

POLYTUNNELS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Report By: Planning Policy Manager

1 Wards Affected

Countywide

2 Purpose

- 2.1 To inform members of the comments received to the Draft Poly tunnels Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) published for consultation purposes in June 2008 and to consider appropriate changes. This document is included within the Council's Local Development Scheme and is being produced as part of Herefordshire's Local Development Framework. It will set out the Council's policy and approach to dealing with planning applications for polytunnel developments.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs of preparing this document is being met from the Planning Delivery Grant.

4 Background

- 4.1 This supplementary planning document is being produced to expand upon and provide additional information and guidance in support of policies and proposals in the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan. As there is no single polytunnels policy within the Plan, a range of policies will need to be considered when assessing such proposals.
- 4.2 The purpose of the document is to make clear to applicants and interested parties the policy areas and requirements such development proposals will need to address and against which they will ultimately be assessed. Once adopted, it will become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The document will replace the Council's Voluntary Code of Practice to control polytunnels which has been suspended.
- 4.3 In July 2007 and as part of initial consultation and information gathering, the Council published an Issues Paper and sought the views of Parish Councils, statutory undertakers, interested organisations, growers and stakeholders as to the form that this document should take. This was followed by structured consultation events with both representatives from the farming/growing community and with local individuals and representatives from interested lobby groups. The consultation process follows the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and comments received helped shape the draft SPD.
- 4.4 The draft SPD was presented to Planning Committee on 11th April 2008 and approved for consultation purposes by Cabinet on 12th June 2008. The

draft was accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal and Consultation Statement. Consultation on the draft took place over the period 26 June to 8 August 2008.

5 Aims of the SPD

5.1 The aim of the SPD is to assist all involved as to the requirements and issues to be addressed in any polytunnel development proposal. In so doing it attempts to:

- Help clarify the forms of development that will require planning permission;
- Set out the planning issues associated with the erection of polytunnels;
- Set out the UDP policies that will need to be addressed;
- Make clear the additional information that would need to accompany an application; and
- Set out the Council's pre-application planning guidance.

6 SPD Outline

6.1 The SPD is made up of the following sections:

- Sections 1 and 2: Introduction and Context – setting out role and purpose, use of polytunnels/methods of growing, associated development, planning control, planning policy context and main UDP policies.
- Sections 3 and 4: Planning Issues – outlining and assessing the planning issues that most frequently arise when planning applications are considered. Setting out policy guidelines.
- Section 5 – sets out the additional information that may need to be submitted with a planning application.
- Section 6 – advice and opportunity for pre-application discussions, advice on types and forms of applications including 'whole farm plans'.

7 Comments Received and Suggested Amendments

7.1 The draft SPD prompted many and varied comments from parish councils, residents groups, growers, statutory bodies, support groups, environmental groups, researchers and the local public. Many comments have been made with specific reference and knowledge of current local situations. Whilst the main changes proposed to be made to the document are summarised below, all proposed changes are shown in a final version of the SPD in Appendix 1. All written comments received are summarised along with a Council's response in Appendix 2. This summary will be included in a full Consultation Statement which will be published with the adopted SPD and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal.

7.2 Main changes proposed are:

- Redraft Section 2 – Planning Context, to simplify advise and interpretation of when development requires planning permission
- Update to use latest Defra statistics on soft fruit production
- Firm up requirements for applications to consider all/associated development of a polytunnel proposal (whole farm plans)
- Redraft section on surface water/water quality/pollution prevention to encourage sustainable drainage systems
- Provide further clarification on table top growing
- Clarify the protection to be afforded to AONBs
- Clarify guidance related to noise and buffer zones
- Re-order guidelines

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) be recommended to agree the changes to the draft Polytunnels SPD as identified in this report and for the document to be adopted as part of the Council's Local Development Framework.

Background papers

Local Development Scheme (January 2008)
Statement of Community Involvement (March 2007)
Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (March 2007)