

**Agricultural Land Classification Desk Based Study**

# AGRICULTURAL LAND DESK BASED REVIEW

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 This desk based review considers the potential impacts of the A27 East of Lewes scheme may have on agricultural land.
- 1.1.2 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system provides a framework for classifying land according to how its physical and chemical characteristics affect the long-term limitations on agricultural use.
- 1.1.3 The main physical factors influencing agricultural production are climate, site and soil. These factors together with interactions between them form the basis for classifying land into one of five grades; Grade 1 land being of excellent quality and Grade 5 land of very poor quality. Grade 3, which constitutes about half of the agricultural land in England and Wales, is now divided into two subgrades designated 3a and 3b.

### 1.2 SCOPE

- 1.2.1 The scope of this review is to identify and predict the likely construction and long-term effects of the proposed development on agricultural resources after the incorporation of mitigation measures.
- 1.2.2 The framework for undertaking an Environmental Assessment is set out in the EC Directive 'The Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment<sup>1</sup>' which is given force in the UK by the 'Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations<sup>ii</sup>.
- 1.2.3 This framework does not, however, contain detailed guidance on the specific aspects of agriculture which should be included in an impact assessment, and the manner in which they should be treated. Therefore, the general approach adopted by this study has been derived from the present planning advice from central and local Government which provides a guide to the factors which ought to be examined in an assessment of the impacts of development proposals upon agriculture, as well as a policy framework within which weight can be attached to the significance of particular impacts.
- 1.2.4 National land use development policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>3iii</sup> seek to safeguard scarce natural resources in the long-term national interest and give protection to the best and most versatile agricultural land (that in Grades 1, 2 and 3a).

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1.1

The approach to the review utilises a combination of receptor sensitivity and magnitude of impact to determine significance. The relative sensitivity of agricultural land is scaled according to the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system as set out in Table 12-1.

### RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY

TABLE 2.1 - RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY			
Receptor Sensitivity	Criteria (Post-1988)	Pre-1988 Comparison	Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land?
High	Grade 1	Grade 1	Yes
Medium	Grade 2 and 3a	Grade 2 and 3	Yes
Low	Grade 3b and 4	Grade 3 and 4	No
Negligible	Grade 5	Grade 5	No

### MAGNITUDE OF EFFECTS

TABLE 2.2 - MAGNITUDE OF EFFECTS	
Magnitude of Impact	Land take
High	More than 20 hectares of BMV
Medium	5 – 20 hectares of BMV
Low	1 – 5 hectares BMV
Negligible	Less than 1 hectare of BMV

## SIGNIFICANCE

TABLE 2.3 - SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Sensitivity	Magnitude of Impact			
	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	Significant	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Medium	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Low	Minor	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

## 3 ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

- 3.1.1 The desk based review has been undertaken using Pre-1988 mapping from online resources. The scope of the Environmental Assessment Report was undertaken on the Design Fix 2 plans which did not include areas of mitigation planting. Areas of additional woodland have been located adjacent to existing areas of woodland for habitat connectivity and landscape purposes.
- 3.1.2 Following Design Fix 3, it was noted that additional land take was required which increased the total land. A desk based review has therefore been undertaken to understand the potential impacts of the scheme on Agricultural Land.
- 3.1.3 The land take has been based upon the maximum extent plan of the scheme. The total land take areas are based on whole land parcels and does not distinguish between areas of non-agricultural land use such as hedgerows, woodland and drainage and therefore is likely to represent a worse-than worst case scenario in regard to land take.

## 4 BASELINE

### LAND TAKE AND PRE-1988 ALC GRADE

TABLE 4.1 - AGRICULTURAL LAND TAKE

Pre 1988 Grade	Agricultural Land Take (Hectares)	Percentage of total
Grade 1	0	0
Grade 2	0.66	3%
Grade 3	19.93	85%
Grade 4	1.16	5%
Urban	1.67	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23.36</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.1 DESK BASED REVIEW

TABLE 4.2- REVIEW

Pre 1988 Grade	Sensitivity	Land Take (Hectares)	Magnitude (if BMV)	Significance
Grade 1	High	0	Negligible	<b>Negligible</b>
Grade 2	Medium	0.66	Negligible	<b>Negligible</b>
Grade 3	Medium – Low	19.93	Medium	<b>Minor</b>
Grade 4	Negligible	1.16	Low	<b>Negligible</b>
Urban	Negligible	1.6	Low	<b>Negligible</b>

# 5

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The desk based review has highlighted the potential for effects of minor significance due to the loss of agricultural land as a result of the construction of the scheme.

The vast majority of agricultural land take falls within Grade 3. This grade was split after 1988 into two subgrades; Grade 3a – good quality and Grade 3b – Moderate quality. Grade 3a is considered Best and Most Versatile land whereas Grade 3b is not.

Based on the desk study the effects of the scheme will be minor adverse as between 5ha and 20ha of BMV may be lost. This assumes that all Grade 3 is Grade 3a sub-grade..

It is recommended that an Agricultural Land Classification field survey, utilising the post-1988 grading is undertaken to inform the detailed design of the scheme.

## REFERENCES

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<sup>i</sup> The Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment (2011/92/EU), EC Directive, December 2011

<sup>ii</sup> Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (SI No 571),

<sup>iii</sup> National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018

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