

SG Safeguarding 2: Protection and conservation of agricultural land

We will only approve development that would cause the permanent loss of prime agricultural land, subject to other policies, if:

- 1) it has been allocated in the development plan; OR**
- 2) the applicant has demonstrated that:-**
 - a) the social or economic benefit clearly outweighs the agricultural value of the site; AND**
 - b) there is no suitable alternative site for the development.**

Reasoned Justification

Agricultural land in Scotland has been classified into 7 classes by the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute according to its potential productivity. Classes 1, 2, and 3.1 are defined as prime quality. Aberdeenshire has limited prime land, so it is particularly important to protect this. Where the agricultural classification of the land is in question, the developer must demonstrate its quality.

The aim of this policy is to protect the most productive agricultural land, and to steer development to areas of lesser quality. Aberdeenshire has approximately 518,000 ha of agricultural land. This is only 9% of Scotland's agricultural land, but it boasts a much higher proportion of crops, livestock and farm labour ('Agriculture in Aberdeenshire' 2008). It is important to retain existing prime land in Aberdeenshire in the interests of maintaining agriculturally productive potential, which will help towards achieving self-sufficiency in food and production and meeting Scottish Government climate change targets.