

CASE STUDY: LAND MANAGEMENT/SOIL

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION



ADAS UK Ltd was commissioned to undertake Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) of some land south of Ludlow to inform a planning application for a solar farm. The land was classified using the system outlined in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) publication: 'Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land' (October 1988).



The Agricultural Land Classification (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.

By considering specific **climate, site** and **soil** factors, the land can be classified into one of five agricultural grades or certain non-agricultural grades, with Grade 1 land being the highest quality and Grade 5 the lowest quality. There is a presumption against the development of grades 1, 2 and subgrade 3a, as they are the 'best and most versatile' soils.

A previous ALC survey had found the land to be subgrade 3a, which is less likely to be consented for development than lower grades. ADAS undertook a desk study of soils and climatic information followed by a detailed field survey to study the soil and site limitations.

Fieldwork was undertaken with a hand-held 50 mm diameter 'Dutch' auger and spade to a depth of 1m. In addition, soil pits were excavated, to determine those subsoil characteristics which could not be identified from the auger sample. A total of 12 auger borings and two soil pits were examined to determine the quality of the land.



ADAS found that 54% of the site was classified as grade 3b, whilst the rest was classified as grade 3a. Thanks to the comprehensive work conducted by ADAS, more than half of the site was classified as a more developable grade of soil than previously found and the client was able to proceed with their planning application for the solar farm.