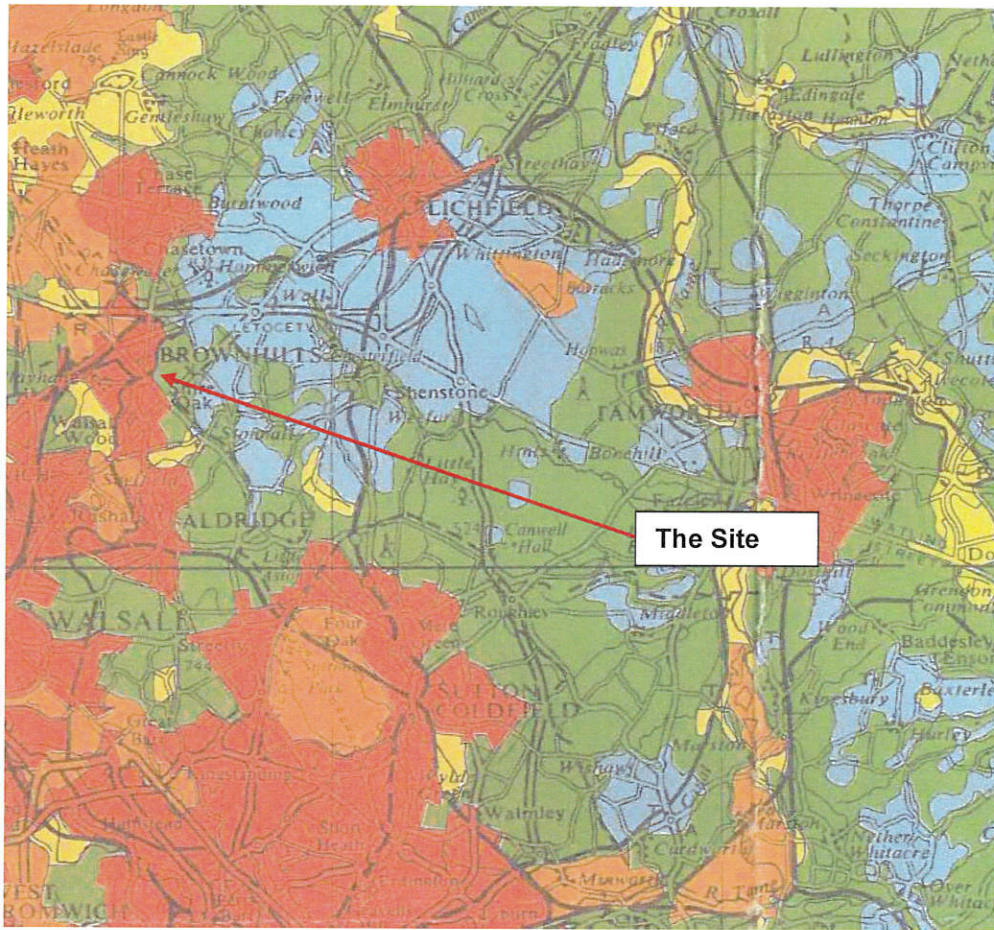


9. Agricultural Land

Agricultural Land Classification

- 9.1.1 This section presents the initial Agricultural Land Classification assessment which has been undertaken by Kernon Countryside Consultants Limited (KCC) to identify any major constraint to development on the site.
- 9.1.2 There are two principal agricultural considerations in the selection of development sites. These are:
- The effect on land and its quality; and
 - The effect on farm businesses.
- 9.1.3 National Policy Guidance governing the non-agricultural development of agricultural land is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (NPPF). Paragraph 112 of the NPPF notes that local planning authorities:
- “should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.”***
- 9.1.4 The best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV) is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as land of Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Agricultural Land Classification (ALC).
- 9.1.5 The Agricultural Land Classification Survey (ALC) system divides land into five grades according to the extent to which its 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 factors interact.
- 9.1.6 The provisional agricultural land classification map (MAFF 1983), as attached overleaf at **Figure 9.1**, shows undifferentiated Grade 3 land over the site. The map is provisional and was designed to be used for areas larger than about 80 hectares in extent and boundaries on this plan do not necessarily reflect the detailed situation. Since the map was constructed there has been changes to the classification. In particular Grade 3 has been subdivided into sub Grades 3a and 3b and the effects of the interaction between climate and soils are now more clearly stated which puts the land quality more clearly into the local context. The current Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food ALC system was last revised in 1988.



Agricultural Land



Non-Agricultural Land



NORTH



FIGURE	9.1		
TITLE	Extract from the Provisional ALC Plan (1983)		
SITE	Home Farm, Sandhill		
CLIENT	Gallagher Estates		
NUMBER	KCC2116/01 10/15/vmd		
DATE	October 2015	SCALE	NTS

KERNON COUNTRYSIDE CONSULTANTS LIMITED
 GREENACRES BARN, STOKE COMMON LANE, PURTON STOKE, SWINDON,
 WILTSHIRE, SN5 4LL
 Tel 01793 771333

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9.1.7 A review of www.MAGIC.gov.uk has identified that the site has been the subject of a detailed ALC survey which was carried out in February and March 1994, in accordance with the current MAFF Guidelines (1988). A copy of the survey is attached at **Appendix 9.1**. It should be noted that the conclusions of the report relate to the wider site area, of which only part of the land is proposed for development. The survey has identified the site to comprise mainly of sub Grade 3a land, with a swathe of sub Grade 3b land running through the middle of the site in an east – west direction. There are also areas of woodland and agricultural buildings within the site.

9.1.8 **Table 9.1** below sets out a breakdown of the grading across the site.

Table 9.1: ALC Grading across the Site

Grade	Description	Area (Ha)	Area (%)
3a	Good	62.1	74
3b	Moderate	15.7	19
Ag Buildings	Ag Buildings	2.2	2
Woodland	Woodland	1.7	2
Non-Ag	Non-Ag	1.9	2
TOTAL		83.6	100

* The table above relates to the grading across the wider site and, as set out on the indicative Masterplan, a smaller proportion of the site is proposed for development, which includes all of the 3b graded land identified.

9.1.9 The wider site area comprises predominately of sub Grade 3a and Grade 3.b land. The developable area proposed, however, includes a smaller proportion of Grade 3a land and all of the Grade 3b land. A review of land quality in and around Brownhills indicates that this site actually comprises some of the lower quality land in the locality. Surveys to both the north and west of the site identify areas of Grade 2 land, i.e. land of a higher quality than that found at Home Farm, as illustrated at **Appendix 9.2**. Please note that Appendix 9.2 relates to the wider site and not the development area, which is proposed on the Indicative Masterplan.

9.1.10 Although the site comprises of sub Grade 3a land with an area of sub Grade 3b, the presence of “best and most versatile land” around Brownhills is common place. Indeed, much of the surveyed land to the north and east of Brownhills has been identified as being of Grade 2 quality.

9.1.11 The NPPF requires that, where “significant” development of BMV land is demonstrated to be necessary, poorer quality land is used in preference. In this case, the development of sub Grade 3a land will represent the development of poorer quality land in the area with much of the land around Brownhills comprising of Grade 2 land.

Existing Farming Business

9.1.12 Gallagher Estates has engaged with the owner of the existing farming business on site. The owner of the farming business has confirmed that the business would not be severely affected by the development proposals which are being promoted through this Background Document. The owner currently farms around 2,000 acres, and it is notable that the promotional agreement to secure development on this site does not include the farm houses and associated buildings. Therefore, from a practical perspective the farming business will be able to continue to operate as normal after any residential development is secured and implemented. The promotional agreement covers approximately 200 acres, so even if all of this area was withdrawn from the current farming land base, this would only represent a 10% reduction in the farmed area, which would not be a significant change. As such, development proposals will not prejudice the existing farm business.

9.2 Summary

9.2.2 With regards to Agricultural Land Classification, the wider site has been found to comprise land of sub Grade 3a and Grade 3b. The site proposed for development includes a smaller proportion of Grade 3a land and all of the 3b land. Although sub Grade 3a is considered to be “best and most versatile agricultural land”, a review of land quality in and around Brownhills indicates that the site actually comprises some of the lower quality land in the locality, with surrounding areas being identified as being of Grade 2 quality. The development of this site would therefore represent use of poorer quality land in accordance with the NPPF, which states where significant development of BMV land is demonstrated to be necessary, poorer quality land is used in preference.

9.2.3 This Chapter has also demonstrated that development proposals will not prejudice the existing farm business, as outlined at paragraph 9.1.12.

9.2.4 In conclusion, having undertaken the above initial work in relation to the site’s agricultural land quality, it is considered that the site is suitable for residential development.

APPENDIX 9.1
MAFF ALC SURVEY REPORT

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION
LAND AT HOME FARM, SANDHILLS**

**R D METCALFE
Resource Planning Team
ADAS Statutory Group
WOLVERHAMPTON**

**ADAS Ref: 25/RPT/0617
Job No: 8/94
MAFF Ref: EL46/10407**

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT FOR
LAND AT HOME FARM, SANDHILLS**

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey for this site shows that the following proportions of ALC grades are present:

Grade/Subgrade	ha	% of site
3a	64.0	76
3b	15.7	19
Other land		
Agricultural buildings	2.0	2
Non-Agricultural	1.9	2

- 1.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of land in Subgrades 3a and 3b is topsoil stone content.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The site was surveyed by the Resource Planning Team in February and March 1994. An Agricultural Land Classification survey was undertaken according to the guidelines laid down in the "Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Grading the Quality of Agricultural Land" (MAFF 1988).
- 2.2 The 83.6 ha site is situated to the east of Brownhills and north west of the A461 road. The land in the north adjoins a canal, and the west boundary adjoins housing, while the north eastern boundary adjoins farmland.
- 2.3 The survey was requested by MAFF in connection with an ad-hoc development proposal for an industrial development.
- 2.4 At MAFF Land Use Planning Unit's request this was a detailed grid survey at 1:10000 with a minimum auger boring density of 1 per hectare. The attached map is only accurate at the base map scale and any enlargement would be misleading.
- 2.5 At the time of the survey the site was mostly under cereals, brassicas with some fallow land.

3. CLIMATE

3.1 The following interpolated data are relevant for the site

Average Annual Rainfall (mm)	725
Accumulated Temperature above 0°C January to June (day °C)	1315

3.2 There is no overall climatic limitation on the site.

3.3 Other relevant data for classifying land include:

Field Capacity Days (days)	170
Moisture Deficit Wheat (mm)	91
Moisture Deficit Potatoes (mm)	77

4. SITE

4.1 Three site factors of gradient, micro relief and flooding are considered when classifying land.

4.2 These factors do not impose any limitations on the agricultural use of the land.

5. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

5.1 The solid geology of the area is shown as Soft Sandstone with Pebble Beds - British Geological Survey Sheet 154 1 inch.

5.2 The underlying geology influences the soils which have a sandy loam texture overlying loamy sand and sand.

6. AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

6.1 Subgrade 3a - occupies 64.0 ha (76%) of the survey area.

6.1.1 The soil has a sandy loam texture over loamy sand and sand to depth and with up to 15% stones greater than 2cm size present.

6.1.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is topsoil stone content.

6.2 Subgrade 3b - occupies 15.7 ha (19%) of the survey area and is found in the northern and eastern parts of the site.

6.2.1 The soil typically has a sandy loam texture overlying loamy sand and sand to depth. The topsoil content with stones greater than 6cm in size is up to 10%.

6.2.2 The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is topsoil stone content.

6.3 Other land includes agricultural buildings and farm tracks.

6.4 SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION GRADES

Grade/Sub-grade	Areas in Hectares	% of Survey Area	% of Agricultural Land
3a	64.0	76	80
3b	15.7	19	20
Other land			
Agricultural buildings	2.0	2	-
Non-Agricultural	1.9	2	-
Totals	<u>83.6</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

March 1994



Agricultural Land Classification

Home Farm Sandhills

Agricultural Land	
Grade	Quality Area (ha)
1	Excellent nil
2	Very Good nil
3a	Good 62.1
3b	Moderate 15.7
4	Poor nil
5	Very Poor nil

Other Land Categories	
Category	Area (ha)
Urban	1.9
Non-Agricultural	1.7
Woodland	2.2
Agricultural Buildings	nil
Open Water	nil
Not Surveyed	nil

Total agricultural land area: 77.8 ha
 Total survey area: 83.6 ha
 * Grade 5 figures are given within parentheses

Scale: 1:10,000

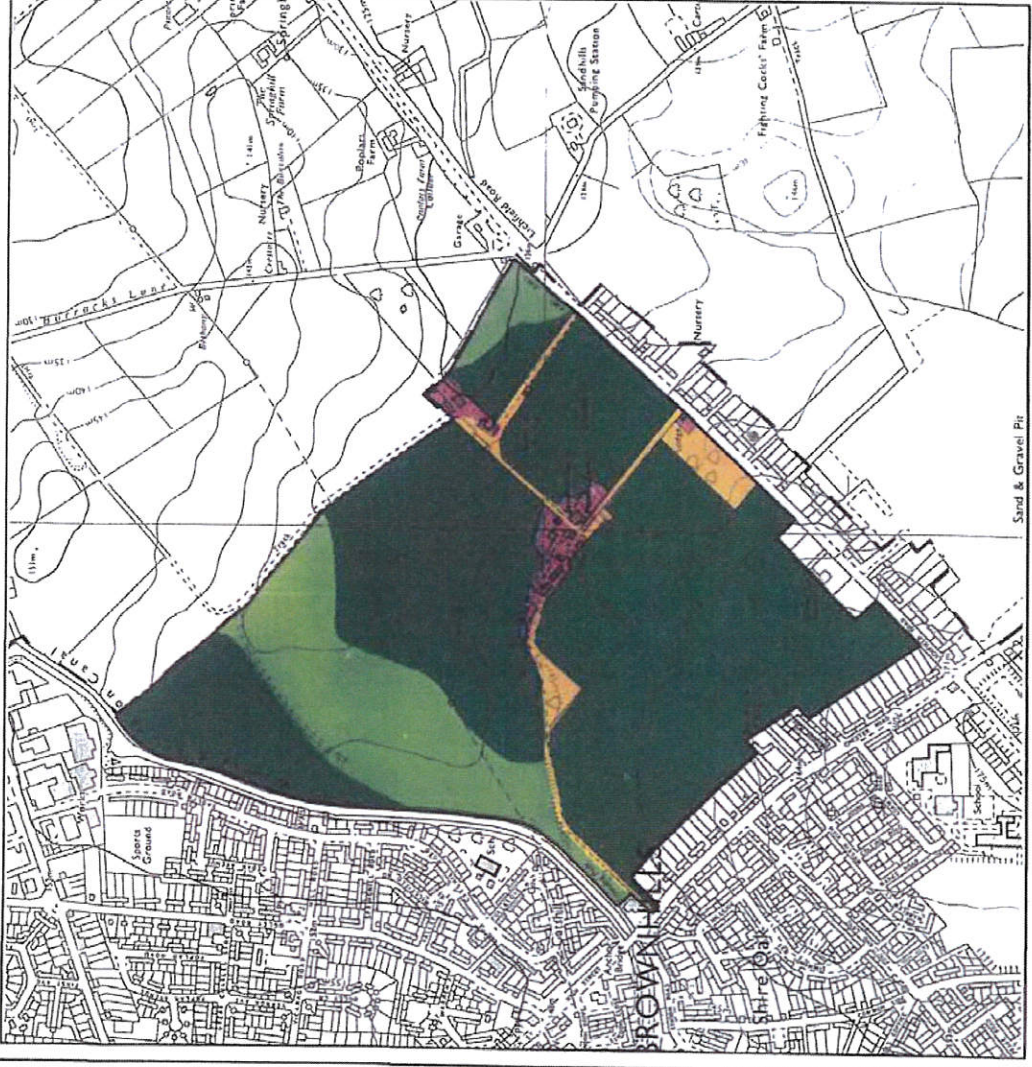
Further details contained in MAFF/USDA Agricultural Land Classification England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land. MAFF/USDA/USDA, London, SEP 2007.

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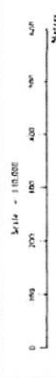




Agricultural Land Classification Home Farm, Sandhills

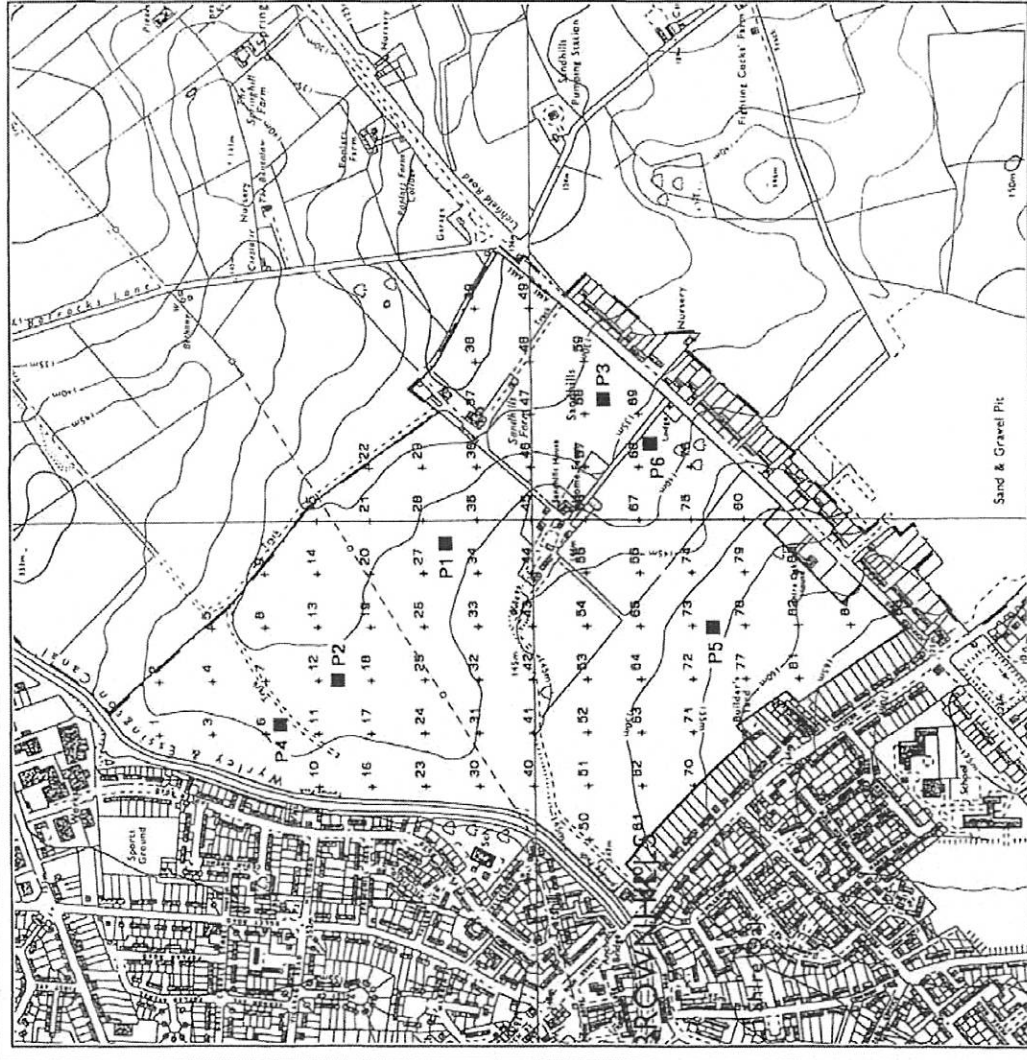
AUGER BORINGS

Soil Pits ■



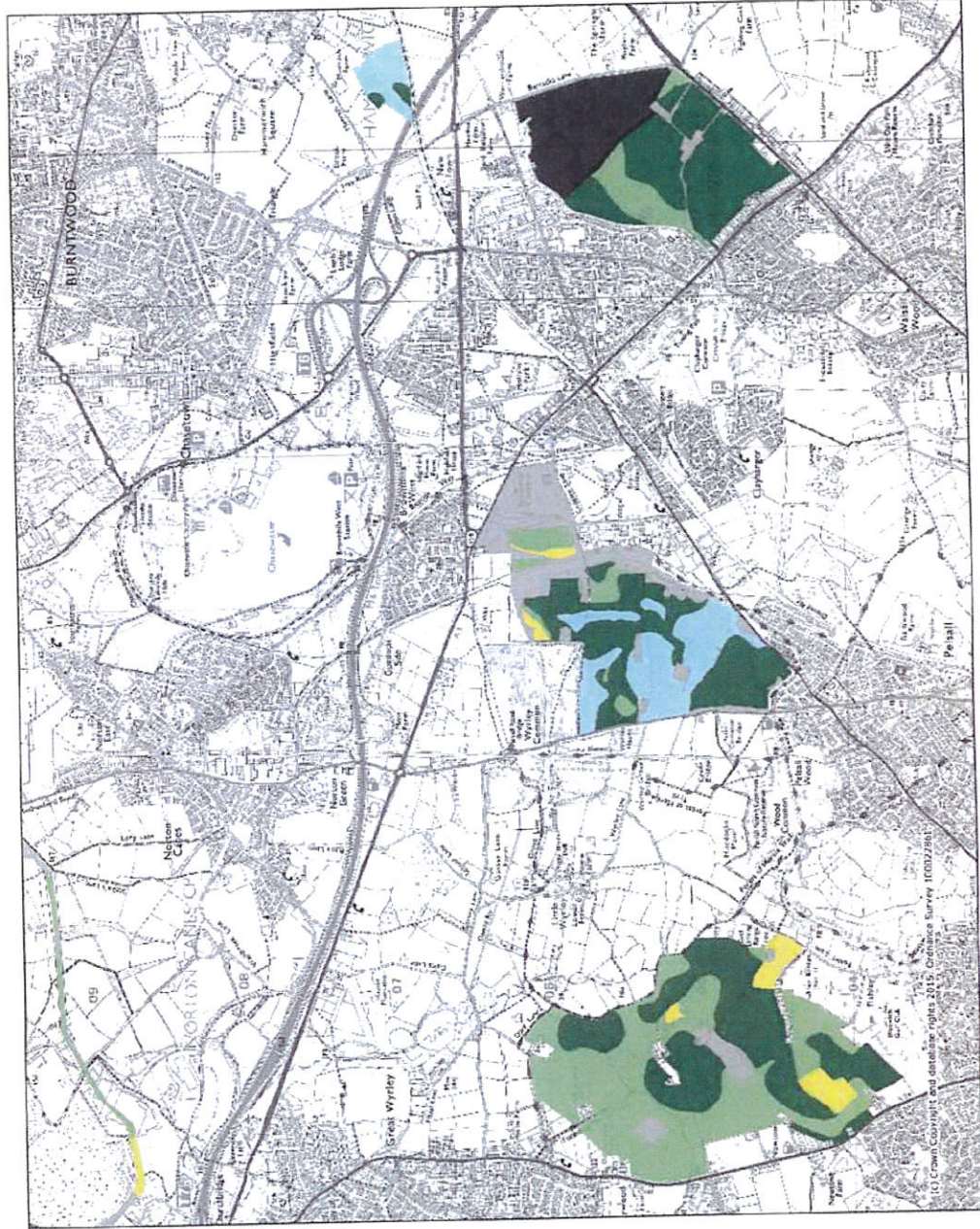
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APPENDIX 9.2

MAFF ALC SURVEY RESULTS FOR LAND AROUND BROWNHILLS



Legend

- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3a
- Grade 3b
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Not Surveyed
- Other

Projection = OSGB36
units = 389000
ymin = 303500
ymax = 407100
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