

PLANNING STATEMENT

Erection of a small agricultural polytunnel on paddock land

Site	Paddock land adjoining the applicant's property, Mid Sussex
Proposal	A polytunnel of approximately 28 m ² , secured by ground-driven fixings
Primary use	Agricultural and horticultural production associated with the landholding
Applicant	The owner and occupier of the land

1. Introduction

This statement supports a full planning application for a modest polytunnel on paddock land forming part of the applicant's agricultural landholding. The structure is required to enable protected cultivation and the reliable production of fruit and vegetables as part of the ongoing agricultural use and management of the land.

The proposal is not a domestic garden building and is not intended to extend the residential curtilage into the paddock. It will belong functionally and physically to the landholding and will be used only for agriculture, horticulture and directly associated land-management purposes.

2. Site and surroundings

The site lies within an established paddock of approximately four acres adjoining my property. The land is used and managed as a small agricultural holding, including the keeping of sheep, cattle and hay/silage production. A further field of approximately seven acres forms part of the wider landholding.

2.1 Registered agricultural holding

The holding is formally registered with the Animal and Plant Health Agency and the Rural Payments Agency. It has an allocated County Parish Holding number, APHA customer identifier, sheep flock mark, pig herd mark and RPA Single Business Identifier. These registrations provide objective evidence that the land is part of a recognised agricultural holding and is not being treated as an extension of the domestic garden. The registration details can be supplied directly to the local planning authority for verification on request.

The polytunnel would be positioned behind the existing garage, where it would lie in conjunction with the established group of buildings rather than as an isolated structure in the open paddock. The location is not visible from the public highway or a public footpath.

Existing buildings and boundary vegetation substantially limits its view with perhaps only a limited part of the polytunnel visible from one neighbouring property.

A listed building lies approximately 100 metres North from the proposed location. The distance, existing buildings and vegetation, together with the lightweight, low-rise and visually limited character of the polytunnel, minimises any effect upon its setting.

3. The proposal

The proposal is for a single polytunnel with a footprint of approximately 28 m². Its precise dimensions, height, alignment and external appearance are shown on the submitted drawings. The frame would carry a conventional translucent horticultural covering. It would be secured using ground-driven or impacted-soil fixings rather than a concrete base or concrete posts.

- No permanent floor or extensive ground engineering is proposed.
- No external lighting is proposed.
- No new vehicular access, parking area or servicing arrangement is required.
- There will be no retail sales, customer visits, advertising or other commercial activity associated with the polytunnel
- There would be no domestic, recreational or general household storage use.

The method of anchoring keeps ground disturbance to a minimum and allows the structure to be removed with little lasting effect on the paddock if it is no longer required.

4. Agricultural need and relationship to the land

Section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 defines agriculture as including horticulture, fruit growing and the breeding and keeping of livestock. The proposed activities therefore fall within the statutory meaning of agriculture. They do not cease to be agricultural merely because the produce is intended principally for the applicant's own consumption rather than retail sale.

Protected growing space is needed because open-ground cultivation alone is vulnerable to poor weather, seasonal temperature variation, pests and crop loss. The polytunnel would extend the growing season, provide shelter for seedlings and tender crops, improve the reliability of food production and support rotation between protected and open-ground cultivation as well as livestock management. These functions require the structure to be located on the land where the agricultural activity takes place.

Any storage within the structure would be incidental and confined to tools, equipment and materials used in cultivating and managing the land and caring for livestock. Its principal

and continuing purpose would remain crop production and livestock management. The applicant would accept a condition limiting the use accordingly and requiring removal if the agricultural use permanently ceases.

5. Planning policy context

5.1 Development plan

The application falls to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The principal adopted policies are in the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031.

Policy DP12 (Protection and Enhancement of Countryside) permits development outside built-up-area boundaries where it maintains, or where possible enhances, the District's rural and landscape character and where it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture. The policy recognises the countryside as a working environment and supports well-designed development that requires a countryside location.

Policy DP14 (Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy) supports appropriately scaled rural activity, subject to consistency with Policy DP12. Policy DP26 (Character and Design) requires development to respond sensitively to the countryside and the scale and character of the surrounding landscape. Policies DP34, DP37 and DP38 address the setting of listed buildings, trees and hedgerows, and biodiversity respectively.

5.2 National policy

The National Planning Policy Framework supports a prosperous rural economy and recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It also requires proportionate conservation of heritage assets and their settings. The proposal's limited scale, agricultural purpose, contained siting and reversible construction accord with those objectives.

6. Assessment

6.1 Principle and necessity

The proposal satisfies the first limb of Policy DP12 because it is necessary for agricultural and horticultural production on the land. A polytunnel is a conventional structure for protected cultivation. Unlike a domestic shed or leisure building, its function depends on direct access to soil, daylight, water and the adjoining growing area. Its countryside location is therefore inherent in and proportionate to its agricultural purpose.

The footprint is modest in the context of the approximately four-acre paddock and the wider landholding. The proposal would not prejudice continued agricultural use of the surrounding land, and no change to domestic garden or residential use is sought.

6.2 Landscape and visual effects

The siting behind the garage minimises visual exposure and avoids an isolated position in the open field. The curved, low-rise form, translucent covering and absence of a concrete platform give the structure the appearance expected of a small agricultural holding. Existing vegetation would be retained. There would be no prominent view from a road or public right of way and no materially urbanising effect on the countryside.

6.3 Residential amenity

The use is low intensity. It will not generate customers or deliveries, amplified sound or external lighting. The separation from neighbouring dwellings and the screened position mean there would be no unacceptable effect through overlooking, loss of outlook, noise or disturbance.

6.4 Heritage

The proposal does not alter the listed building or its curtilage. Given the separation distance, intervening features, small scale and reversible agricultural character of the polytunnel, the ability to appreciate the listed building's significance would be preserved. The proposal would therefore conserve its setting in accordance with Policy DP34 and the statutory duty in section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

6.5 Ecology, trees and drainage

No tree or hedgerow removal is proposed. Ground-driven anchors and the absence of a concrete slab minimise soil sealing and disturbance. Rainwater would continue to discharge to the adjoining ground, with no increase in off-site run-off. The limited works can be undertaken without material harm to established habitats. Any biodiversity information required by the application process will be provided separately.

7. Suggested conditions

If considered necessary, the following controls would secure the limited nature of the development:

- The polytunnel shall be used solely for agriculture and horticulture associated with the landholding, including only incidental storage of related tools, equipment and materials, and not for domestic or commercial retail purposes.

- No external lighting shall be installed without the prior written approval of the local planning authority.
- If the structure is no longer required for agricultural or horticultural purposes, it shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition.

8. Conclusion

The proposed polytunnel is a small, necessary and proportionate agricultural structure serving a formally registered holding. It is tied by its purpose, location and use to the paddock land; it is not an extension of the domestic garden. It is contained sitting behind the garage and of lightweight and reversible construction, in the absence of concrete foundations and with the lack of traffic or amenity issues ensures that the rural character of the site would be maintained.

The proposal therefore satisfies Policy DP12 and is consistent with Policies DP14, DP26, DP34, DP37 and DP38 of the Mid Sussex District Plan and with national planning policy. Planning permission is respectfully requested.

Karen Henderson