OXFORDSHIRE
STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

DCO Submission

Environmental Statement

Chapter 14: Soil Resources and Agricultural Land

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On behalf of
Oxfordshire Railfreight Limited

Prepared by Land Research Associates Limited
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APPENDICES

14.1 INTRODUCTION

14.1.1 This Chapter considers the potential impact of the Proposed Development on agricultural land and soil resources.

14.1.2 This Chapter has been prepared by Martin Worsley of Land Research Associates. Martin has over 10 years' industry experience and holds a BSc Forestry and MSc Soil Science from the University of Aberdeen; one of the leading schools of soil science in Europe. Land Research Associates (LRA) have specialised in soils, agriculture and environmental impact assessment for over 25 years.

14.2 ASSESSMENT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Assessment Criteria and Assignment of Significance

14.2.1 The methodology used in this Chapter to assess the potential impact of the Proposed Development has been developed by LRA over many years. It makes reference to the following:

- The IEMA document 'A New Perspective on Land and Soil in Environmental Impact Assessment' (2021);
- DEFRA (2009), Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites;
- British Society of Soil Science (BSSS) (2022) Working with Soil Guidance Note on 'Benefitting from Soil Management in Development and Construction';
- Article 18, Schedule 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

14.2.2 The potential or actual impacts of a proposed development can be: adverse, causing negative impacts on a receptor; beneficial, resulting in advantageous or positive impacts on a receptor; or negligible. These are further explained in the sections below.

Magnitude of Impact

<u>Agricultural land</u>

14.2.3 The magnitude of impact on agricultural land will depend on the amount of 'best and most versatile' ((BMV), grades 1, 2 and 3a) land to be taken by a proposed development. Article 18, Schedule 4 of the Town and Country

Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 only requires Natural England to be consulted on development that involves the loss of 20 or more hectares (ha) of grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land. Consequently, losses above this threshold are regarded as large magnitude.

Soil resources

14.2.4 The magnitude of impact on topsoil resources makes the assumption that, as a valuable finite resource, the requirement should be to protect topsoils from damage. However, since built developments often generate large surpluses of topsoil, the primary requirement is considered to be that sufficient topsoil is protected to complete all on-site landscaping/greenspace requirements (provided the baseline resource is suitable for the proposed uses). Failure to do so is regarded as a large magnitude impact. If all topsoil is protected from damage, the impact is regarded as negligible. As few built developments are likely to require more than 50% of topsoil for reuse, losses below this figure are regarded as small.

14.2.5 Subsoil compaction under greenspace areas increases flood risk (and is not typically accounted for in SuDS design). Severe compaction is also likely to adversely affect the success of landscaping/ecological planting schemes. Magnitude is considered as a percentage of the development scheme. Compaction of greater than 10% of a site is considered as high magnitude as it is likely to result in tangible increases in runoff volumes, of a magnitude which could affect the efficacy of SuDS design capacity.

14.2.6 The magnitude of impacts are summarised in Table 14.1 below.

Table 14.1 – Magnitude of Impacts

Impact type	Large	Moderate	Small	Negligible
Loss of agricultural land	Irreversible loss of >20 ha of agricultural land	Irreversible loss of 5-20 ha of agricultural land	Irreversible loss of 1-5 ha of agricultural land	Irreversible loss of <1 ha of agricultural land
Soil loss or damage	Loss of >80% of topsoil resources and insufficient topsoil protected for on-site uses. Subsoil compaction of >10% of Site.	Loss or irreversible damage to 50-80% of topsoil resources. Compaction of 5-10% of subsoils.	Loss or irreversible damage to <50% of topsoil resources. Compaction of <5% of subsoils.	Only minor disturbance of soils within the Site.

Sensitivity of Receptors

Agricultural land

14.2.7 Best and most versatile agricultural land is considered to be a finite national resource, is given special consideration in national policy, and can be considered to be of higher sensitivity than land in Grades 3b, 4 and 5. In areas of the country where best and most versatile land is common, such as Cherwell, the best land (Grades 1 and 2) is considered of higher sensitivity than Subgrade 3a. The loss of lower quality land is considered of lower importance under the planning system of England and Wales.

Soil resources

14.2.8 The assessment of impacts on soil follows a soil functions approach as recommended in the IEMA 2022 Guidance. This approach assesses the effect on one or more soil functions that soils are required to perform. The initial primary function for agricultural land is regarded as food and agricultural production, with secondary functions including flood risk mitigation and supporting soil biodiversity. Following land use change as part of a development, the primary soil functions would be expected to change. The nature of these post-development functions is dependent on the type of the development. In this instance it is determined that soil would primarily be required to support plant growth and soil biodiversity and to mitigate surface water flooding risk. All natural soils are finite resources, but where sites are to be developed, their quality as a resource for reuse varies. Medium and coarse loamy soils are regarded as of higher value for reuse and so of the highest sensitivity, since these soils are most effective at mitigating the effects of flooding and are of highest quality for reuse in landscaping and planting schemes (also the most likely to meet British Standards criteria for use at other sites). Lower quality soils such as sandy or clayey topsoils are susceptible to damage and less valuable if soil function is lost in this context.

14.2.9 Permeable coarse or medium textured subsoils are reusable for planting schemes (e.g. to support tree growth) and have a greater function in mitigating the effects of flooding than heavy and slowly permeable subsoils. In some instances, soils have important properties which make them able to support rare habitats (e.g. species diverse calcareous grassland or lowland heath habitats).

14.2.10 The sensitivity of receptors are summarised in Table 14.2 below.

Table 14.2 – Sensitivity of Receptors

Receptor	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Agricultural land	Grades 1 & 2	Subgrade 3a	Subgrade 3b	Grades 4 & 5 and other land (non-agricultural)
Soils	Permeable coarse loamy and medium loamy soils, or other soils capable of supporting valuable habitats.	Fine textured or sandy topsoils not capable of supporting valuable habitats.	Slowly permeable subsoils.	Damaged or contaminated soils.

Significance of Effects

14.2.11 The level of any beneficial or adverse impact can be assessed as either 'major' or 'moderate', 'minor' or 'negligible' according to the magnitude of the impact of a proposed development and the sensitivity of the receptor.

14.2.12 Effects that are deemed to be significant for the purposes of this assessment are those that are described as being moderate or major.

14.2.13 The significance of effects are summarised in Table 14.3, below (with 'significant' effect categories shown in bold).

Table 14.3 – Significance of Effects

Magnitude	Sensitivity			
	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Large	**Major**	**Major**	**Moderate**	Minor
Moderate	**Major**	**Moderate**	Minor	Negligible
Small	**Moderate**	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Minor	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Limitations and Assumptions

14.2.9 449.5 ha of land has been surveyed in detail by suitably experienced and qualified practitioners. There are no limitations to the conclusions on this land. An additional 17.8 ha of land, proposed as ecological mitigation, has not been surveyed. The assessment of this land, whilst also undertaken by suitability experienced and qualified practitioners, is based on a desk study and reference to adjacent detailed survey results, rather than on detailed survey

itself. This is judged an appropriate approach given that the land is not to be developed, and as such it will retain its agricultural potential and the soil resource will be retained and protected.

14.2.10 A very small extent of the Application Site (less than 1% of the total) has neither been assessed by detailed survey nor by desk study. This land is recorded as unsurveyed in both this chapter and the related appendix, and comprises small, often linear areas of land intended for development as part of highways works. Its exclusion does not change the overall outcome of the assessment in this chapter.

14.3 POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy

National Networks National Policy Statement ('NPS')

14.3.1 The primary source of national policy for NSIPs is the National Networks National Policy Statement ('NPS'), 2024. The NPS includes guidance regarding the assessment of NSIP projects, and is discussed in detail in the separate Planning Statement.

14.3.2 With regards to soils, the NPS requires schemes to protect and reuse soil resources, and limit the generation of soil and other material as a waste material. Specific reference is made to the need to recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined in the NPS as grades 1, 2 and 3a), with an expectation that where possible, schemes seek to use areas of poorer quality (paragraph 5.189).

14.3.3 It expects surveys to assess soil quality classifications, and encourages use of soil or other resource management plans as part of construction to minimise adverse impacts on soil health or contamination (NPS paragraph 5.190). When decisions are taken on NSIP schemes, the NPS advises that the Secretary of State should ensure that appropriate mitigation is put forward to minimise impacts on soils and soil resources (paragraph 5.202).

National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF')

14.3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024), paragraph 187 states:

"*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).

b) *recognising…… the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land*"

14.3.5 NPPF paragraph 188 states:

"*Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.*"

14.3.6 NPPF paragraph 188, footnote 65 states:

"Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality."

14.3.7 The availability of agricultural land should be considered, alongside other policies. This replaces specific reference to the need to protect Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (defined as Grade 1 to Subgrade 3a of the Agricultural Classification of England and Wales) which was included in earlier versions of the NPPF.

14.3.8 The emerging revised draft NPPF (December 2025) is broadly consistent with the current adopted NPPF with regard to agricultural land (for example through draft proposed new NPPF policies N1 c) and N2 b)).

Planning Practice Guidance

14.3.9 Planning Practice Guidance states in relation to agricultural land:

"*In the circumstances set out in Schedule 4 paragraph (y) of the Development Management Procedure Order 2015, Natural England is a statutory consultee: a local planning authority must consult Natural England before granting planning permission for large-scale non-agricultural*

development on best and most versatile land that is not in accord with the development plan. Natural England has published guidance on development on agricultural land."

14.3.10 Planning Practice Guidance states in relation to soils:

"Soil is an essential natural capital asset that provides important ecosystem services – for instance, as a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, as a store for carbon and water, as a reservoir of biodiversity and as a buffer against pollution."

It also states that Defra's 'Code of practice for the sustainable use of soils on construction sites' may be helpful in giving advice and setting planning conditions for development sites.

Natural England

14.3.11 Natural England's 'Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land', Point 1 states:

"*Developers and local planning authorities (LPAs) should refer to the following government policies and legislation when considering development proposals that affect agricultural land and soils. They aim to protect:*

- *the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals*
- *all soils by managing them in a sustainable way*".

14.3.12 Natural England's 'Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land', Point 1.1 states:

"*A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to improve the Environment (2018), which sets out the government's 25-year plan to improve the health of the environment by using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently. It plans to:*

- *protect the best agricultural land*
- *put a value on soils as part of our natural capital*
- *manage soils in a sustainable way by 2030*
- *restore and protect peatland*".

Cherwell Local Plan

14.3.13 Cherwell Local Plan 2011 to 2031, Policy ESD 10, Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment states:

"*Protection and enhancement of…the natural environment will be achieved by…the reuse of soils*".

14.4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

14.4.1 A detailed baseline report titled 'Agricultural quality of land at proposed Oxford SRFI development near Ardley, Oxfordshire' has been produced. This report is attached to this document as **Appendix 14.1**. The information below is derived from this report.

Site Description and Survey Methodology

14.4.2 The area covered by the Application Site is 470.1 ha in size.

14.4.3 The majority of this land, 449.5 ha, was surveyed in detail in 2021 and 2022. An additional 17.8 ha of land, earmarked for ecological mitigation, has not been surveyed but the quality of this land was estimated using desk study information and the findings of the adjacent detailed surveys. This is judged an appropriate approach given that the land is not to be developed, and as such it will retain its agricultural potential and the soil resource will be retained and protected.

Context

14.4.4 The land is in general gently undulating, with gentle and moderate slopes and elevations ranging between approximately 90 and 120 m AOD.

14.4.5 At the time of the surveys the majority of the land comprised post-harvest stubble fields, with a small number of fields in permanent grassland.

14.4.6 British Geological Survey (BGS) 1:50,000 scale information[1] records the geology of the Applicant Site as Jurassic White Limestone Formation. No superficial deposits are recorded.

14.4.7 The National Soil Map[2], published at 1:250,000 scale, records the land of the Applicant Site as Aberford Association, comprising shallow, locally brashy, well drained calcareous soils over limestone, with some deeper calcareous soils in colluvium.

Baseline Survey Information

Agricultural land

14.4.8 The detailed surveys of 2021 and 2022 identified agricultural land of Subgrade 3a (37.7 ha) and Subgrade 3b (284.5 ha) quality, with large areas of other land (non-agricultural, 127.3 ha). The principal limitations to agriculture are soil droughtiness, topsoil stoniness and soil wetness.

14.4.9 The land proposed as ecological mitigation which was not surveyed in detail is predicted to have a mixture of Subgrade 3a and Subgrade 3b quality agricultural land.

14.4.10 A very small area of agricultural land, covering 2.8 ha and <0.6% of the Application Site, has not been surveyed.

14.4.11 More details ae given in the baseline report. The areas occupied by each land grade are given in Table 14.4 below.

Table 14.4 – Agricultural land classification

Grade	Land surveyed in detail		Ecological mitigation areas[3]		Application Site	
	Area (ha)	% of land	Area (ha)	% of land	Area (ha)	% of land
Subgrade 3a	37.7	8.5	-	-	37.7	8
Subgrade 3b	284.5	63.5	-	-	284.5	61

[1] British Geological Survey (BGS) 1:50,000 scale mapping: https://www.bgs.ac.uk/technologies/web-map-services-wms/web-map-services-geology-50k/
[2] Jarvis, M.G., et al., (1984). *Soils and their Use in South East England*. Soil Survey of England and Wales Bulletin No. 15, Harpenden.
[3] 54.5 ha of land outside of the Main Site is proposed as ecological mitigation or similar. The majority of this land has been surveyed in detail. 17.8 ha has not been surveyed and for this land a predicted grading is given, based on desk study and the findings of detailed adjacent surveys.

Predicted mix of Subgrade 3a & 3b	-	-	17.8	100	17.8	4
Other land (non-agricultural)	127.3	28.0	-	-	127.3	27
Land not surveyed	-	-	-	-	2.8	<1
Total	**449.5**	**100**	**17.8**	**100**	**470.1**	**100**

Soil resources

14.4.12 The detailed survey identified two broad soil types. More details are given below and in the baseline report.

Shallow brashy soils over limestone

14.4.13 These soils are generally shallow and well drained with no evidence of seasonal wetness. The topsoils are mainly clay or heavy clay loam and occasionally medium clay loam, overlying a similarly-textured upper subsoil, which overlies weathered, brashy, limestone material. In places, the upper subsoil is absent and the topsoil directly overlies brashy limestone. There are also some similar deeper soils in places.

Deep soils with impeded drainage

14.4.14 There are some deeper soil profiles which have slowly permeable subsoils. These soils have evidence of seasonal wetness. They are judged to be imperfectly or poorly draining (Wetness Class III or IV).

14.5 ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY EFFECTS

14.5.1 This section of the Chapter assesses the likely effects of the Proposed Development on agricultural soil resources. The assessment takes into account any embedded or design features which will help minimise or mitigate the otherwise likely effects.

14.5.2 Impacts on soils is a construction specific issue. The Proposed Development could potentially result in the loss of all topsoils[4] during stripping and stockpiling if not carefully managed. Such a loss of the resource would result in insufficient resources being available to complete on-site landscaping. These would be permanent effects.

14.5.3 Embedded mitigation for potential loss or damage to soil resources is available in the form of a site-specific Soil Management Plan (in accordance with the Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites). A Soil Management Plan (SMP) is required by the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP – see ES Appendix 2.3) for relevant phases of construction activity. The SMPs will be phase- and site-specific to ensure protection of the resource and best re-use of soil resources, preventing damage to soils and potential losses. The SMP will include details regarding:

- Depth and method of topsoil stripping and stockpiling;
- Identification of landscaping topsoil requirements and assessment of suitability and availability of on-site resources;
- Means of subsoil protection from compaction damage (e.g. specific pathways and restricted areas for construction traffic) and remedial measures (such as ripping/subsoiling) to remove damage

14.5.4 Adoption of these measures (as a post-consent requirement of the DCO) should ensure the protection soil resources for reuse and ensure the provision of soils of sufficient quality and quantity to meet all after-use requirements.

Construction Phase

Agricultural land

14.5.5 The Proposed Development would result in the irreversible loss of 36.9 ha of Subgrade 3a land and 249.7 ha of Subgrade 3b land. This would be a **Major Adverse (significant)** impact: large magnitude impact on a medium sensitivity receptor.

14.5.6 The land proposed for ecological mitigation (54.5 ha) would not lose its agricultural potential (see footnote 4). There would be negligible impact here, and this land is not considered by this assessment any further.

[4] In areas where development is proposed – this excludes the specific areas proposed as BNG/ecological mitigation only.

14.5.7 The very small areas of the Application Site not surveyed is of insignificant size in this context. Its exclusion does not change the outcome of the assessment in this chapter.

14.5.8 The table below, Table 14.5, outlines the loss of agricultural land grades, split between areas of irreversible loss and areas of ecological mitigation (where soil resources will not be lost to development).

Table 14.5 Areas affected by development and areas included (retained) in ecological mitigation areas

Grade	Proposed development and other areas[5]		Ecological mitigation areas[6]	
	Area (ha)	% of Site	Area (ha)	% of Site
Subgrade 3a	36.9	8	0.8	<1
Subgrade 3b	249.7	53	34.8	7
Predicted mix of Subgrade 3a & 3b	-	-	17.8	4
Other land (non-agricultural)	126.2	27	1.1	<1
Land not surveyed	2.8	<1	-	-
Total	415.6	88	54.5	12

Soil resources

14.5.9 In the absence of any measures to retain and protect on-site soil resources the Proposed Development could result in the permanent loss of, or damage, to greater than 80% of the soil resource. That scale of loss or damage would, if not mitigated, represent a large magnitude impact on medium to high sensitivity receptor (which would be significant in EIA terms), and which would also likely result in a shortfall of suitable soil for the proposed landscaping and planting which forms part of the OxSRFI scheme.

14.5.10 However, the embedded mitigation measures (an SMP) during the construction process as described above will ensure soils are protected and retained on-site, allowing its re-use on-site. As a result, the Proposed Development represents a **negligible to Minor Adverse (non-significant)** residual effect on soil resources, as a consequence of a negligible impact on a medium to high sensitivity receptor.

[5] Proposed development and other areas – this land includes the Main Site, Main Site – biodiversity and landscaping area, Ardley Bypass, Heyford Park Link Road, Middleton Stoney Relief Road, M40 Junction 10, M40 Junction 9, Landfill Works and all other smaller areas of built development and construction works.
[6] Ecological mitigation areas – Ecological Mitigation: Work Nos. 29, 32 and 37, and Biodiversity and landscaping enhancement area: Work No. 31.

14.5.11 The soils on the land proposed as ecological mitigation would be retained and protected. There would be negligible impact in these areas due to the lack of any built development, and this land is not considered by this assessment any further.

Operational Phase

Agricultural land

14.5.12 There would be no further impact on agricultural land during the operational phase of the Proposed Development beyond that identified for the construction phase

Soil resources

14.5.13 There would be no further impact on soil resources during the operational phase of the Proposed Development beyond that identified for the construction phase.

14.6 ADDITIONAL MITIGATION AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS

Additional Mitigation

Agricultural land

14.6.1 Additional mitigation for the loss of agricultural land to enable built development is not possible.

Soil resources

14.6.2 No further or additional mitigation for the loss or damage of soil resources has been identified beyond the embedded use of a Soil Management Plan (SMP) referred to above.

Residual Effects

Agricultural land

14.6.3 The loss of agricultural land to built development cannot be mitigated. The residual effects of the Proposed Development are as identified above, a **Major**

Adverse (significant) residual effect on agricultural land as a consequence of a large magnitude impact on a medium sensitivity receptor.

Soil resources

14.6.4 Following the adoption of the embedded mitigation measures during the construction process as described above, the Proposed Development represents a **Minor Adverse to negligible (non-significant)** residual effect on soil resources: negligible impact on medium to high sensitivity receptor.

Climate Change

14.6.1 Chapter 16 provides a general assessment of the Proposed Development, including greenhouse gases. There are no significant additional interactions between climate change, agricultural land and soil resources, in the context of this assessment.

Human Health

14.6.2 There are no significant interactions between human health, agricultural land and soil resources, in the context of this assessment.

14.7 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

14.7.1 The IEMA document 'A New Perspective on Land and Soil in Environmental Impact Assessment' outlines a methodology to assess the cumulative impact of land loss, at the local and national levels. The assessment involves comparing potential land loss to past average annual land loss. A loss of best and most versatile agricultural land ((BMV), grades 1, 2 and 3a) greater than 1% of average annual loss is regarded as significant. It should be noted that this method does not take account of consented and proposed developments in line with normal cumulative impact assessment practice.

14.7.2 The data used to evaluate the potential effect of proposed development is taken from UK Government Land Use Change statistics. These calculate the total loss of agricultural land and undeveloped land to development over a three year period. The most recent data is presented in Table 14.6 below, converted to loss on an annual basis.

Table 14.6 – Loss of land to development: local and national estimates of annual loss in hectares, three years from 2019-2022

Category	England	Cherwell
	Estimated annual loss	
All agricultural land	8,768 ha / yr	34 ha / yr
BMV agricultural land[7]	3,682 ha / yr	14 ha / yr

14.7.3 The effect of the proposed development in comparison to national land loss is shown in Table 14.6 below.

Table 14.7 – Loss of land to development: proposed development as a % of estimated annual loss at a national level, three years from 2019-2022

Category	England	Proposed Development	
	Estimated annual loss	Proposed Development	% of national annual loss
All agricultural land	8,768 ha / yr	286.6 ha	3.3 %
BMV agricultural land	3,682 ha / yr	36.9 ha	1.002 %

14.7.4 The data above demonstrate that at a national level the proposed development would be equal to 3.3% of annual agricultural land loss and 1.002% of annual BMV land loss. Although small scale in the wider context this is regarded as **significant**.

14.7.5 The effect of the proposed development in comparison to local land loss is shown in Table 14.7 below.

Table 14.7 – Loss of land to development: proposed development as a % of estimated annual loss at a local level, three years from 2019-2022

Category	Cherwell	Proposed Development	
	Estimated annual loss	Proposed Development	% of local annual loss
All agricultural land	34 ha / yr	286.6 ha	843 %
BMV agricultural land	14 ha / yr	36.9 ha	264 %

14.7.6 The data above demonstrate that at a local level the proposed development would be equal to 843 % of annual agricultural land loss and 264 % of annual BMV land loss. This is regarded as **significant**.

[7] Based on Natural England/Defra estimate of 42% of agricultural land being BMV nationally. This derives from previous surveyed land and is likely to be skewed towards land intended for development, disproportionately located in lowland areas.

14.7.7 The cumulative loss of agricultural land and best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV) posed by the proposed development is considered significant, at both the local and nation level.

14.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Agricultural land

14.8.1 The proposed development would have a **Major Adverse (significant)** residual effect on agricultural land, including a **significant** cumulative residual impact.

14.8.2 BMV represents only a small proportion of the land of the Application Site (37.7 ha, 8%). This outcome aligns with point 5.189 of NPS, which states that "*applicants should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality*".

14.8.3 There would be no significant residual impact on the land proposed as ecological mitigation, as this land would retains its agricultural potential.

Soil resources

14.8.4 The proposed development would not have a significant residual effect on soil resources, provided a detailed Soil Management Plan (SMP) is adhered to during the construction phase. The SMP would ensure protection and appropriate reuse of the soil resource.

14.8.5 There would be no significant residual effect on the land proposed as ecological mitigation, as these soils would be retained and protected.