

Polytunnels Planning Guidance: addendum to Key Decision Report

Date: 30.05.18

A late response was received from Cllr Hardwick (sent to him by Cllr Matthews) to the report as follows:

*“Despite Gov updating during 2016 there appears very little change other than a now more frequent use of ‘table top’ growing for strawberries which in turn leads to a greater degree of permanence of these structures so lesser movement of the tunnels around the whole farm complex! Despite the 30m / 50m headlands between polytunnel activities and adjacent properties, it is our opinion that there should be a greater need for **landscaping specifically if the site use is to exceed 5 x years** normal capacity for plastic lifespan as for example, in cherry growth!*

*Regards the proposed updated guidance numbered **1 to 20** there needs to be a natural flow such as **number 14** which refers to ‘redundant materials and sites’ should be placed in the later stage, i.e. **number 20** so it reads more naturally.*

As far as we can see, all the detail is there, it is just time saving if one wishes to access specific parts of the guidance.

However, there is also a failure to include in the planning rules any serious consideration of housing for the personnel working on and in such units. A case of ‘silo policy making’. Any polytunnel plan should have a section on number of people to be employed and where they will be housed etc. If the number is significant there needs to be an impact assessment on medical and social services and any other provision eg if school age children accompanying or elderly etc. If not housed but on site during the day then again there needs to be an impact assessment and plan for sewage, water and washing facilities, weather protection and relaxation area when non-working time eg meal breaks, coffee breaks etc. this should not be left to a separate planning application but be part of the polytunnel or ‘non poly’ but similar construction requirement. If polythene is to be not acceptable in the future because of biodegradability issues should the word ‘polytunnel’ be used or defined to cover any such structure?”

In reply to the points raised:

- a) The Polytunnels Planning Guidance document is an update of the previous version, to bring it into line with changes to national and local planning policy brought through the NPPF, the Core Strategy and neighbourhood planning. It has not been through the same regulatory process as for the creation of a new supplementary planning document.
- b) Landscaping: The requirement for appropriate landscaping is key to the obtaining of planning permission for polytunnels. The guide contains a significant amount of advice on this issue and states in para 4.18 *“The landscape’s ability to accept a polytunnel development without undue harm should be a prime consideration.”* This includes consideration of whole farm plans, cumulative impact, protected landscapes, pre-application consultation and mitigation.

c) The numbering in the guidance can be altered to refer to redundant materials and sites at the end of the list.

d) Facilities for personnel and their families: The guide acknowledges the need for schemes for staff accommodation to be included in polytunnels planning applications. There is a section referring specifically to associated development. Paragraph 2.4 states: "*Planning applications for polytunnels should include such associated developments to allow an understanding of the full extent of the proposed development.*" However, the guidance document is not intended to cover all buildings and facilities, since this is already covered by national and local planning policies and would merely be repeating that advice.

e) Use of non-polythene material to cover structures: the requirement for planning permission and the considerations in this guidance will not alter whichever type of material is used for this type of development.