

**PROPOSED CHILTERN RAILWAYS (BICESTER TO OXFORD IMPROVEMENTS)
ORDER**

NOTE TO THE INSPECTOR ON

THE EXTENT OF GRADE 3A AGRICULTURAL LAND TO BE TAKEN

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This note provides a further update to the Inspector on Statement of Matter 5(f) impacts on land use, including agricultural land. Policy in PPS7 seeks to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as grades 1, 2 and 3a) from development unless opportunities have been assessed for accommodating development on previously developed sites and on land within the boundaries of existing urban areas (Paragraph 28).

2 Assessment of the Impacts on Agricultural Land

- 2.1 The assessment of the impacts of agricultural land in the Environmental Statement (ES) [CD/1.16] states that there are no permanent or temporary impacts on Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land. All agricultural land take is Grade 3 or lower quality within a few defined areas. Only impacts on Grade 3 agricultural land are reported in the ES. Some of the agricultural land take associated with the Order Scheme may affect Grade 3a agricultural land, which falls within the definition of the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land as defined in PPS7.
- 2.2 The assessment in the ES is based on information drawn from the Defra 1:250,000 scale Agricultural Land Classification maps of England, which were originally surveyed at 1 inch to 1 mile. These maps do not distinguish between Grade 3a and Grade 3b agricultural land. In order to distinguish between Grade 3a and 3b, detailed agricultural land classification field surveys would need to be undertaken on a field by field basis. Given this requirement, the ES took a reasonable approach to the assessment of the impacts of the best and most versatile land assuming a worst case by reporting all Grade 3 agricultural land take.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 In respect of Statement of Matter 5(f) impacts on land use, including agricultural land, policy in PPS7 seeks to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as grades 1, 2 and 3a) from development. Chiltern Railways' assessment of the impact of the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land necessarily takes a precautionary approach and rests on the assessment of Grade 3 land as a distinction

cannot be made between Grade 3a and 3b land without further survey.

- 3.2 In total 27.16 hectares of Grade 3 agricultural land is included within the Limits of Deviation. However, it is not envisaged that all of this land will be acquired as the land included within the Limits of Deviation is the maximum land that might be needed to be acquired, dependant upon the final location of the works. Based on the calculations in Section 5.5 of the Environmental Statement, the actual permanent take of Grade 3 agricultural land is likely to be in the region of 14.04 hectares.

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