

<b>Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
<b>Report Title</b>	Local Plan Review – Agricultural Land Report - Stage 1: Baseline Information
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Joanne Johnson, Head of Place
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Rachel Scott, Principal Policy Consultant
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. Members to discuss and note the Agricultural Land Report Stage 1.

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Agricultural Land Report - Stage 1: Baseline Information to members (see Appendix 1). The report will form part of the Local Plan Review evidence base, and is proposed to be published later this calendar year.

## 2 Background

- 1.1 As part of the Local Plan Review evidence base, it is important to understand what resources the Borough has in terms of agricultural land. The Agricultural Land Report: Stage 1 is a factual report which looks at how much high grade agricultural land (known as 'best and most versatile' land) is in the borough, and where, and considers potential implications of this for the Local Plan Review.
- 1.2 The report looks at the requirements of the current version of the NPPF as well as the recently published proposed amendments, and provides the evidence base to meet those requirements. It also refers to other Local Plan evidence base documents which cover the topic, notably the Sustainability Appraisal, and the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment.
- 1.3 As explained in the report, the Stage 1 report looks at the baseline situation. An extract from the Stage 1 report is provided below, showing how much of each grade of agricultural land there is in the Borough.

**Table 1 Agricultural Land Grades across Swale Borough**

<b>Agricultural Land Grade</b>	<b>Area of land (rounded to nearest whole hectare)</b>	<b>% of the Borough</b>
Grade 1	8,255	22.3
Grade 2	7,724	20.9
Grade 3	10,218	27.6
Grade 4	6,509	17.6
Grade 5	552	1.5

Urban	1,747	4.7
Non-agricultural	1,999	5.4
<b>Total</b>	37,005	100%

1.4 A Stage 2 report will be published at a later date which will look at the agricultural land grade of potential site allocations once those have been selected, so that the scale of any potential loss of best and most versatile land can be understood.

### 3 Proposals

3.1 The proposal is to publish the Agricultural Land Report - Stage 1: Baseline Information before the end of the calendar year to form part of the Council's Local Plan Review evidence base.

### 4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 The option of not preparing the Agricultural Land Report was considered and rejected. It is a requirement of national policy to consider agricultural land quality when preparing a Local Plan, and the aim of the report is to demonstrate that the Council has met this requirement.

### 5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 It is proposed to publish the report by the end of the calendar year, but as this is an evidence base document it will not be subject to consultation. If anyone has comments about the document, like with any other evidence base document, they can make these through the consultation on the Regulation 18 Local Plan.

### 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals in the report align with the following Corporate Plan action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart.</li> </ul>
Financial, Resource and Property	No implications identified at this stage.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	No implications identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	No implications identified at this stage.

Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No implications identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.

## **7 Appendices**

7.1 Appendix I - Agricultural Land Report - Stage 1: Baseline Information.

## **8 Background Documents**

8.1 None.