Does the farm have a commercial or semi-commercial shoot?	Mark on plan
Is the local hunt permitted on farm?	
Is any commercially managed woodland affected?	
Does the farm have other diversification enterprises that might be affected? Farm shop, car boot sales etc.	Mark on plan
Any other concerns of farmer? (noise, view etc.?).	Mark on plan
Is another visit required?	Mark on plan

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