



Supacrops Arable Limited, 10 Mitre Street, Buckingham MK18 1DW

27th June 2023

Mrs Rebekah Morgan
Planning Department
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Banbury
OX15 4AA

Dear Mrs Morgan

PROPOSED 44MW PADBURY SOLAR PARK - Planning Application Ref: 22/03873/F

As a professional Agronomist with over ten years' experience in the agricultural industry, I am writing with regards to the Agricultural Classification of the land at the proposed Padbury Brook Solar Farm site.

On studying the report by amet Property, commissioned by the applicant JBM, I question the content/findings. My comments are derived from data (see attached grid) relating to the quality and productivity of the land, based on my first-hand knowledge of professionally managing the growing of the crops over ten years for the previous farmers, Mr & Mrs Oakey.

1. Land Classification

Since 2001, the Oakey family have enjoyed consistent yields and, in many years, these have been significantly higher than the national average, as substantiated in the attached grid.

Land categorised as '3b' is regularly used for grazing and would be unlikely to provide a wide range of healthy yielding crops. During the Oakey's stewardship of this land for over 20 years, they have never used it for livestock, hay or haylage.

Agricultural Classification as confirmed in the amet report (Appendix 5) ...

"Subgrade 3b – moderate quality agricultural land capable of producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, principally cereals and grass or lower yields of a wider range of crops or high yields of grass which can be grazed or harvested over most of the year."

Indeed, in the current owners planning application to build a Grain Store to service this land (Ref: 22/01503/AGN), it states (2.7) "One m³ of wheat weighs approximately 790kg. Taking the total acreage of the holding at 241 acres, multiplied by a yield of 3.5 tonnes of grain per acre = 844 tonnes in total." This highlights it is productive food producing land and somewhat contradicts amet's report findings.

2. Historic Data

The report grades the whole parcel of land as 3b. This does not consider the undoubted variation within the fields. Over the years the previous farmer of 20 years, has grown a wide range of crops, which include winter wheat, winter beans, winter OSR (root based), winter and spring barley. This is a clear characteristic of 3a land.

From reviewing the definition of grade 3b of the submitted document, it clearly states 3b to be "a narrow range of crops, principally cereals and grass or a lower yield of a wide range of crops, of a high yield of grass, which can be grazed or harvested at most times of the year".

From the 20 years of Harvest Data for this land (attached grid), as evidenced, crop yields achieved have consistently been higher than the National Average. This directly correlates with the information provided by the applicant for her own agricultural grain storage facility planning application in June 2022 (Ref: 22/01503/AGN). As with any crop, grown anywhere in the UK, yields will always fluctuate to a degree, relating to the weather conditions at the time.

In addition, the previous farmers never grew grassland and so the land in question is clearly not in line with the industry recognised characteristics of 3b graded land.

3. Summary

This is productive agricultural land which has been farmed for many years to produce crops for human consumption. As so much seems to ride on the classification of it, it should be fully scrutinised with all the evidence available.

The entire grading system and differences between 3a and 3b is grey. It requires an element of interpretation, but based on the facts I believe the land in question fits well within the 3a category. The greatest weight should be applied to historic data and therefore the land clearly fits into the 3a classification category for human food production.

This is in line with current Government policies to protect our National Food Security, as recognised at the UK's first Food Security Summit in May 2023. The importance of our national food production was officially put on an equal political footing with other high-profile issues such as energy, the economy and climate change.

Yours sincerely

Ed Brooks

Edward Brooks

GRID ATTACHMENT - APPENDIX

YEAR	CROP	YIELD tonnes per/acre	COMMENTS See grid notes below
2003	Wheat	4.0	
2004	Wheat	3.4	
2005	Wheat	3.5	
2006	Wheat	3.6	
2007	Wheat	3.3	
2008	Wheat	3.5	
2009	Wheat	3.4	
2010	Wheat	3.5	
2011	Wheat	4.3	
2012	Wheat	3.5	Dry year
2013	Wheat	-	Fallow Year Very wet period
2014	Wheat	3.3	
2015	Wheat	3.6	
2016	Wheat	3.5	
2017	Wheat	3.5	
2018	Wheat	3.8	
2019	Winter Barley	3.5	Hybrid Barley
2020	Spring Barley	2.5	Break for Blackgrass
2021	Spring Barley	2.5	Break for Blackgrass

GRID NOTES: to achieve successful wheat production, other crop varieties are also grown alongside and rotated each season, ie Oil Seed Rape and Beans.

- Wheat consistently never under 3.3 tonnes/acre
- Beans average 1.28 tonnes/acre
- Oil Seed Rape 125 – 175 tonnes/acre
- Spring Barley added in rotation from 2015