

A417 fact sheet

Agricultural Land Classification surveys



What are Agricultural Land Classification surveys?

Land quality in England is graded according to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) scheme. There are six grades, rated 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 4 and 5, depending on the soil type, climate and topography and the way these features interact with one another. The best land, known as 'Best and Most Versatile', is in grades 1, 2 and 3a.

The soil profile refers to the vertical section of the soil from the ground surface downwards to where the soil meets the underlying rock. Understanding this helps us build up a picture of how much soil we'll need to remove if we choose to build in an area, how we'll design and manage stockpiles of soil to keep it healthy, and how we'll restore land to its original condition when we've finished.

What's involved?

Our surveyors (two or three per site) will use a 5cm width hand auger to take a soil sample down to a maximum depth of 120cm (about four feet). We'll take the samples on a grid pattern at 100m intervals with additional samples taken where necessary. They'll then analyse the sample to tell us the grade of the land and the profile of the soil, at each sample site. Carrying out the surveys by hand means we'll minimise any potential disturbance to you as there'll be no need for vehicles or tracked machinery. We may also need to dig some larger sample pits to uncover and examine potential subsoil structures.

We'll use this to map all the Agricultural Land Classification grades and write a report describing how we assigned these grades. We'll also create an inventory of soil profiles.

Why are we doing them now?

We need to know about land quality and the soil profile in all the places that we might end up working. This is important to help us to protect the land during construction and ensure that we can return as much of the land as possible to its previous state when we've finished our works.



If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.