

Agricultural Evaluation and Land Classification Various Clients



The recent revisions to PPG7 have softened the protection afforded to the 'best and most versatile' (BMV) agricultural land, however it is still necessary for those promoting developments to be aware of the difficulties that may be faced if the land is of good agricultural quality. An important distinction that must be made is to separate the current use / management of the site from its underlying productive potential.

Entec staff have helped those promoting residential, leisure and industrial development of agricultural land to achieve their aspirations by understanding the agricultural quality of the site and policy constraints that apply. At the core of the assessment are the 6 grades of 'agricultural land classification' (ALC) system that grades land from grade 1 (the best) through 2 and 3a (collectively 1, 2 and 3a form the BMV land) 3b, 4 and 5 (the poorest). The grading is made on

largely objective criteria encompassing stoniness, 'droughtiness' and topography amongst others.

A grading of 1, 2 or 3a, previously a constraint to many developments, is no longer of such concern where no alternative sites of a lower grade are available. Even if alternative sites of lower grade are available they may still be successfully challenged if other environmental constraints are present or broader sustainable development arguments can be sustained. Entec staff can advise on these matters.

Entec staff are also able to advise on the broader agricultural impacts of development including severance of holdings and holding viability etc, though these are increasingly recognised as not being material considerations in planning decisions albeit that they can provide important additional contextual support in favour or against proposals.

Understanding all different constraints is essential if developments are to have the maximum chance of success and can be aided by brief desk review, utilising the wealth of existing data that exists for many sites, supported by detailed ALC investigations and soil testing where appropriate.

