

**John Murphy & Sons Ltd**

**Land at New Ollerton, NG22 9TB**

**Agricultural Land Quality**

**Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd, February 2024**

Guidance for assessing the quality of agricultural land in England and Wales is set out in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land, and summarised in Natural England's Technical Information Note (TIN) 049.

Agricultural land in England and Wales is graded between 1 and 5, depending on the extent to which physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. The principal physical factors influencing grading are climate, site conditions and soil which, together with interactions between them, form the basis for classifying land into one of the five grades.

Grade 1 land is excellent quality agricultural land with very minor or no limitations to agricultural use.

Grade 2 is very good quality agricultural land, with minor limitations which affect crop yield, cultivations or harvesting.

Grade 3 land has moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield, and is subdivided into Subgrade 3a (good quality land) and Subgrade 3b (moderate quality land).

Grade 4 land is poor quality agricultural land with severe limitations which significantly restrict the range of crops and/or level of yields.

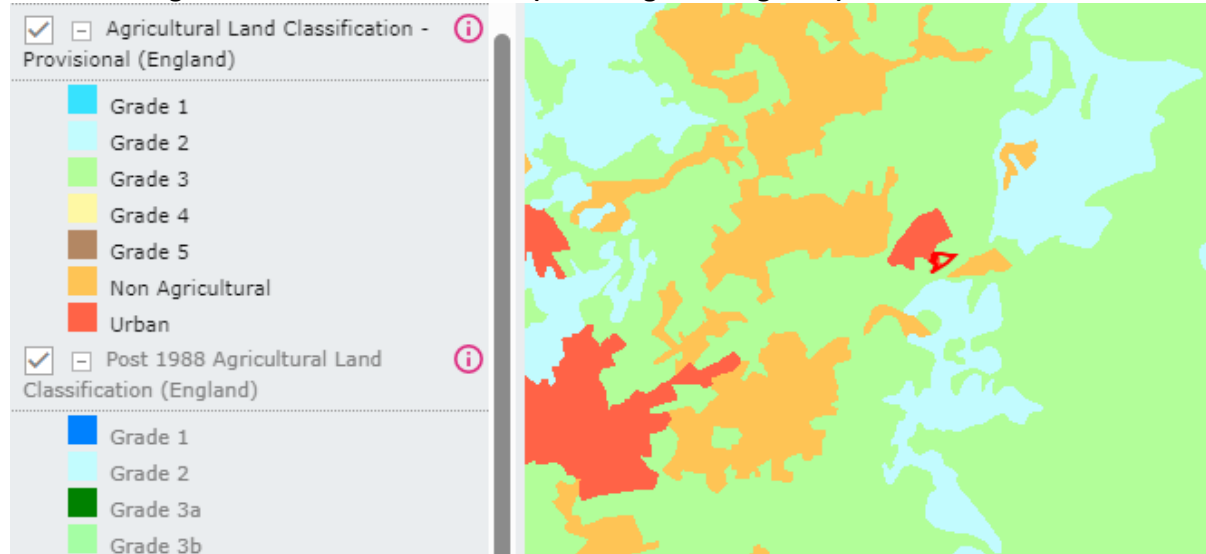
Grade 5 is very poor quality land, with severe limitations which restrict use to permanent pasture or rough grazing.

Land which is classified as Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the ALC system is defined as best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land.

As explained in Natural England's TIN049, the whole of England and Wales was mapped from reconnaissance field surveys in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to provide general strategic guidance on agricultural 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 (1:63,360) and is now available on <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> at a scale of 1:250,000.

The Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) map shows the agricultural land within the site as undifferentiated good to moderate quality Grade 3 land, with the existing JMS depot shown as urban land.

### Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (from [magic.defra.gov.uk](http://magic.defra.gov.uk))



However, TIN049 explains that these maps are not sufficiently accurate for assessing individual fields or development sites, and should not be used other than as general guidance. TIN049 goes on to explain that a definitive ALC grading should be obtained by undertaking a detailed survey according to the published guidelines, at an observation density of one boring per hectare.

The site was surveyed in accordance with the ALC guidelines in January 2024, with soil profiles in the agricultural part of the site examined using augers and by hand digging pits, in order to describe the depth, texture, stone content, colour, consistency, structural condition and free carbonate of each soil horizon (topsoil, upper subsoil and lower subsoil) within the profile. Topsoil samples have also been submitted for laboratory determination of particle size distribution, pH, organic matter content and nutrient contents.

The results of the detailed ALC survey will be reported and mapped once the laboratory analysis is available. The assessment of agricultural land quality will be carried out according to the revised ALC guidelines, with soil profiles and characteristics described according to the Soil Survey Field Handbook.