

REPORT
for
LAND CLASSIFICATION
of
LAND
at
SHERSTON
MALMESBURY
WILTSHIRE
SN16 0QB
for
K BIRD

10TH DECEMBER 2024

Prepared by
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LAND AT SHERSTON, MALMESBURY, WILTSHIRE, SN16 0QB

1.0 PERSONAL

1.1 I am Ivor Humphry Mann, sole trader and owner of John Coad & Son, Chartered Surveyors, Valuers, Land Agents and Auctioneers, of 7 Coinagehall Street, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 8ER.

1.2 I left the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, with a Diploma in Rural Estate Management in 1975 and in 1977 became an Associate of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). In 1979 I became a Full Member of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers and in 1990 I became a Fellow of the RICS.

1.3 When I left Cirencester in 1975, I worked for the agricultural professional arm of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), based in Truro, before pursuing the profession in private practice.

1.4 During my time at MAFF, among other tasks, I was engaged to carry out Land Classification of areas of land adjacent to large towns or urban areas where development was proposed in the future (the future being 25-50 years ahead).

2.0 INSTRUCTIONS

2.1 John Coad & Son has been requested by K Bird (in an email dated 26th November 2024) to carry out Land Classification and in an emailed letter of 'Confirmation of Instructions' between John Coad & Son and K Bird dated 2nd December 2024, the following instructions were confirmed:

"To visit the above land (at Sherston, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 0QB) to inspect the land, take notes on slope, altitude, exposure and take soil samples, to completion of a report with plans (as required) to give an indication of land classification and advise on various aspects of a professional nature".

3.0 LAND CLASSIFICATION

3.1 The "Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quantity of Agricultural Land", dated October 1988, state:

3.2 The Agricultural Land Classification provides a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. The limitations can operate in one or more of four principal ways: they may affect the range of crops which can be grown, the level of yield, the consistency of yield and the cost of obtaining it. The classification system gives considerable weight to flexibility of cropping, whether actual or potential, but the ability of some land to produce consistently high yields of a somewhat narrower range of crops is also taken into account.

3.3 The principal 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.

3.4 The main climatic factors are temperature and rainfall although account is taken of exposure, aspect and frost risk. The site factors used in the classification system are gradient, micro-relief and flood risk. Soil characteristics of particular importance are texture, structure, depth and stoniness.

3.5 The grade or subgrade of land is determined by the most limiting factor present. When classifying land the overall climate and site limitations should be considered first as these can have an overriding influence on the grade. Land is graded and mapped without regard to present field boundaries, except where they coincide with permanent physical features.

4.0 INSPECTIONS

4.1 The land was inspected on Tuesday 10th December 2024 and soil core samples were taken.

5.0 WEATHER

5.1 The weather was dry and cold with a fresh breeze blowing after 'Storm Darragh' a few days earlier.

6.0 AREA

6.1 It was explained to us that we were to carry out a Land Classification report on the field shown on the attached Land Registry map/plan. Title Number WT478399.

6.2 The map shows the sample points marked with "crosses", and numerated A1, A2, A3 and B1, B2, B3 all on a grid but at least 10 metres off the hedge or ditch or headland. The reason is to ensure a good sample not affected by mechanical pressure/damage.

7.0 SAMPLES

7.1 As this is one field, samples were taken approximately 100m apart as indicated on the enclosed map at points A1, A2, A3 and B1, B2, B3 on a grid – see map.

7.2 Individual core samples (all depths approximate):

A1. 8" (200mm) a Cotswold brash brown clay soil to a clay subsoil with stones on the surface.

A2. 9" (225mm) a Cotswold brash brown clay soil to a clay subsoil with stones on the surface.

A3. 9" (225mm) a Cotswold brash brown clay soil to a clay subsoil with stones on the surface.

B1. 8" (200mm) a Cotswold brash brown clay soil to a yellow clay subsoil with stones on the surface.

B2. 7" (175mm) a Cotswold brash brown clay soil to an impenetrable subsoil with stones on the surface.

B3. 10" (250mm) a Cotswold brash brown clay soil to an impenetrable subsoil with stones on the surface.

8.0 SLOPE

8.1 The field is sloping to the south, losing approximately 6m (20ft).

9.0 ALTITUDE

9.1 Levels are taken from the <https://www.freemaptools.com/elevation-finder.htm> map. Alongside the single big tree on the northern hedge, the level is 122m (402ft) asl and along the southern hedge, the level is 116m (380ft) asl.

10.0 EXPOSURE

10.1 On the day of inspection, the breeze was blowing. There are only a few trees growing and those present in the locality are growing slightly away from the prevailing wind.

11.0 OWNER/FARMER INPUT

11.1 SOILS

It would be remiss of any 'sampler' not to interview/speak to the farmers who have normally been farming the land for the last few years whereas sampling only takes a number of hours. The farmer intimated that he had heavier clay soils elsewhere on the farm but climate variables were a problem.

There is evidence of considerable 'volunteer' beans from the 2023 harvest and winter wheat has now been planted.

11.2 CROPPING CAPABILITIES

From talking to the farmer, cropping is somewhat limited, ie: no horticultural or early crops can be grown.

11.3 TEMPERATURE & FROST RISK & EXPOSURE

This land is somewhat exposed as evidenced by the lack of trees and growth on hedges. Trees/thorns tend to grow away from the prevailing winds.

Frost is likely to be a problem due to altitude and exposure and will affect the colder clay soils.

12.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

12.1 We have not carried out any surveys to establish the potential for contamination to the subject property or adjacent sites.

12.2 Neither are we aware of any environmental audit, environmental investigation or soil survey which may have been carried out and we have therefore assumed that the property and its site is not subject to any contamination.

12.3 The property is not located in an area identified on the Environment Agency's flood maps as being potentially susceptible to river or sea flooding, although it is classed as Flood Zone 1.

13.0 LIMITATIONS

In making this Report, the following assumptions have been made:

13.1 that the property is not subject to any unusual or especially onerous restrictions.

13.2 the surveyor will be under no duty to verify these assumptions.

13.3 all inspections have been made by I H Mann and the Report will not purport to express an opinion about or to advise upon the condition of uninspected parts and should not be taken as making any implied representation or statement about such parts.

14.0 PUBLICATION

14.1 Neither the whole nor any part of this report or any reference thereto may be included in any published document, circular or statement or published in any way without our prior written approval as to the form and context in which it may appear.

15.0 THIRD PARTIES

15.1 This report is private and confidential to the Clients and their professional advisors. We accept responsibility to the above mentioned parties for the stated purpose and can accept no responsibility whatsoever to any other persons. We can accept no responsibility if the report is divulged to any other persons or bodies, any such parties rely upon the report at their own risk.

16.0 ASSUMPTIONS /SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

16.1 We are instructed by K Bird to carry out Land Classification of Land being a field at Sherston, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 0QB.

16.2 Whilst appointed by the Clients, we owe all parties a duty of care.

16.3 We confirm that in so far as the facts stated in this report are within our own knowledge, we have made clear which they are and we believe them to be true and the opinions we have expressed represent our true and complete professional opinions.

16.4 Various other assumptions have been made in this report and these have been outlined earlier in the body of the report at 3.0 Land Classification , 4.0 Inspection, 6.0 Area, 7.0 Samples, 8.0 Slope, 9.0 Altitude and 10.0 Exposure.

17.0 CONCLUSIONS

17.1 We believe that we have covered the salient points of the Land Classification as to:

- a) Climatic factors: exposure, aspect and frost risk.
- b) Site factors: gradient, micro-relief and flood risk.
- c) Soil characteristics: texture, structure, depth and stoniness.

17.2 Having inspected the land and carried out soil samples, we are of the opinion that the land in question is graded 3b.

17.3 Where soil and site conditions vary significantly and impose a practical constraints on cropping and land management, a 'pattern' limitation is said to exist. This variability becomes a significant limitation if, for example, soils of a different type and texture occur as a patchwork and with susceptibility to exposure (wind and salt), complicate soil management and cropping decisions, or resulting in uneven crop growth, maturation or quality.

17.4 We have graded the said land and given a land classification judged according to the severity of the limitations imposed by the pattern on 'cropping' and management, and for these reasons we believe that it will be difficult to manage the subject site, the land classification as 3b.

Dated this sixteenth day of December 2024.

SIGNED _____



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Appendices 1. Map showing sample points.
 2. Google Map annotated

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