



12. Agricultural Circumstances

Introduction

- 12.1 This chapter considers the effects on soil and other agricultural factors of the non-agricultural development of 8.8 hectares of agricultural land on the north eastern edge of Bognor Regis.
- 12.2 The study area includes the Site and any adjacent land in agricultural use, including the two committed developments at Land North of Bersted and Land to the North of Felpham.

Policy Context

- 12.3 In undertaking this section of the Environmental Statement, account has been taken of national planning policy governing the non-agricultural development of agricultural land which is set out in Planning Policy Statement 7 "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas" (2004), paragraph 28, which identifies the "best and most versatile agricultural land" (BMV) as land in Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Grades 1, 2 and 3a. Throughout England and Wales this amounts to one third of agricultural land, but in parts of England this proportion is much higher.

- 12.4 Paragraph 28, notes:

"the presence of best and most versatile agricultural land should be taken into account alongside other sustainability considerations (e.g. biodiversity; the quality and character of the landscape; its amenity value or heritage interest; accessibility to infrastructure, workforce and markets; maintaining viable communities; and the protection of natural resources, including soil quality) when determining planning applications. Where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land (grades 3b, 4 or 5) in preference to that of higher quality, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations. Little weight in agricultural terms should be given to the loss of agricultural land in grades 3b, 4 or 5, except in some areas (such as uplands) where particular agricultural practices may themselves contribute in some special way to the quality and character of the environment or the local economy. If any undeveloped agricultural land needs to be developed, any adverse effects on the environment should be minimised".

- 12.5 Paragraph 29 goes on to state that:

"It is for Local Authorities to decide whether best and most versatile agricultural land can be developed, having carefully weighed the options in light of competent advice".

- 12.7 At the current time there is no relevant Local Plan policy relating to the protection of agricultural land. Previously Policy AREA 12 of the Arun District Local Plan (adopted 2003) set out the Council's policy on Agricultural Land Quality. However the Local Plan has now expired, and although the Secretary of State granted consent for a number of policies in



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the Local Plan to be saved under the provisions set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, policy AREA 12 was not one of those policies that was saved.

Assessment Methodology & Significance Criteria

- 12.8 Baseline survey data has been gathered by desk-based assessment and site surveys. Natural England were contacted with regard to the availability of existing Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) data and provided copies of existing survey data for the Site. Data regarding farming circumstances was obtained during a site meeting with the land owner's agent in November 2007.
- 12.9 The assessment of impact on land resources has been carried out in three stages. Firstly the magnitude of the potential impact has been considered. Secondly the importance / sensitivity of the resource has been considered. Thirdly the significance of impact has then been determined by the interaction of magnitude and sensitivity. The effects have been determined by the thresholds set out in Tables 12.1 – 12.3 below.
- 12.10 There are no defined thresholds for assessing the impacts of non-agricultural development on agricultural soil resources. Planning Policy Statement 7 (2004) states that it is for Local Authorities to decide whether "best and most versatile land" (BMV) can be developed. BMV land is identified in PPS 7 as worthy of protection. Accordingly the loss of BMV land is a measure of impact.
- 12.11 EIA requires various thresholds to be set and in consultation with other consultants and various agricultural departmental offices from DEFRA, the thresholds set out in this chapter have been adopted.

Table 12.1 Methodology for Determining Impact Magnitude

Impact magnitude	Definition	
	Impact on Soils	Impact on Local Agriculture
Substantial	The proposed development would directly lead to the loss of over 50 hectares of "best and most versatile agricultural land" (Grades 1/2/3a).	The impact of the development would render an agricultural business non-viable.
Moderate	The proposed development would directly lead to the loss of between 20 and 50 hectares of "best and most versatile agricultural land" (Grades 1/2/3a).	The impact of the development would require significant changes in the day-to-day management/structure of an agricultural business.
Minor	The proposed development would directly lead to the loss of less than 20 hectares of "best and most versatile agricultural land" (Grades 1/2/3a).	Land take would not render any business non-viable and would require only minor changes to the farm enterprises and the type and range of enterprises would be unaffected.
Negligible	No direct impacts upon agricultural land.	No direct impact on agricultural businesses.



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Table 12.2 Methodology for Determining Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Examples of Receptors
High	Land Resources are matters of potentially national importance. There are no defined criteria against which to set thresholds. National planning policy towards the development and protection of agricultural land is at paragraphs 28 and 29 of Planning Policy Statement 7 (2004). The effect on land resources is a combination of the quantum and quality of agricultural land affected, relative to both the national resource and the relative availability of land of that quality locally. Land resources should therefore be classified as being of high environmental value (sensitivity).
Moderate	/
Low	Farm businesses are of potentially local importance. The way that farms are operated will vary over time according to ownership, local and international economic factors. Farm businesses are tolerant of some change without detriment to their character.

Table 12.3 Impact Significance Matrix

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	High	Moderate	Low
Substantial	Major Adverse / Beneficial	Major – Moderate Adverse / Beneficial	Moderate-Minor Adverse / Beneficial
Moderate	Major-Moderate Adverse / Beneficial	Moderate-Minor Adverse / Beneficial	Minor Adverse / Beneficial
Minor	Moderate-Minor Adverse / Beneficial	Minor Adverse / Beneficial	Minor / Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Baseline Conditions

- 12.12 Existing conditions prior to the construction of the scheme (the baseline situation) can be divided into two categories.

- Inherent conditions (i.e. those not influenced by man to any significant degree, such as soils and land quality); and
- Land use conditions, which are generally of a more transient nature, such as farming occupation and management.

Inherent Conditions

- 12.13 The inherent soil resources, interacting with factors such as climate and topography, influence the extent to which land can be exploited for agricultural purposes. As a means of measuring and comparing land in different locations, the former agricultural ministry, the Ministry for Agricultural Fisheries and Food (MAFF), devised a system of Agricultural Land Classification (ALC). The ALC system divides land into five grades according to the extent to which inherent characteristics can be exploited for agricultural production. Grade 1 is described as being of excellent quality and Grade 5, at the other end of the scale, is described as being of very poor quality. ALC is based upon an assessment of limiting factors including soils, climate and other physical limitations and the way in which these interact.
- 12.14 The Site is shown on the 1:250,000 published Agricultural Land Classification Map (MAFF 1976) as comprising a mix of Grade 1 and undifferentiated Grade 3 land.
- 12.15 Natural England has been contacted and they have provided us with details of an ALC survey that was carried out in 1994. The ALC survey was



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undertaken at a detailed level of approximately one boring per hectare and inspections undertaken in accordance with MAFF guidance (1988).

- 12.16 The MAFF Survey identifies the Site to comprise a mix of Grade 1 and Grade 3b land. The presence of Grade 1 land is representative of land quality in the area. A breakdown of the grades is set out in the table below. A copy of the survey data is attached at Appendix 12.1.

Table 11.4 ALC Grades across the Site

ALC Grade	Definition	Area (Ha)	% of Site
1	Excellent	7.9	90
2	Very Good		
3a	Good		
3b	Moderate	0.9	10
4	Poor		
5	Very Poor		
TOTAL		8.8	100

The Site which extends to 8.8 hectares, comprises part of a single field currently in arable use.

- 12.17 The land is owned by the Langmead family. This site forms part of a large arable and dairy unit, extending to approximately 400 hectares (1000 acres) based at Lidsey Lodge Farm. The farm operates a 150 head dairy unit and crops approximately 335 hectares of arable crops, including maize.
- 12.18 Adjacent to the Site is a pair of cottages and a range of dilapidated farm buildings that suffered fire damage several years ago.

Identification & Evaluation of Key Impacts

- 12.19 Two key areas of impact have been identified:
- Impacts on agricultural land quality i.e. the effects of the loss of agricultural land as a national resource; and
 - Impacts on Farm Businesses. The effects of non-agricultural development on the viability of farm businesses operating within the area.
- 12.20 These impacts have been split down into effects that will take effect during the construction phase and operational phase.
- 12.21 Effects that will take place throughout the construction phase have been identified as:
- Effects on the national resource of agricultural land. This impact will be permanent and continue throughout the operation of the proposal;
 - Effects on farm size and structure. Again this impact will be permanent and continue throughout the operation of the proposal;
 - Effects of field drainage and water supplies. These will also be permanent effects and will continue throughout the operation of the proposal; and
 - Effects on field accesses.
- 12.22 The following operational effects have been identified.
- Trespass onto surrounding agricultural land.



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Prediction of Impact Magnitude

Construction Phase Impacts

Effects on the National Resource of Agricultural Land

- 12.23 The site extends to approximately 8.8 hectares, all of which comprises agricultural land. Of this 8.8 hectares 7.9 hectares comprises of Grade 1 i.e. "best and most versatile" agricultural land. The Proposals will involve the long term irreversible loss of this land. Once developed it will be unlikely to ever return to an agricultural use.
- 12.24 The magnitude of impact of the loss of 7.9 hectares of best and most versatile agricultural land is deemed to be minor negative. Whilst it is BMV land, it is a small area.

Effects on Farm Size and Structure

- 12.25 The Site is occupied by a substantial farming enterprise. The application site forms part of mixed arable and dairy enterprise operating from a farmyard complex to the north east of Bognor Regis. The land that will be lost to development represents only a very small proportion of the land farmed in the locality (less than 1%). Its loss will have only very minimal effects on the overall farm size and structure. The loss of this land will not in any way prejudice the continued operations of the farm business. The dairy herd will be able to continue operating at existing levels and the arable enterprise will continue albeit the area available for cropping will be slightly reduced, the impacts of which will be a slightly reduced farm income. This reduction in cropping and farm income will be off-set by the purchase of an additional parcel of land, of a similar size, adjoining the main farm. Although this purchase has not been finalised the farm has already taken occupation of the land and has planted it up in preparation for harvest 2008.
- 12.26 The Proposed Development will not affect the farmability of the remainder of the holding.
- 12.27 In summary, the magnitude of impact of the loss of this agricultural land is deemed to be minor negative.

Effects on Field Drainage and Water Supplies

- 12.28 None of the affected land is known to be tile drained.
- 12.29 There are no water supplies to the field.
- 12.30 Accordingly the magnitude of impact on field drainage and water supplies is considered negligible.

Effects on Field Accesses.

- 12.31 The Proposals include the development of part of a single field. Access will still be available to the remaining part of the field. No parcels of land will be severed as a result of the Proposed Development. The impact of the proposal on farm accesses is negligible.
- 12.32 In summary the magnitude of impact on farm businesses during the construction phase are deemed to be minor negative.



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Operational Effects

- 12.33 Once in operation the non-agricultural use of sites can lead to the spread of trespass onto neighbouring agricultural land. The spread of such trespass can prohibit the full agricultural exploitation of adjacent land.
- 12.34 In this case the spread of trespass is unlikely for a number of reasons. Industrial uses do not tend to generate trespass to the same degree as say a residential use. This is evident on the Site with there being no evidence of agricultural practices being restricted because of trespass from existing industrial areas. Further the design of the Proposed Development will prohibit trespass with the northern boundary adjoining the proposed relief road.
- 12.35 In summary, the magnitude of impact of the operational effects of the scheme will be negligible to minor negative.

Assessment of Impact Significance

- 12.36 The significance of an environmental impact is determined by the interaction of the magnitude of impact and the sensitivity / importance of the resource. Based on the thresholds set out in Tables 1-3 above and the magnitude of impact assessment in section 6 above the significance of the impacts has been assessed as being:

Significance of Impact on Soil Resources: Minor Adverse

Significance of Impact on Farm Businesses: Minor Adverse

Mitigation Measures

- 12.37 There are no mitigation measures which can mitigate against the loss of agricultural land. Soils handling and conservation should be undertaken in accordance with the relevant chapters in the "The Good Practice for Handling Soils" (MAFF 2000)

Cumulative Effects

- 12.38 This section of the chapter considers the cumulative impacts of both this proposal and the proposed development of the North Bersted and Felpham sites on agriculture and soils. Information regarding the North Bersted and Felpham sites has been obtained from the published Environmental Statements for the two sites and over-the hedge inspections of the Sites.

Effects on Soil Resources

- 12.39 The Environmental Statement for the Felpham Development states at paragraph 12.14 of the Agriculture Chapter that "the use of the Site for built development will involve the loss of Grade 1 and Grade 2 land". At paragraph 12.21 it goes onto state that "the proposed development of up to 900 houses and roads at the Felpham site will involve the loss of 25 ha of land, much of which is agricultural land."
- 12.40 The proposed development at Bersted involves the irreversible loss of around a further 25 hectares of Grade 1 and 2 land, as noted at paragraph 16.9 of the Environmental Statement.
- 12.41 In summary, the three schemes in combination will involve the irreversible development of approximately 59 hectares of agricultural land of which approximately 58 hectares comprises of "best and most versatile agricultural land". The cumulative magnitude of impact of this loss is deemed to be substantial adverse. However, it should be noted that the



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Local Plan review process and the Inspector's report for the Local Plan Inquiry gave due consideration to Agricultural Land Quality when accepting that these three sites should be set aside for new development given the need for housing and employment land in Bognor Regis and the aim to rejuvenate and regenerate this part of West Sussex. Therefore, the balancing exercising set out in PPS7 has been carried out.

Effects on Agricultural Businesses

- 12.42 At paragraph 12.20 the ES for the Felpham development concludes that:

"the development of land at Felpham could affect the provision of access to remaining agricultural land currently in production. However, the proposal is an urban extension and following a review of relevant land ownership and the Master Plan for the Site, it is concluded that agricultural land will not be fragmented to the extent that remaining farmland or adjoining farm units will be isolated. The design of the BRRR provides appropriate accesses serving land on both sides and this will facilitate the movement of people and machinery."

- 12.43 The Agricultural Chapter of the Bersted ES makes no reference to impacts on agricultural businesses. However the cumulative impacts section of the ES concludes that:

"no adverse effects on access to agricultural land would occur along the northern edge of Bognor Regis".

- 12.44 As set out in section six of this chapter the effects on farm businesses as a result of the Oldlands Farm proposals will be minor negative.

Residual Effects

- 12.45 As set out in section 8 there is nothing that can be done to mitigate against the loss of agricultural land. Therefore the residual effects remain the same as those identified i.e. the effects before mitigation. A summary, of the residual effects is set out in the table below.

- 12.46 Accordingly even when all three proposals are considered together there will be no significant adverse impacts on farm businesses as a result of the proposals. In summary, the cumulative magnitude of impact of the proposed developments on agricultural businesses is deemed to be minor negative.

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Impacts	Description of Impact		Description of Mitigation Measure(s)	Description of Residual Impact	
	Description	Significance		Description	Significance
Construction Impacts	Soil Resources: Loss of 8.8 ha of agricultural land (90% BMV) (-ve, D, LT)	Minor Adverse	None Proposed	Loss of 8.8 ha of agricultural land (90% BMV) (-ve, D, LT)	Minor Adverse
	Loss of 8.8 ha of land currently in arable production. The site represents less than 1% of the occupying farm business (-ve, D, LT)	Minor Adverse	None Proposed	Loss of 8.8 ha of land currently in arable production. The site represents less than 1% of the occupying farm business (-ve, D, LT)	Minor Adverse
	Drainage/ Water Supplies: No farm drainage or water supplies will be affected by the proposal (-ve, D, LT)	Negligible	None Proposed	Drainage/ Water Supplies: No farm drainage or water supplies will be affected by the proposal (-ve, D, LT)	Negligible
	Access: There will be no affects on continued access to remaining parcels of agricultural land (-ve, D, LT)	Negligible	None Proposed	Access: There will be no affects on continued access to remaining parcels of agricultural land (-ve, D, LT)	Negligible
Operational Impacts	Trespass: The scheme is well designed to prevent trespass onto neighbouring agricultural land (-ve, D, LT)	Negligible to Minor Negative	None Proposed	Trespass: The scheme is well designed to prevent trespass onto neighbouring agricultural land (-ve, D, LT)	Negligible to Minor Negative
+ve = Positive -ve = Negative D = Direct; I = Indirect; T = Temporary ST = Short Term; MT = Medium Term; LT = Long Term					

Summary

- 12.47 This chapter has assessed the effects on soil resources and agricultural businesses of the development of 8.8 hectares of agricultural land.
- 12.48 The Proposed Development will involve the irreversible loss of 8.8 hectares of agricultural land, of which 7.9 hectares comprises of Grade 1 land i.e. "best and most versatile agricultural land". The magnitude of the impact is deemed to be minor negative and the significance of the loss is minor adverse. National planning policy set out in PPS 7 states that "it is for local authorities to decide whether best and most versatile agricultural land can be developed". Due consideration has been given to the development of this area of "best and most versatile" agricultural land, both during the Local Plan review and the Local Plan Inquiry.
- 12.49 The site forms part of a substantial farming enterprise. The loss of agricultural land will not affect the continued farmability of the holding. The magnitude of impact of this loss is minor negative the significance of impact is minor adverse.