

Planning Committee

5 December 2025

Agenda item number 7.3

BA/2025/0251/FUL Wayford Nurseries, Wayford Road, Wayford Bridge

Report by Planning Officer

Proposal

Replace 8 polytunnels with single, large polytunnel

Applicant

Mr Nicholas Meale

Recommendation

Approval with conditions

Reason for referral to committee

Major application

Application target date

2 February 2026

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1. Description of site and proposals

- 1.1. The subject comprises part of a well-established farm shop, garden centre, and nursery site known as ‘Wayford Nurseries’ or ‘AG Meale and Sons’ with associated retail buildings, glasshouses, polytunnels, and plant hardening open areas, set amidst fields in horticultural and agricultural use, part of the wider Wayford Nurseries site.
- 1.2. The site is located to the northern side of Wayford Road (A149), with the vehicle entrance to the site approximately 300m north-east of Wayford Bridge.
- 1.3. The subject area covers three elements of the site. Eight polytunnels in a row which are used for the growing of plants. To the front (east) of the polytunnels is an uncovered area which is used to bring plants on and to harden them, with an element of retail. To the immediate west of the polytunnels is an area used for growing strawberries and raspberries which includes some elements of polytunnel coverage, these two areas being separated by a hedgerow.
- 1.4. To the north of the subject area site is an open area for plant sales, a café, and retail buildings selling plants, consumables, and garden equipment. To the east of the subject area is a hard surfaced car park, with fields to the south and west. There is a glasshouse at the site which is located to the east of the retail buildings.
- 1.5. The wider site comprises 105 hectares producing potatoes, asparagus, cabbage, cauliflower, calabrese (broccoli), kale, corn, pumpkins, beet, barley and wheat for sale at the site.
- 1.6. The surrounding area is predominantly in agricultural use. There are pockets of residential development, the closest to the subject area of the site form part of the wider ownership area, with further dwellings immediately east and south-east of the wider site. To the west are commercial uses around Wayford Bridge.
- 1.7. The site is not within a conservation area and lies outside of flood zones 2 and 3. The subject site is approximately 565m east of the Broad Fen SSSI, SAC, SPA, and Broadland Ramsar site.

- 1.8. The proposal is to remove the 8 existing polytunnels and replace them with a single large polytunnel structure constructed of polythene over metal framework. The proposed polytunnel would cover much of the area of the existing polytunnels, the adjacent plant hardening area, and part of the adjacent hedgerow area. The total size of the proposed polytunnel is 55m by 48m except for the south-east corner where an area of 25m x 9.6m is absent as it steps in to take account of the existing boundary. Despite being one large structure rather than a collection of individual structures, the overall appearance is a standard polytunnel, an elongated tunnel with a curved roof, in this case appearing as 5 adjoined polytunnels with 5 curved roofs. The height of the main structure is 3.85m, with the maximum height to the top of the curved roofs being 6.68m. The area to the north of the proposed polytunnel would be retained as a plant hardening area with a surface of paving slabs and gravel.
- 1.9. It is noted that there is an extant permission for replacement of the 8 polytunnels with a glasshouse and covered area under planning reference BA/2024/0066/FUL. The applicant has explained in the submitted application form that construction costs proved prohibitive for the glasshouse.

2. Site history

- 2.1. BA/2024/0066/FUL - Replace 8 poly-tunnels with glasshouse & covered area. Approved with conditions.
- 2.2. BA/2022/0015/AGR - Steel Portal Framed Building for the purpose of storing grain produced by the applicant. Prior approval not required.
- 2.3. BA/2015/0168/FUL - Proposed coffee shop, patio and play area. Approved with conditions.
- 2.4. BA/2013/0206/FUL - Replacement toilet block and staff room. Approved with conditions.
- 2.5. BA/2006/1209/HISTAP - Erection of extension to provide replacement glasshouse / plant area and coffee shop. Approved with conditions.
- 2.6. BA/2004/1420/HISTAP Erection of canopy over walkway. Approved with conditions.
- 2.7. BA/2003/1469/HISTAP Erection of building to provide additional retail / storage area. Approved with conditions.
- 2.8. BA/1995/2344/HISTAP Construction of potato storage building
- 2.9. BA/1995/2329/HISTAP Covered open area for plant sales, glasshouse, coffee house and porch to glasshouse and existing farm shop. Approved with conditions.
- 2.10. BA/1994/2429/HISTAP Extension to include butchers, bakers, coffee shop and additional greenhouse. Refused.

- 2.11. BA/1991/2730/HISTAP Extension to existing building used for storage, preparation and sales of produce. Approved with conditions.
- 2.12. BA/1989/3003/HISTAP Erection of relocatable office and toilet accommodation Approved with conditions.
- 2.13. BA/1989/2901/HISTAP Extension of use of building to include sale of bought in produce. Approved with conditions and s106 agreement.
- 2.14. BA/1989/2900/HISTAP Greenhouse for the display and sale of plants grown within the nursery grounds. Approved with conditions.
- 2.15. BA/1988/3438/HISTAP Portal framed building for onion conditioning and potato storage. Approved with conditions.
- 2.16. BA/1987/3594/HISTAP Erection of additional glasshouse. Approved with conditions.

3. Consultations received

Natural England

- 3.1. No objection

BNG consultant

- 3.2. Additional information requested

BA Ecologist

- 3.3. No objection subject to conditions and enhancements.

4. Representations

- 4.1. None.

5. Policies

- 5.1. The adopted development plan policies for the area are set out in the [Local Plan for the Broads](#) (adopted 2019).
- 5.2. The following policies were used in the determination of the application:
 - DM6 - Surface water run-off
 - DM13 - Natural Environment
 - DM16 - Development and Landscape
 - DM21 - Amenity
 - DM23 - Transport, highways and access
 - DM43 - Design
 - DM51 - Retail development in the Broads

5.3. Other material considerations:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Planning Practice Guidance

6. Assessment

- 6.1. The proposal is to replace the existing 8 polytunnels with a single large polytunnel structure. The existing polytunnel are sited side by side in a line with a separation maintained between each polytunnel. The proposed polytunnel would be one continuous structure although with the appearance of 5 adjoined polytunnels by virtue of the roof structure and entrances.
- 6.2. The main issues in the determination of this application are the principle of development, the design and appearance of the proposed polytunnel, impact on landscape, ecology, neighbour amenity, BNG, highway and parking issues.

Principle of development

- 6.3. In terms of the principle of development, the proposed polytunnel would partly replace 8 existing polytunnels and partly cover over an existing open area, all within the existing site. There would be no change to the use of those areas which would still be used for the growing and hardening of plants including an element of sales, all for the benefit of the existing and well established business at the site. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle.

Impact upon the landscape

- 6.4. The existing nursery and garden centre site is well concealed by virtue of the surrounding landscape and boundary features. This includes a well-established mature hedgerow along the boundary with Wayford Road, with the only gap being at the vehicle entrance to the site, although glimpses of the site are possible at other points. At the entrance the existing polytunnels are visible, and the proposed polytunnel would also be visible, however this is a view framed by trees and within the context of an established business, so would not be unexpected or detrimental to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.
- 6.5. The existing polytunnels have a maximum height of 4.25m, the proposed polytunnel will have a maximum height of 6.68m so will be more of a presence at the site. The majority of the garden centre/nursery buildings are between 4.50m and 5.20m. There are structures taller than the proposed polytunnel on site comprising a grain silo (east of the subject polytunnel area to the opposite side of the car park) adjacent to which are a pair of chimneys. Whilst the proposed polytunnel would not be the tallest structure on site, by virtue of its length and width it will potentially be the more prominent structure. However, the buildings in this locale are commonly 2 storey dwellings which are taller than the proposed polytunnel, there are also sizeable farm buildings to the west which again are notably taller than the proposed polytunnel, and of a use which is broadly comparable to the proposed structure. The proposed

polytunnel, in the context of the existing garden centre/nursery, in a landscape with buildings of notable height, and on a site which is well screened from most public vantage points, would not have an unacceptable impact on the appearance of the site or surrounding landscape character and the wider Broads landscape.

- 6.6. The proposed glasshouse is therefore considered acceptable with regard to Policy DM16 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Amenity of residential properties

- 6.7. There are residential properties around the site, although only one in proximity of the proposed development. The garden centre/nursery is an established use and taking into account the siting and scale of the polytunnel, along with its use, it is considered that the proposed polytunnel will not result in an undue impact on the amenity and privacy enjoyed by neighbouring residents, with regard to Policy DM21 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Design and appearance

- 6.8. The provision of polytunnels at garden centres and nurseries is fairly typical and the proposed polytunnel would replace existing polytunnels at the Wayford Nurseries site. The proposed polytunnel has a standard appearance and is of a suitable scale for the site and its setting within the site. In addition, the height of the proposed polytunnel is reasonable taking into account the existing buildings at the site and in the immediate surrounds, as discussed in paragraph 6.5 of this report.
- 6.9. The appearance of the proposed polytunnel, and the replacement of the existing polytunnels is therefore considered acceptable with regard to Policy DM43 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.10. The proposed development will require the removal of an existing hedge which is sited between the existing polytunnels that are proposed for removal and the strawberry growing area and other polytunnels on the area of the site to the west. The hedge is described as a non-native and ornamental hedgerow. A small sites metric was submitted in support of the application, this was reviewed by the BNG consultant who commented that 'The submitted metric reports that the project will generate a gain of 0.46 (48.25%) area units by improving the condition of vacant land from moderate to good'. However, they also commented that need the applicant will need to provide certainty that the forecast gain can be delivered, and requested submission of additional supporting information. An update on this issue will be provided verbally to members.

Other issues

- 6.11. The BA ecologist has assessed the proposed scheme and advised that there are no ecology concerns for the development as long as conditions are met. New lighting is known to affect the foraging and commuting success of some bat species, but as polytunnels, glasshouses and industrial buildings are already in existence and there are

few natural features within the development site to support bat use, potential impact is considered negligible. The proposed polytunnel is 565m from the nearest designated site and the nature of the works are such that there would be no impact on the integrity of the designated sites, and Natural England raised no objection to the proposal. Planning conditions for suitable biodiversity enhancement and mitigation would be included in any grant of planning permission. In this respect the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to Policy DM13 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

- 6.12. The proposal would provide broad sustainability benefits in that the new polytunnel would allow for use of a more efficient heating system, and rainwater harvesting would be introduced in this area of the site. This would accord with Policy DM6 of the Local Plan for the Broads.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposed provision of a single large polytunnel in place of an existing row of polytunnels and adjacent open air area is acceptable in principle, is acceptable in terms of design and appearance, would not result in an unacceptable landscape impact, would not impact on residential amenity and is acceptable in ecological terms.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:
- i. Time limit
 - ii. In accordance with plans
 - iii. Standard BNG condition
 - iv. Biodiversity enhancement in form of provision of habitat for wildlife
 - v. Vegetation clearance/demolition works outside of main bird breeding/nesting season or checked by ecologist prior to works
 - vi. Follow biosecurity protocols
 - vii. Use of polytunnel for growing/hardening of stock for sale on site only
 - viii. External lighting plan

9. Reason for recommendation

- 9.1. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies DM6, DM13, DM16, DM21, DM23, DM43 and DM51 of the Local Plan for the Broads, along with the National Planning Policy Framework which is a material consideration in the determination of this application.

Author: Nigel Catherall

Date of report: 20 November 2025

Background papers: BA/2025/0251/FUL

Appendix 1 – [Location map](#)

Appendix 1 – Location map

BA/2025/0251/FUL -Wayford Nurseries, Wayford Road, Wayford Bridge



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