

14. Agriculture and Soils

Introduction

- 14.1 This Chapter reports the outcome of the assessment of likely significant environmental effects arising from the Project for Assessment in relation to Agriculture and Soils. It also reports the likely significant environmental effects associated with the Proposed Scheme, which comprises the planning application.
- 14.2 The Chapter describes the technical consultation that has been undertaken during the EIA, the scope of the assessment and assessment methodology, and a summary of the baseline information that has informed the assessment.
- 14.3 In line with **Chapter 2: Approach to EIA**, the assessment reports on the likely significant environmental effects, the further mitigation measures required to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects, or further enhance beneficial effects. The conclusions are provided both in terms of the residual effects and whether these are considered significant. The assessment of effects takes into consideration both primary and tertiary mitigation (see **Chapter 2: Approach to EIA** for further details) and is informed by the EIA Scoping process (**Appendix 2.1 – 2.2**) and iterative scoping process where applicable.
- 14.4 This Chapter, and its associated **Appendix 14.1** and **Figure 14.1** is intended to be read as part of the wider ES with particular reference to the introductory Chapters of this ES (**Chapters 1 – 6**), as well as **Chapter 13: Ground Conditions and Contamination** and **Chapter 18: Climate Change**.
- 14.5 In addition, this Chapter should be read in conjunction with **Chapter 19: Assessment of Cumulative Effects**.

Summary of Consultation

- 14.6 **Table 14.1** provides an overview of the consultation that has been undertaken to inform the EIA, including the consideration of likely significant effects and the methodology for assessment.

Table 14.1: Summary of Consultation

Body/Organisation	Contact	Date/Form of Consultation	Summary of Consultation Outputs
Natural England	Senior Officer Strategic Planning	12 th November 2024, scoping advice by email	Disturbance of soil and agricultural land should be considered as part of the ES. Details should be included on how adverse impacts on soils and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land can be avoided or minimised.

Body/Organisation	Contact	Date/Form of Consultation	Summary of Consultation Outputs
			Both soil and agriculture and the effects on BMV agricultural land are addressed within this Chapter.

Scope of the Assessment

- 14.7 An EIA Scoping Report was submitted to BC and RBC on 17 October 2024, as presented as **Appendix 2.1**. A Scoping Opinion has not been received to date; however a number of consultation responses have been received and are provided in **Appendix 2.2**. A response to the comments in **Appendix 2.2** are provided in **Appendix 2.3**. This section provides confirmation on the scope of the assessment presented within this Chapter following submission of the EIA Scoping Report.

Effects Not Considered to be Significant

- 14.8 The following effects were not considered significant as part of the EIA Scoping Report and are not considered further in this Chapter:
- Disturbance / Removal of peat.
- 14.9 It is worth noting that further information is available since the preparation of the EIA Scoping Report. This is provided in **Appendix 2.4**. It confirms that existing ground investigations for the Assessment Boundary only identified isolated pockets of peat and therefore disturbance or removal of peat in the context of a resource is not considered to be significant. Further information is provided in **Chapter 13: Ground Conditions and Contamination** and **Chapter 18: Climate Change**.

Effects Considered Likely to be Significant

- 14.10 The following effects (**Table 14.2**) were considered likely to be significant and are reported within this Chapter:

Table 14.2: Effects Considered Likely to be Significant

Likely Significant Effect	Receptor(s)	Applicable Development Stage	Spatial Plot/Area
Loss of agricultural land	Agricultural land, including that of BMV quality	Construction	All spatial plots/areas
Loss of or damage to soil resources	Soil resources	Construction	All spatial plots/areas
Reduction in farmable area and business viability	Tenanted farm holdings	Construction	All spatial plots/areas

Assessment Methodology

Legislative Framework, Policy and Guidance

14.11 The following policy has informed the assessment of effects within this Chapter:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraphs 187 and 188, and footnote 65¹; and
- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity².

14.12 The following guidance has informed the assessment of effects within this Chapter:

- Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 8-001-20190721, Revision date: 21 07 2019³;
- Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites⁴; and
- Natural England Technical Information Note (TIN) 049⁵.

Defining the Study Area

14.13 The study area extends to all of the agricultural land within the Assessment Boundary which amounts to approximately 325.7ha within the total Assessment Boundary of 570ha. The study area is outlined in **Appendix 14.1**.

Background Studies to Inform the ES / Establishing the Baseline

14.14 **Table 14.3** summarises all surveys undertaken to inform the assessment presented within this Chapter.

Table 14.3: Background Studies / Surveys / Evaluations /Analysis

Survey	Overview	Date of Completion
Initial desk appraisal of soils and ALC	Initial baseline data collation for the Assessment Boundary	July 2024
Baseline soil and Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey (Appendix 14.1)	Semi-detailed ALC survey across the Application Boundary	October 2024
Consultation with landowners	Collection of information about the owner-occupied and tenanted farm businesses and likely impacts of the loss of farmable area on tenant farms	January 2025

Assessment Process

14.15 The agriculture and soils baseline conditions have been established by undertaking a semi-detailed ALC and soil resources survey in accordance with the established guidelines and

criteria for assessing the quality of agricultural land⁶. At each observation point the following characteristics were assessed for each soil horizon up to a maximum of 120cm:

- Soil texture;
- Stone content;
- Colour (including localised mottling);
- Consistency;
- Structural condition;
- Free carbonate; and
- Depth.

14.16 Representative topsoil samples were submitted for laboratory determination of particle size distribution, pH, organic matter content and nutrient contents (P, K, Mg).

14.17 The data obtained has been analysed according to the ALC guidelines and classified into applicable grades. The soil resources identified are classified into broad types for the impact assessment.

14.18 It has not been possible to survey all of the agricultural land within the Assessment Boundary. Therefore, the soils and ALC data for the Assessment Boundary has been extrapolated from the survey data within the Application Boundary, in conjunction with published sources such as mapping of bedrock geology and soil associations, as well as previous survey data in the north-east of the Assessment Boundary⁷.

14.19 As set out in the EIA Scoping Report (**Appendix 2.1**), there is a very large number of ownership titles within the Assessment Boundary. For the purposes of the assessment on farm businesses, it is assumed that owner-occupied units of whatever size have undertaken their own assessment on the impacts of the Project for Assessment on the viability of their land holding and by agreeing to sell land now or in the future have considered any impacts not to be harmful and therefore Not Significant.

14.20 The assessment therefore considers the impacts on farm businesses that rely on tenanted land, which are smaller in number but account for the majority of agricultural land within the Assessment Boundary.

Reporting of the Environmental Effects and Significance Criteria

14.21 The assessment of likely significant environmental effects as a result of the Project for Assessment has taken into account the construction and operational stage. The following sections define the approach adopted within the assessment for the determination of sensitivity (or value/importance), magnitude of change (or impact), the level of effect and significance.

Determining Sensitivity of Receptor

14.22 The sensitivity of affected receptors has been considered on a scale of **high, medium, low or negligible**.

- 14.23 The sensitivity of agricultural land is determined according to its grade within the ALC system (see **Table 14.4** below). Grade 1 land is excellent quality agricultural land with very minor or no limitations to agricultural use. Grade 2 is very good quality agricultural land, with minor limitations which affect crop yield, cultivations or harvesting. Grade 3 land has moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield, and is subdivided into Subgrade 3a (good quality land) and Subgrade 3b (moderate quality land). Grade 4 land is poor quality agricultural land with severe limitations which significantly restrict the range of crops and/or level of yields. Grade 5 is very poor quality land, with very severe limitations which restrict use to permanent pasture or rough grazing.
- 14.24 Land which is classified as Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the ALC system is defined as BMV agricultural land.
- 14.25 The sensitivity of agricultural land is amended slightly from the EIA Scoping Report (**Appendix 2.1**) in order to differentiate between and report on the effects on BMV and non-BMV land more clearly. The EIA Scoping Report included both Subgrades 3a and 3b within the same sensitivity category but this assessment separates the subgrades so that the specific effects on BMV land can be reported.
- 14.26 The impact on the soil resources is assessed according to the degree to which disturbed soil resources are re-used in a manner that enables the resource to fulfil one or more of the primary soil functions of:
- The production of food and biomass, and the provision of raw materials;
 - The storage, filtration and cycling of water, carbon and nitrogen in the biosphere;
 - The support of ecological habitats and biodiversity;
 - Support for the landscape;
 - The protection of cultural heritage; and
 - The provision of a platform for human activities, such as construction and recreation.
- 14.27 The sensitivity of the soil resources reflects its textural characteristics and its susceptibility to the effects of handling during construction and the re-instatement of land.
- 14.28 The sensitivity of farm holdings to change is determined according to the degree of disruption caused by the construction and presence of the Project for Assessment. The criteria for determining the sensitivity of each receptor is shown in **Table 14.4**.

Table 14.4: Criteria for determining receptor sensitivity

Sensitivity	Agricultural Land	Soil Resources	Farm Holdings
High	Grade 1 and 2	Peat soils	Farm types in which the operation of the enterprise is dependent on the spatial relationship of land to key

Sensitivity	Agricultural Land	Soil Resources	Farm Holdings
			infrastructure, and where there is a requirement for frequent and regular access between the two, or dependent on the existence of the infrastructure itself, e.g. dairying, irrigated arable cropping and field-scale horticulture, and intensive livestock or horticultural production.
Medium	Subgrade 3a	Soils with high clay and silt fractions (clays, silty clays, sandy clays, heavy silty clay loams and heavy clay loams).	Farm types in which there is a degree of flexibility in the normal course of operations, e.g. combinable arable farms and grazing livestock farms (other than dairying).
Low	Subgrade 3b and Grade 4	Silty loams, medium silty clay loams, medium clay loams and sandy clay loams.	Off-lying areas of commercial land and non-commercially farmed land.
Negligible	Grade 5	Soils with a high sand fraction (sands, loamy sands, sandy loams and sandy silt loams).	Not applicable.

Determining the Magnitude of Change

- 14.29 The magnitude of change has been considered as the change experienced from the current baseline conditions at the sensitive receptor and has been considered on a scale of large, medium, small or negligible.
- 14.30 The magnitude of change to agricultural land is determined by the quantum of land that is temporarily or permanently removed from agricultural production as a direct result of the Proposed Scheme and Project for Assessment. The thresholds are determined in light of the guidance from Natural England which requires that consultation is undertaken where more than 20ha of BMV agricultural land is likely to be affected.
- 14.31 The magnitude of change to soil resources considers the continued ability of soils to fulfil their primary functions.
- 14.32 The magnitude of change to farm holdings considers the ongoing viability of that business with the Proposed Scheme and Project for Assessment in place.

Table 14.5: Criteria for determining the magnitude of change

Magnitude	Agricultural Land	Soil Resources	Farm Holdings
Large	Development would directly lead to the loss of over 50ha of agricultural land	The soil displaced from development is unable to fulfil one or more of the primary soils functions	Development results in the loss of the tenanted farm holding or renders the residual land holding non-viable
Medium	Development would directly lead to the loss of between 20ha and 50ha of agricultural land	The soil displaced from development mostly fulfils the primary soil functions off site or has a reduced capacity to fulfil the primary functions on site	Development results in changes being required to the management of the residual farm holding in order that it can remain viable.
Small	Development would directly lead to the loss of between 5ha and 20ha of agricultural land	The soil displaced from development mostly fulfils the primary soil functions on site	Development does not affect the ongoing management of the residual land.
Negligible	Development would directly lead to the loss of less than 5ha of agricultural land	The soil retains its existing functions on site	No impact on the farm holding.

Determining the Level of Effect

- 14.33 The level of effect has been informed by the magnitude of change due to the Project for Assessment and the evaluation of the sensitivity of the affected receptor. The level of effect has been determined using professional judgement and **Table 14.6** has been a tool which has assisted with this process.
- 14.34 Whilst **Table 14.6** provides ranges, the level of effect is confirmed as a single level and not a range, informed by professional judgement. For each effect, it has been concluded whether the effect is '*beneficial*' or '*adverse*'.

Table 14.6: Matrix to Support Determining the Level of Effect

Magnitude of change (or impact)	Sensitivity (or value, importance, etc.)				
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
	Large	Major	Moderate to Major	Minor to Moderate	Negligible
	Medium	Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Small	Minor to Moderate	Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

14.35 The following terms have been used to define the level of the effects identified and these can be 'beneficial' or 'adverse':

- **Major effect:** where the Project for Assessment / Proposed Scheme is likely to cause a considerable change from the baseline conditions and the receptor has limited adaptability, tolerance or recoverability or is of the highest sensitivity;
- **Moderate effect:** where the Project for Assessment / Proposed Scheme is likely to cause either a considerable change from the baseline conditions at a receptor which has a degree of adaptability, tolerance or recoverability or a less than considerable change at a receptor that has limited adaptability, tolerance or recoverability;
- **Minor effect:** where the Project for Assessment / Proposed Scheme is likely to cause a small, but noticeable change from the baseline conditions on a receptor which has limited adaptability, tolerance or recoverability or is of the highest sensitivity; or where the Project for Assessment / Proposed Scheme is likely to cause a considerable change from the baseline conditions at a receptor which can adapt, is tolerant of the change or/and can recover from the change; and
- **Negligible:** where the Project for Assessment / Proposed Scheme is unlikely to cause a noticeable change at a receptor, despite its level of sensitivity or there is a considerable change at a receptor which is not considered sensitive to a change.

14.36 The duration of the effect has been assessed as either 'short-term', 'medium-term' or 'long-term'. Short-term is considered to be up to 1 year, medium-term is considered to be between 1 and 10 years and long-term is considered to be greater than 10 years.

Determining Significance

14.37 For each effect, a statement has been made as to whether the level of effect is '**Significant**' or '**Not Significant**'. This determination has been based on professional judgement and/or relevant guidance/legislation where applicable.

14.38 Significance has only been concluded for residual effects (i.e. following the identification of secondary mitigation).

Baseline Conditions

14.39 The Assessment Boundary extends to 570ha in total of which most (325.7ha or 57%) is agricultural land primarily under permanent grass. Non-agricultural land includes sections of existing highways, Pike Fold Golf Club, Thurston Fold, Whittle Fold and several rural properties off Doctor Fold Lane.

14.40 The topography within the Assessment Boundary is varied. Within the Application Boundary (Application Plots A – F, **Figure 4.1**), the topography is characterised by an irregular, mainly west-facing slope.

14.41 The highest altitude is around 130m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at Whittle Fold and the lowest altitudes are at 85-90m AOD at Whittle Brook. In the south-west of the Assessment Boundary, south of Whittle Brook, the land typically undulates between around 90m and 95m AOD.

- 14.42 Drainage of the north of the Assessment Boundary is predominantly via localised gradients which direct water into Pilsworth Clough, Brightley Brook and Whittle Brook. Drainage of the south of the Assessment Boundary is facilitated by drainage ditches across the golf course that connect to Castle Brook. All the brooks converge in the west of the Assessment Boundary into the Hollins Brook and ultimately discharge into the River Roch.
- 14.43 The climate at the Assessment Boundary is cool and very wet. Moisture deficits are moderately small to moderate. The number of Field Capacity Days is larger than is average for lowland England and is very unfavourable for providing opportunities for agricultural fieldwork.
- 14.44 The bedrock geology across most of the Assessment Boundary is the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation, and in the south-west is the Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation. Both comprise mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, with the former distinguished by more numerous and thicker coal seams in the upper part, and the latter by more marine fossils in the upper part. In the north, around Application Plots A and B, the geology is Rough Rock of the Rossendale Formation, comprising coarse-grained sandstone.
- 14.45 Superficial deposits of till cover most of the Assessment Boundary. Glaciofluvial deposits, lacustrine deposits, head and peat are also mapped in localised areas across the Assessment Boundary.
- 14.46 The mapped soil information⁸ shows three soil associations across the Assessment Boundary. The most prevalent is the Brickfield 3 association which is characterised by fine loamy, fine loamy over clayey and clayey soils. The profiles are usually seasonally waterlogged (Wetness Class (WC) IV). In the north and east is the Blackwood association, characterised by coarse loamy and sandy textures. The soils are naturally affected by fluctuating groundwater but can vary from well drained WC I where the regional water table has been lowered, to WC IV where it has not.
- 14.47 In the south, the Newport 1 association is mapped and includes deep, well drained, sandy and coarse loamy soils⁹.
- 14.48 The soil and ALC survey that was undertaken across all of the agricultural land within the Application Boundary identified two main soil types which relate to the Brickfield 3 and Blackwood associations. Central to the Application Boundary, there is medium clay loam, sandy clay loam or occasionally sandy loam topsoil which overlies progressively sandier subsoil horizons. There is evidence of periodic waterlogging within a majority of the profiles, which are assessed as WC II or occasionally I. The profiles in WC II are limited by wetness to Subgrade 3b. The profiles in WC I with the medium topsoils give rise to the only BMV land identified, amounting to 17.7ha of Subgrade 3a.
- 14.49 The second soil type, broadly present in the east and west of the Application Boundary, has similar topsoil characteristics or otherwise heavier textures, passing through heavy clay loam and clay subsoils. The profiles are in WC III or IV depending on the presence of a slowly permeable layer, and are limited by wetness to Subgrade 3b or occasionally Grade 4.
- 14.50 Other agricultural land within the Assessment Boundary, to the west and east of the Application Boundary, is mapped as having the same baseline geology and soils parameters. Previous survey data from the east of the Assessment Boundary classified the land as a

majority Grade 4 with pockets of Subgrade 3a and Subgrade 3b. The ALC distribution across the unsurveyed west of the Assessment Boundary is likely to continue to be similar to that of nearby land within the Application Boundary, and is provisionally classified as Subgrade 3b. Collectively, combining confirmed and predicted grades, there is around 22ha of Subgrade 3a quality land; 259ha of Subgrade 3b quality; 43ha of Grade 4 quality; and 1.8ha of Grade 5. This is defined in **Figure 14.1**.

- 14.51 No peat soils are mapped and available Ground Investigations surveys across the Assessment Boundary have confirmed the presence of only isolated pockets of peat as indicated in **Chapter 13: Ground Conditions and Contamination** and **Figure 13.5**. Under the applicable climatic conditions, any thin bands of peat soils occurring within a depth of 1.2m are likely to be in ALC Grade 5.
- 14.52 There is a very large number of ownership titles (nearly 80) within the Assessment Boundary but the number of operational farm holdings is limited and includes Broom Hill Farm, Higher Barn Farm and Thurston Fold Farm, with a number of other smaller land holdings.
- 14.53 The principal tenanted holding is Higher Barn Farm which is occupied on a secure tenancy. Land rented by others in the study area is rented on short-term or annual basis and is therefore not necessarily available to the individual tenants year on year. The land is used mostly for mowing for hay (which is also sold through an on-site livestock feed business) and grazing for horses.

Future Baseline

- 14.54 Should the Project for Assessment not proceed, there are anticipated to be no changes to the agriculture and soils baseline in the future.

Primary and Tertiary Mitigation

- 14.55 There are no primary or tertiary mitigation measures applicable to agricultural land, soil resources or farm holdings for the Project for Assessment or Proposed Scheme.

Assessment of Effects, Secondary Mitigation and Residual Effects

Construction Stage

Loss of agricultural land (Project for Assessment and Proposed Scheme)

Project for Assessment

- 14.56 The Project for Assessment may require the removal of all of the agricultural land from production. There is considered to be a loss of 325.7ha of agricultural land.
- 14.57 The sensitivity of the agricultural land is primarily low or negligible (93% is in Subgrade 3b and Grades 4 and 5). As the development would directly lead to the loss of over 50ha of agricultural land, the magnitude of change is large. Therefore there is likely to be a direct, permanent, long-term adverse effect which is considered to be minor.
- 14.58 Development would directly lead to the loss of approximately 22ha of BMV land in Subgrade 3a, which would be a medium magnitude of change on a receptor of medium sensitivity.

Therefore there is likely to be a direct, permanent, long-term adverse effect on BMV land that is considered to be moderate.

Proposed Scheme

- 14.59 The Proposed Scheme will require the removal of 178.1ha of agricultural land from production.
- 14.60 The sensitivity of the agricultural land is primarily low or negligible, with a total of 160.4ha (or 90%) of the agricultural land in Subgrade 3b and Grades 4 and 5. As the development would directly lead to the loss of over 50ha of agricultural land, the magnitude of change is large. Therefore there is likely to be a direct, permanent, long-term adverse effect which is considered to be minor.
- 14.61 However, the magnitude of change on BMV land is small, with the loss of 17.7ha of Subgrade 3a land. Therefore there is likely to be a direct, permanent, long-term adverse effect on BMV land that is considered to be minor.

Secondary Mitigation or Enhancement

- 14.62 There are no measures available to mitigate the progressive and permanent loss of agricultural land.

Residual Effect

- 14.63 The residual effect for agricultural land is the same as reported in the pre-mitigation scenario.

Significance

- 14.64 The effect on BMV agricultural land is considered to be **Significant** for the Project for Assessment and **Not Significant** for the Proposed Scheme. The effect on other agricultural land is considered to be **Not Significant** for the Project for Assessment and the Proposed Scheme.

Loss of or damage to soil resources (Project for Assessment and Proposed Scheme)

- 14.65 Soil may be lost or damaged due to handling during construction and the re-instatement of land. Soils will be affected across the majority of the Assessment Boundary within the anticipated extent of excavation as shown on **Figure 4.3**.

Project for Assessment

- 14.66 The sensitivity of the soil resource is mostly low. The heavy clay loam and clay textures are of medium sensitivity whilst the sensitivity of the sandy loam topsoils and sandy subsoils is negligible. The magnitude of change is considered to be large across all soil types as the soil displaced from development is unable to fulfil one or more of the primary soils functions. Therefore, prior to implementation of mitigation, there is likely to be a direct, temporary, long-term adverse effect which is considered to be moderate for most of the soil resource; major for the clayey textures; and negligible for the sandy textures.

Proposed Scheme

- 14.67 The effects for soil resources are the same as that reported for the Project for Assessment.

Secondary Mitigation or Enhancement

- 14.68 Secondary mitigation for soil resources refers to the implementation of a Soil Resources Management Plan (SRMP). For the Proposed Scheme, the SRMP will be managed under pre-

commencement condition. It is assumed that the same or similar mitigation will apply to the Project for Assessment, although this will be a matter for when planning applications are made for those relevant areas.

- 14.69 The SRMP would confirm the different soil types (based on the soil surveys already undertaken); the most appropriate re-use for the different types of soils; and the proposed methods for handling, storing and replacing soils within the Assessment / Application Boundary.
- 14.70 The aim of the SRMP will be to re-use displaced soil resources within the Assessment / Application Boundary in the detailed design of open spaces and green infrastructure (**Figure 4.1**). The quality of soils retained would be maintained by following good practice guidance on soils handling and storage, such as that set out in Defra's Construction Code of Practice⁴, particularly to avoid compaction and biodegradation of soils, such that they can continue to fulfil their various ecosystem functions.
- 14.71 A summary of the proposed secondary mitigation is provided in the table below.

Table 14.7: Summary of Secondary Mitigation for Construction Stage

Mitigation	Person Responsible	Secured by	Relevant to	
			Project for Assessment	Proposed Scheme
SRMP	Construction contractor	Planning condition	✓	✓

Residual Effect

- 14.72 With the adoption of appropriate secondary mitigation for the handling and restoration of soils, most soils will be able to continue their various ecosystem functions, principally as a medium for producing biomass; for storage and cycling of water and carbon; and for supporting habitats, biodiversity, and landscape planting.

Project for Assessment

- 14.73 The sensitivity of soil resources is mostly low, with some medium sensitivity heavy clay loam and clay textures and some sandy loam topsoils and sandy subsoils of negligible sensitivity. The magnitude of change, following secondary mitigation, is considered to be small. Therefore, there is likely to be a direct, temporary, long-term, adverse residual effect which is considered to be minor for heavy clay loam and clay textures and negligible across all other textures.

Proposed Scheme

- 14.74 The effects for soil resources are the same as that reported for the Project for Assessment.

Significance

- 14.75 This effect on soil resources is considered to be **Not Significant** for the Project for Assessment and the Proposed Scheme.

Reduction in farmable area and business viability (Project for Assessment and Proposed Scheme)

14.76 The assessment of farmable area and business viability is applicable to Higher Barn Farm only as it is the tenanted holding with any security of tenure. All other rented land is opportunistic and therefore not relied on by the occupiers.

Project for Assessment

14.77 The sensitivity of the main tenanted farm holding is considered to be medium. This is because there is a degree of flexibility in the normal course of operations, especially in mowing hay and grazing livestock. The magnitude of change is considered to be large as the main tenanted farm holding (Higher Barn Farm) will be lost. Therefore, there is likely to be a direct, permanent, long-term, adverse effect which is considered to be moderate.

Proposed Scheme

14.78 The effects for the main tenanted farm holding are the same as reported for the Project for Assessment.

Secondary Mitigation or Enhancement

14.79 No secondary mitigation or enhancement is available, other than financial compensation to the tenants.

Residual Effect

14.80 In the absence of secondary mitigation the residual effects for the main tenanted farm holding are the same as that reported in the pre-mitigation scenario.

Significance

14.81 This effect is considered to be **Significant** for the Project for Assessment and the Proposed Scheme.

Limitations and Assumptions

14.82 To ensure transparency within the EIA process, the following limitations and assumptions have been identified.

- It has not been possible to survey all of the agricultural land within the Assessment Boundary. Therefore, the soils and ALC data for the Assessment Boundary has been extrapolated from the survey data within the Application Boundary, in conjunction with published sources such as mapping of bedrock geology and soil associations, as well as previous survey data in the north-east of the Assessment Boundary;
- For the purposes of the assessment on farm businesses, it is assumed that owner-occupied units of whatever size have undertaken their own assessment on the impacts of the Project for Assessment on the viability of their land holding and (if appropriate) business and, by agreeing to the Project for Assessment, have considered these impacts are not harmful; and
- Information obtained from agents representing landowners and tenants is not verified by any other means (other than cross-reference where these interests overlap) and is assumed to be accurate. Assessment of effects can only be based on information provided.

Summary

- 14.83 **Table 14.8** provides a summary of the effects, receptors, residual effects and conclusions of significance considered within the Chapter, with reference to both the Project for Assessment and Proposed Scheme.
- 14.84 The table only provides a summary of the residual effects identified within the assessment. Details of all primary, secondary and tertiary mitigation that has been taken into account is summarised within **Volume 3: Environmental Management Plan**.

Table 14.8: Summary of Residual and Significant Effects for the Project for Assessment and Proposed Scheme

Effect	Receptor	Project for Assessment		Proposed Scheme	
		Residual Effect	Is the Effect Significant?	Residual Effect	Is the Effect Significant?
Construction Stage					
Loss of agricultural land	BMV agricultural land	Moderate Adverse	Yes	Minor Adverse	No
	Other agricultural land	Minor Adverse	No	Minor Adverse	No
Loss of or damage to soil resources	Soil (heavy clay loam and clay textures)	Minor Adverse	No	Minor Adverse	No
	Soil (all other textures)	Negligible Adverse	No	Negligible Adverse	No
Reduction in farmable area and business viability	Main tenanted farm holding	Moderate Adverse	Yes	ModerateAdverse	Yes

References

- ¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024). *National Planning Policy Framework*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- ² Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2024). *Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document for Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan 2022 to 2039*.
- ³ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024). *Planning Practice Guidance – Natural Environment*. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>
- ⁴ Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2009). *Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites*
- ⁵ Natural England (2012). *Technical Information Note 049 - Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land*, Second Edition.
- ⁶ MAFF (1988). *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales. Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land*.
- ⁷ Reading Agricultural Consultants Limited (2017). Land at South Heywood, Greater Manchester. Ref.: 7848. Available at https://documents.rochdale.gov.uk/pav/planapp.aspx?MyQueryID=108&OBKey__705_1=16/01399/HYBR
- ⁸ Soil Survey of England and Wales (1984). Soils of Northern England (1:250,000), Sheet 1
- ⁹ Jarvis et al (1984). Soils and Their Use in Northern England. Soil Survey of England and Wales Bulletin 10, Harpenden