Virtus Data Centres

Agricultural Land Classification Report

Former Sipson Garden Centre

ESH 00315

Final

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TETRA TECH

Tetra Tech Edinburgh, 3rd Floor, Quay 2, 139 Fountainbridge, Edinburgh, EH3 9QG

Tetra Tech Consulting Limited. Registered in England: No.01470149
Registered Office: 101 Park Drive, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, England, OX14 4RY

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Prepared by	Prepared for
Tetra Tech Consulting Ltd	Virtus Data Centres
Julia Tindale – Senior Director	

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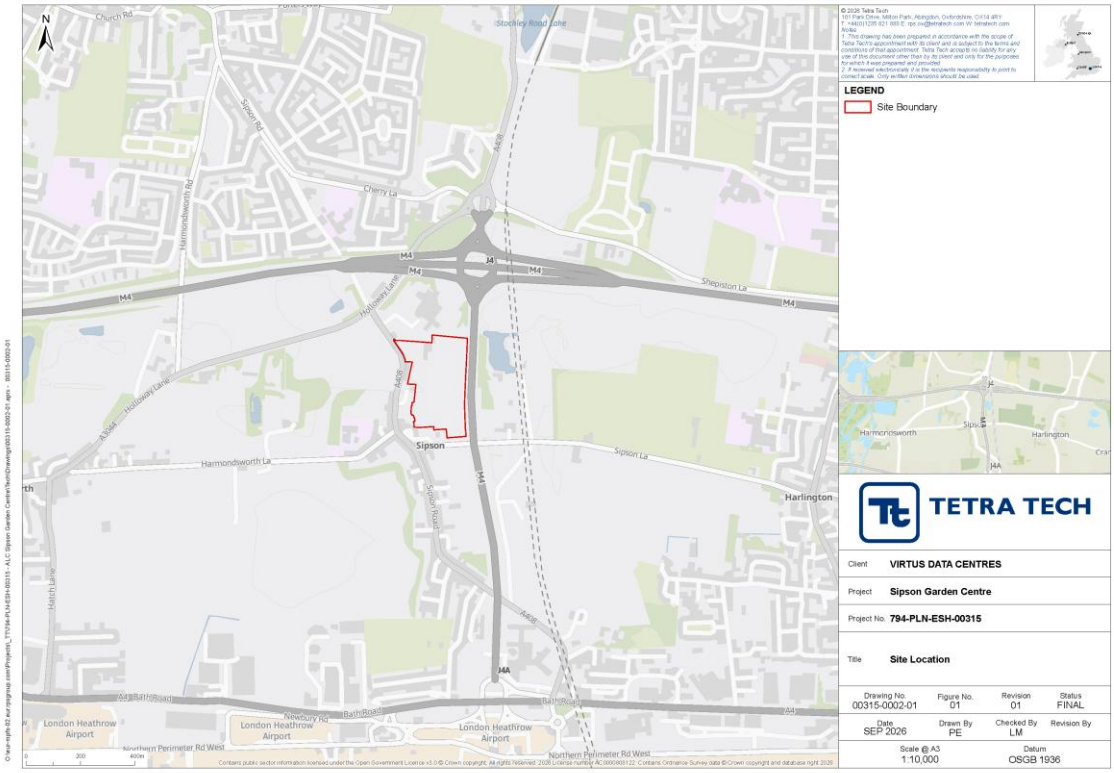
Appendix A: ALC Grading of the Site
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1.0 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This report presents the results of an agricultural land classification (ALC) survey of land at the Virtus Data Centre project hereby referenced as the Site (see Figure 1 below) undertaken in accordance with the Natural England *Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales: Guidelines for grading the quality of agricultural land (JP069)* (Natural England, 2025) in September 2026.

Figure 1: Site Red Line Boundary



1.1.2 The Site is bound by a hotel to the north, the M4 motorway to the east, Sipson Lane to the south and Sipson Road to the west and is located on the outskirts of the village of Sipson in the London Borough of Hillingdon.

1.1.3 The methodology for data collection is presented in Section 1.3 of the report. Section 2.0 describes the location, topography and climatic characteristics of the Site together with a review of published information relevant to the ALC grading of the Site. Sections 3.0 and **Error! Reference source not found.** describe the soils and agricultural land quality of the Site in detail.

1.2 Proposed Development

1.2.1 The Site is intended to be developed for a datacentre, hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 The assessment of the effects on agricultural land quality and soil resources is based on a desk top assessment of relevant published information and a detailed site survey.

Desk Top Study

1.3.2 The desk top study included the following information:

- British Geological Survey (BGS) published data.
- Published soils mapping from Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW).
- Review of available historic mapping for the Site and immediate surrounding area.
- Review of available ALC mapping.
- Compilation of a Climate Data pack for the Site using the Met. Office Climatological data for ALC.
- Review of available Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping to determine likely topographic changes across the Site.

Site Survey

1.3.3 Following completion of the desk study assessment of the Site, it was determined that a site survey would be required to assess the ALC grade(s) for the Site.

1.3.4 The site survey involves the excavation of hand auger borings at specific intervals across the Site, typically at 100m centres, together with the excavation of shallow soil pits to examine soil structure and change in the soil profile with depth.

1.3.5 The site survey should be undertaken by a suitably qualified Soil Scientist, i.e. a suitably qualified and experienced soil scientist or practitioner (an individual with the necessary “Foundation Skills”, having achieved the Soil Professional Competencies as set out by the British Society of Soil Science (BSSS, 2025).

2.0 Desk Study

2.1 Published Geology Data

2.1.1 The geology is shown on a portion of the published 1:50,000 scale geological map Sheet 269 (Windsor, solid and drift) and the published 1:10,000 scale geological map Sheet TQ07NE (Heathrow). These have been used in preference to the British Geological Survey (BGS) web mapping (also consulted) since they are considered by TT to give a clearer picture of the geology, including OS grid lines and street mapping which are helpful in determining locations.

2.1.2 The bedrock geology of the survey area is shown to comprise the London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand).

2.1.3 The superficial geology is indicated to comprise the Langley Silt Member (clay and silt) across the whole Site.

2.1.4 The Site is not recorded as comprising Artificial Ground on available geological mapping. Nevertheless, in view of the known historic development of the Site, the presence of Made Ground is anticipated.

2.1.5 Historic mapping is shown to indicate significant disturbance on the north and southern parts of the Site, associated with the former Sipson Garden Centre, which later became a storage facility for heavy goods vehicles since 2021 with site clearance of built structures in the southern part of the Site also in approximately 2021.

Figure 2: Extract from 1:50,000 Scale BGS Mapping



Figure 3: Extract from 1:10,000 Scale BGS Mapping



2.2 Published Soils Data

2.2.1 The area has been mapped by the Soil Survey of England and Wales and the results published as maps at a scale of 1:250,000 and an accompanying Soil Bulletin (Sheet 6 and Bulletin 15, 1984). An extract from the map is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Extract from 1:250,000 Scale Soils Mapping



2.2.2 The Site is shown on the above extract as Urban land (shown in grey).

2.2.3 The surrounding land shows soils of the Hamble 2 Association (map symbol 571z, shown in yellow). It is possible that these soils encroach on to the Site. The available

soils interactive map viewer (LandIS, 2026) would also agree with the above mapping.

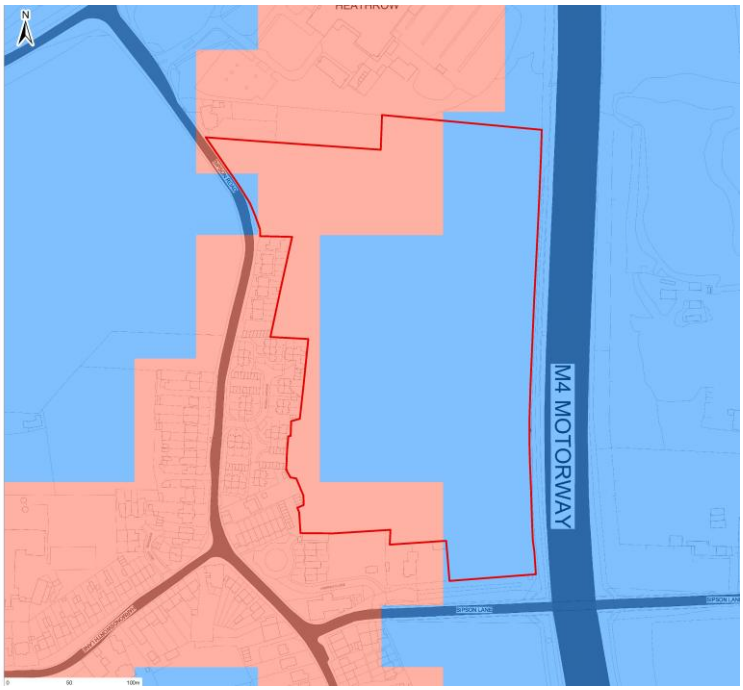
2.2.4 The soils identified on Site are described as deep stoneless well drained silty soils and similar soils affected by groundwater, over gravel locally, mostly found on low-lying land. These soils are described as well drained, typically Wetness Class I, but may require pipe drainage in places where there is silty drift.

2.3 Existing Agricultural Land Classification Data

2.3.1 The provisional mapping (Natural England, 2026) would indicate ALC Grade 1 across the whole Site.

2.3.2 The predictive mapping (Natural England, 2026) would indicate ALC Grade 1 across the majority of the Site, with the west of the Site mapped as Urban land, see extract in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Natural England Predictive ALC Grade Mapping for the Site



2.3.3 The mapping indicates that part of the northern eastern and southern parts of the Site to comprise Urban land (red) and the remaining land to comprise Grade 1 land (blue)

2.3.4 The Site has not been subject to survey at a detailed scale and there is no publicly available information for the Site published on the London Borough of Hillingdon planning portal.

2.4 Climate

2.4.1 Climatic data has been obtained from the Met Office's standard 5km grid point data within the Site and detailed as follows.

Table 1: Site Specific Climate Data

Climatic Parameters	Data
Average Altitude (m AOD)	30
Accumulated Temperature ATO (day degrees)	1479
Average Annual Rainfall AAR (mm)	653
Field Capacity Duration (days)	132
Moisture Deficit for wheat (mm)	116
Moisture Deficit for potatoes (mm)	111
Climatic Grade	1

2.4.2 The data show a relatively warm climate with average annual rainfall. There is no overall climatic limitation to the ALC grade within the area of survey.

2.5 Topography

2.5.1 The land is flat with the Site lying at c.30m AOD. No gradient limitations to the ALC grade were identified within the survey area.

2.6 Published Flood Risk Mapping

2.6.1 From the Government Flood Map for Planning, the Site is located in Flood Zone 1, which has a low risk of flooding. Therefore, there is not considered to be any flood risk which could limit the ALC grade at the Site with reference to the tables shown in 'Figure 2 Grade according to flood risk in summer' and 'Figure 3 Grade according to flood risk in winter' of the ALC Guidelines (Natural England, 2025).

3.0 Agricultural Land Classification of the Site

3.1 The grading of the Site is provided in Appendix A. The site survey has identified that there are significant areas of disturbance and dereliction on parts of the Site. To the north the area of hardstanding extends approximately 150 to 200m into the site where vehicles are being stored. To the east of this there is a grassed area, which on inspection also overlay areas of broken hardstanding throughout.

3.2 At the southern area there is a large, raised area where vegetation growth was noted to be limited and where soil resources varied between 10-20cm over hardstanding. This appears to correspond to areas where previously building structures had been located and then cleared more recently. Similarly, a raised grassed area on the eastern side was noted, where soil resources are limited above an area of broken hardstanding. These areas are assessed to be Grade 4, based on the limited depth of soil material over an impenetrable layer and their tendency to droughtiness.

3.3 Predominantly within the central part of the Site, soils of the Hamble Association were identified. However, there is still a degree of disturbance within 5 out of the 7 soil profiles examined, with volumes of hardcore, tile and brick being present. Where the volumes were found to be higher, these profiles are graded Subgrade 3a, but overall the area of less disturbance, which forms a limited area in the middle of the Site is graded 2 based on inclusions of approximately 5% disturbed material.

Table 2: Agricultural Land Classification Survey Results

ALC Grade/Subgrade	Site Area (ha)	Site Area (%)
Grade 2 (Very Good)	1.96	28
Subgrade 3a (Good)	0.85	12
Grade 4 (Poor)	1.6	23
Urban (derelict)	2.58	37
Total	6.99	100

4.0 Land Use of the Site

4.1 The land within the Site has been grassed, where it is not underlain by hardstanding. The area is fenced along the western, eastern and southern boundaries, but is not fenced along the northern boundaries and part of the grassed area at the northern end is being used for parking cars.

4.2 Although the grass is being cut it is not being used for an active agricultural purpose.

5.0 Analysis and Conclusions

5.1 The Site comprises derelict urban land to the north and three areas of Grade 4 land which is highly disturbed, with the largest area to the south of the Site. Sandwiched between the urban and areas of Grade 4 land, there are remnants of the Hamble Association, which has also been subject to varying levels of disturbance in the topsoil. This area comprises a mixture of Subgrade 2(1.96) and Subgrade 3a (0.85 ha) dependent upon the volume of foreign material present.

5.2 In terms of the weight to be attached to the effects of the proposal on high quality agricultural land the Natural England Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land (2021) identifies the threshold of such land that would be considered significant under the TCPA Development Management Procedure Schedule 4(y):

> *"Planning authorities must consult Natural England on all non-agricultural applications that result in the loss of more than 20ha of BMV land if the land is not included in a development plan."*

5.3 In terms of the threshold identified by this guidance, in absolute terms the Site comprises only a limited area of 2.81ha Grade 2 and 3a land within the category of the best and most versatile land, where the development would not be likely to lead to the loss of more than 20ha of the best and most versatile land, due to its contained nature with the M4, residential and commercial businesses situated on all sides of the Site.

5.4 In addition, whilst there may physically be a small area of best and most versatile land within the central part of the Site, there are still patches of disturbance within it and on this Site, it would be impractical for this limited area to achieve the full extent of its' quality or versatility which is expected for such high quality land including a range of the horticultural and arable crops. In addition, the open boundary at the northern end in proximity to the commercial enterprises there and presence of cars parked on the grassed area emphasise further that this Site does not fulfil any agricultural function.

5.5 In summary therefore, the Site does not comprise a significant area of best and most versatile land and the extent of the disturbance within the Site and the open proximity to commercial enterprises to the north practically limit its future potential to fulfil any agricultural use that would be expected for the best and most versatile land.

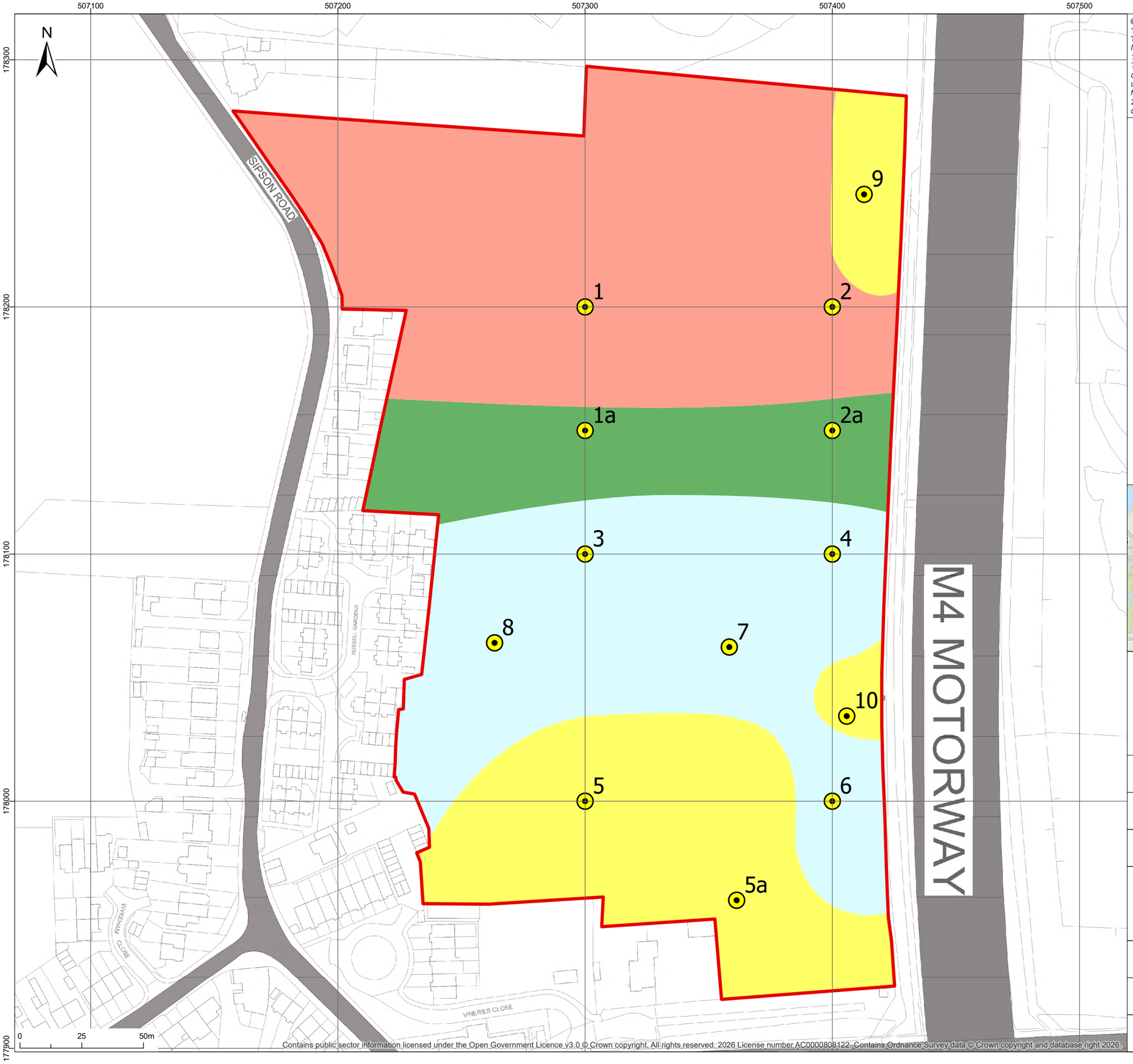
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Appendix A: ALC Grade Plan



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101 Park Drive, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 4RY
T: +44(0)1235 821 888 E: rps.ox@tetratech.com W: tetratech.com

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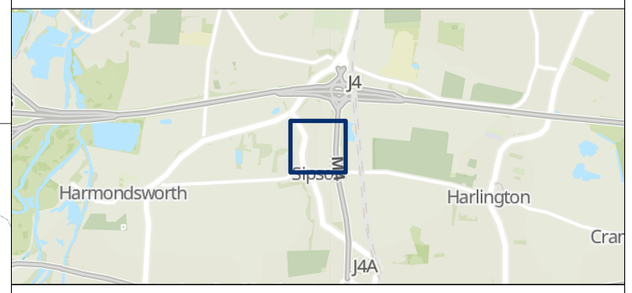


LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Survey Location

Agricultural Land Classification (ALC)

- Grade 2
- Grade 3a
- Grade 4
- Urban



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Client	**VIRTUS DATA CENTRES**
Project	**Sipson Garden Centre**
Project No.	**794-PLN-ESH-00315**
Title	**ALC Survey Results**

Drawing No.	Figure No.	Revision	Status
00315-0004-02	Appendix A	02	DRAFT

Date	Drawn By	Checked By	Revision By
OCT 2026	PE	LM	PE

Scale @ A3	Datum
1:1,500	OSGB 1936

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Appendix B: Auger Boring Descriptions Schedule

Key to Auger Boring Descriptions

Textures

ZL – Silt Loam

ZCL – Silty Clay Loam

LMS – Loamy medium sand

Colours

VDB – very dark brown

Db – dark brown

B – brown

Others

Cdom – common distinct ochreous mottles

Cdogm – common distinct ochreous and grey mottles

Mn – manganese concretions

St – stone

SPL – slowly permeable layer

MB – Moisture Balance

Number	Depth	Colour (Munsell)	Texture	Description	Gleyed	Wetness Class	Droughtiness	Site Survey ALC grade and limitation
1-2				Hardstanding with vehicles parked				
1a	0-30	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL	10%+ brick, hardcore and small stone (Topsoil Pit)				Subgrade 3a – volume of foreign material and disturbance
	30 - 60	B (10YR 5/3)	ZL	Few stones				
	60 - 90+	B (10YR 5/3)	MZCL	Occn. Mottles		1		
2a	0-30	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL	10%+ brick, hardcore and small stone (Topsoil Pit)				Subgrade 3a – volume of foreign material and disturbance
	30 - 60	B (10YR 5/3)	ZL	Few stones				
	60 - 90+	B (10YR 5/3)	MZCL	Occn. Mottles		1		
3.	0-30	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL	5-8% brick, hardcore and small stone				2 – volume of foreign material
	30 – 80+	B (10YR 5/3)	ZL	Few stones in top part of subsoil				

4.	0-30	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL	5-8% brick, hardcore and small stone				2 – volume of foreign material
	30 – 80+	B (10YR 5/3)	ZL	Few stones		1		
5.	0-30	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL	Proper Hamble ; occn stone or brick frag				1
	30 – 80+	B (10YR 5/3)	ZL			1		
5	0 -20	VDB (10YR 2/2)	LMS (slightly organic) -10% small stones	10% small stone; raised area; limited veg growth; broken hardstanding visible. Topsoil Pit			4	4 – depth and drought tendency
	20+			Solid hardstanding				
5a	0 -20	VDB (10YR 2/2)	LMS -10% small stones	10% small stone; raised area; limited veg growth; broken hardstanding visible. Topsoil Pit		1	4	4 – depth and drought tendency
	20+			Solid hardstanding				
6.	0-30	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL	5-8% brick, hardcore and small stone		1		2 – volume of foreign material

	30 – 80+	B (10YR 5/3)	ZL	Few stones in top part of subsoil				
7.	0-30	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL	Proper Hamble ; occn stone or brick frag				1
	30 – 80+	B (10YR 5/3)	ZL			1		
8.	0-30	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL	Proper Hamble ; occn stone or brick frag				1
	30 – 80+	B (10YR 5/3)	ZL			1		
9.	0 – 20	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL/SZL	15 – 20% hardcore and areas of hardcore visible on surface; areas of hardstanding visible adjacent to boring.		1		4 – volume of foreign material and hardcore base.
10.	0 – 20	Db (10YR 3/3)	ZL/SZL	15 – 20% hardcore and areas of hardcore visible on surface		1		4 – volume of foreign material and hardcore base.

Soil Pit at Auger Boring 3.

0 – 30 cm dark brown silt loam; inclusions of 5 -10%of brick, tile and harstanding with occasional small hard stones; grass roots; very slightly moist and firm

30 – 60cm + brown silt loam, tending to medium silty clay loam at 55+; occasion stones or presence of foreign material (mostly at top of subsoil horizon); weak fine subangular blocky structure; few grass roots; dry.

Grade 2 – presence of disturbed material.