

Kindling Farm
Green Belt Planning Statement & Statement of Community Involvement

Ref: PP-12692048 30th January 2025

Although our site is located within the Green Belt. We believe the agricultural purpose of the polytunnel for our farm is appropriate because of its agricultural purpose. [National Planning Policy Framework (Para &149 150)].

We believe this proposal complies with national Greenbelt policy and complements Knowsley Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, Net Zero Delivery Plan and Flood Risk Management Plan. As well as Knowsley Council Plan 2022-2025 and Knowsley 2030 and the vision for Inclusive growth and skills.

The plant raising tunnel is for agricultural use and would be functionally necessary to serve the wider farm, being used to start of seedling which will then be planted out into the fields as part of our veg production.

An essential element of our farming system

The erection of a 8m x 24m plant raising polytunnel is essential to the wider agricultural use of the farm as our business is to produce fruit and vegetables in a wildlife friendly farming system, for as much of the year as possible, increasing access to fresh produce for our local communities.

This plant raising polytunnel is essential for raising seedlings for planting out across the farm and in the triple span tunnel we have planning permission for.

To produce the seedlings for the field-scale production and to extend the growing season we need some polytunnel growing space. After reviewing a number of alternative options to this plant raising polytunnel we have concluded that without this polytunnel, our farming system is not viable.

We do not believe that this constitutes a change of use as it is for agricultural purposes.

Community Consultation.

Over 100 local people from Tarbock Green and the neighbouring area as well as representatives of local groups, departments of Knowsley Council and a range of organisations (local and national) have visited the farm over the last 18 months.

We have run tours of the farmyard and fields, talk about the history, people's memories and consulting on our future plans and their hopes for Kindling Farm.

We have received an overwhelmingly positive response to our consultation events and plans, with a real excitement about the increase in access to locally produced food.

Statement of Community Involvement

We would be more than happy to open the farm to a visit by neighbours to see the proposed area and our plans for the polytunnel.

Proposed Location

We have carefully considered the impact of this polytunnel on the environment and community and have chosen the location to reduce the negative impacts:

- It is our own fields and farmyard that look onto the proposed site.
- There is no view from the public highway.
- We are putting in a new hedge across the field to the south of the proposed site that will help shield the view of the tanks from the south.
- The nearest public footpath to the south is half a kilometre and several fields and hedges away and we don't believe it would be visible from there.

Minimising our Impact.

Preservation of the soil and the ability to return the land to its present state is key to our low impact farming approach.

The polytunnel will be anchored to the ground with minimum impact on the field or soil, by using foundation tubes (one tube every 2.2 metres).

Within the polytunnel we will be using only movable, temporary infrastructure used.

Impact on Neighbours.

We have sought advice, designs and quotes from a number of consultants and contractors on the location and design to ensure good quality design and materials.

Landscaping, a new hedge, additional tree planting, gateway location have all been used to minimise the visual impact of the proposed polytunnel

There is one house ('Ash Lea') close to the site of our proposal, just to the East of the field, Ash Lea is empty at present (and has apparently been so for some time prior to us purchasing the farm).

However, we will work to minimise the impact on our future neighbours.

We have replanting a hedge that was removed in error by the previous owner of the neighbouring property.

We have also positioned the polytunnel as far away from Ash Lea as possible, whilst needing to consider our future farming needs including:

- Maximising the productivity of the land for food production.
- Shading from neighbouring trees.
- Layout for efficient grounds and hedgerow maintenance.
- Soil health and sustainable drainage.
- Proximity to water storage for the most efficient irrigation system.

All work to construct the polytunnel will occur between 9am and 5 pm.

We have just planted a new 160m long hedge to the south of this proposed polytunnel location helping to further shield from view.

Water pollution:

Switching from a conventional semi-intensive farming system, to an organic agroforestry system using no synthetic chemical inputs, will result in a significant reduction in nitrogen run off into the local brook.

Agroforestry along with extensive use of green manure cover crops, minimising tillage, tree planting, rainwater harvesting and nutrient collection ponds will greatly reduce soil erosion.

All rainwater from the polytunnel will be collected and used in the polytunnel.

Use of a bore hole to extract a maximum of 20,000 litres per day will play a crucial role in our sustainable water management plan during drought periods.

The clearing and reinstatement of a currently silted up and overgrown ditch along the westerly side of the field will result in increased bio-diversity and play a role in sustainable water management of the site.

The use of micro dams and nutrient collection ponds will both slow the flow of water into the ditch (and the brook that the ditch flows into) and help retain valuable nutrients on the farm.

Light Pollution:

The development will not generate any light pollution. We have no plans to use artificial lighting in any of the polytunnels – it is not part of organic growing methods.

Air pollution:

We will not generate any additional air pollution, other than that from the use of tractors in their day-to-day standard use. We do not envisage any significant increase in tractor use, from the previous owners of the farm.

Noise Pollution:

During construction of the polytunnel we will work with the contractors to minimise noise pollution.

Construction during winter/early spring with limited daylight will mean noise will not be generated at an unsociable time.

We will not generate any additional noise pollution, other than that from the use of tractors in their day-to-day standard use. It is envisaged that work by staff and machinery will be carried out during daylight hours.

Job Creation.

This is part of the farms renewal and we believe its development will create 7 jobs by 2027/28. All new jobs will be advertised locally and the nature of the work will favour individuals who live nearby.

To date all work carried out on the farm has been undertaken by local tradespeople. This will continue where possible. Our preferred supplier selection process is geared to favouring local companies.

Local economic benefits.

Over the next five years we plan to invest over £3 million in the farm, creating a community owned asset that will benefit the area in a range of ways, from training opportunities, to education and community engagement activities, to significantly increasing access to fresh local sustainable food.

Climate Change.

These plans and Kindling Farm complement Knowsley Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan, Net Zero Delivery Plan and Flood Risk Management Plan. As well as Knowsley Council Plan 2022-2025 and Knowsley 2030 and the vision for Inclusive growth and skills.

Our ongoing biodiversity surveys have indicated that this proposal will have no negative impact on wildlife.

Biodiversity

There are no trees within the site in close proximity to the development. Therefore, a Tree Survey is not required to be submitted as trees will be affected by the proposal.

As part of our extensive biodiversity work we have mapped the majority of the trees and hedgerows on the farm. The hedgerow running closest to the proposed polytunnel is relatively diverse with crab apple, damsons etc This is being extended with the planting of hazel trees.

We have secured Countryside Stewardship for gapping parts of this hedge.

The biodiversity of the adjacent hedgerow will be enhanced by reinstating the old ditch.

We are in the process of implementing a hedge management plan for the entire farm, with a five year cycle of coppicing, gapping up and eventual hedge laying.

We have just planted a new 160m long hedge across this field helping to further shield the polytunnel from view.

We will not be removing, cutting back or damaging any trees to install the polytunnel.

We have planted a significant number of trees so far, including:

- 160m hedge across the field next to the proposed tank location.
- Gapped up the hedge between the farm and our immediate neighbour (Ash Lea)

- Creation of a 100m new hedge between the farm and our most easterly neighbours (this is the continuation of an existing hedge that stopped halfway down the field which are neighbours are very happy about).
- 800 fruit trees have so far been planted across the farm as part of our agroforestry system.
- Gapping up 30m of existing hedge that runs next to the proposed water tanks.
- Planting hedgerow evergreen trees under the 10 large poplars trees planted as part of the farm's last planning application.

Biodiversity Net Gain.

Completing our Biodiversity Net Gain we concluded that there is no biodiversity impact, in simply constructing a polytunnel for plant propagation in the middle of an arable field. We have however stated that we will be creating a pond near to the proposed polytunnel and the planting of a hazel hedge.