

## **Note for Housing WG meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> April re grading of agricultural land and its protection**

### **Policy 13 Soils**

**Unless designated elsewhere in this Neighbourhood Plan, the use of Grades 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification for any form of development not associated with agriculture, horticulture or forestry will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the need to protect such land in the long term.**

**The requirement to protect the best and most versatile land can be outweighed if it is demonstrated through sustainability and options appraisals that:**

- i. Preservation of land of lower agricultural quality has greater benefits in terms of ecosystem services (for example carbon storage, flood water retention, support of biodiversity);**
- ii. That any site preferred for development is demonstrated to be the best and most sustainable option, including but not limited to the terms of land quality, ecosystem services, infrastructure and proven need; and**
- iii. The proposed development meets the requirements of the countryside policies in this Plan.**
- iv. Where development is permitted it should, as far as possible, use the lowest grade of land suitable for that development. Development will not be permitted unless:**
- v. The applicant has submitted sustainability and options appraisals, mitigation measures, and a soil resources plan for the development site;**
- vi. Site appraisal documents submitted by the applicant must demonstrate that consideration has been given to DEFRA's Soil Strategy for England;**
- vii. The productivity of the land is demonstrated using an**

***accepted methodology for assessing gross margins; and  
viii. The applicant has submitted a comprehensive soil  
resources plan for the development site which  
demonstrates that care will be taken to preserve the soil  
resource, such that it can be incorporated into a  
Productive Green Environment following development.***

4.70 Parts of Thakeham contain the highest quality soils in Horsham District and the retention of land of this quality is important for future food production. It is Government policy to safeguard the long term potential of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The Horsham District Planning Framework does not contain a policy for soils.  
4.71 The Draft SA indicates that this policy is consistent with the sustainability framework, especially in respect of having a positive impact on biodiversity.