

Approach to Redundant Glasshouse Sites

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ENVIRONMENT

A STATES OF GUERNSEY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to inform the production of a draft Island Development Plan that is a formal review of the Island's existing Development Plans (the Rural Area Plan 2005 and the Urban Area Plan 2002), under the provisions of The Land Planning and Development (Guernsey) Law 2005. The review will ensure that the Island's land use planning policies respond to current and emerging issues over the ten year life of the Plan whilst complying with the States' Strategic Land Use Plan.
- 1.2 The Strategic Land Use Plan (SLUP) was approved by the States in 2011 and sets the overarching land use planning framework for Guernsey for the next 20 years. The SLUP is the starting point, providing key direction for the Environment Department in preparing the new Island Development Plan.
- 1.3 The Strategic Land Use Plan (SLUP) requires the Island Development Plan to introduce policies to facilitate the removal of redundant glasshouses (Policy LP13). The Spatial Strategy set out in the SLUP would allow for sites within and around Main Centres and within Local Centres to be redeveloped for a number of potential new uses. With regards to sites that will be identified as being 'Outside of the Centres' in the draft Island Development Plan, Policy LP13 (and SLP8) requires that the Development Plan identifies redundant glasshouse sites that are capable of making a positive contribution to agriculture (see the report 'Agriculture Priority Area, October 2014', for information). The SLUP also contains a number of policies that relate to the possible future uses of redundant glasshouse sites including open land (SLP28), landscape (SLP27), biodiversity (SLP30), curtilage (LP13), camping (SLP7), outdoor recreation or leisure (SLP10), small-scale business development (SLP4), renewable energy (LP2) and conversion of redundant ancillary structures to a range of potential new uses.
- 1.4 Taking the policies of the Strategic Land Use Plan together, provision is made in principle for four possible broad options for the use of redundant horticultural land:
 1. Contribution to commercial agricultural land
 2. Contribution to open land including for biodiversity, leisure and recreation or curtilage
 3. Development of sites within and around Main Centres and within Local Centres
 4. Use for small-scale business or renewable energy.
- 1.5 The purpose of this report therefore is to consider how the draft Island Development Plan should address these options presented in the Strategic Land Use Plan for redundant glasshouse sites with a view to supporting the removal of redundant glasshouses and ancillary structures.
- 1.6 In setting this task, the Strategic Land Use Plan in Policy LP13 recognises that there are a limited number of realistic options for clearing glasshouses through the land use planning system by providing uplift in land value sufficient to offset clearance costs. There may be a case for either direct financial incentives like previous schemes run by

the States and/or the introduction of financial penalties to discourage dereliction or similar such initiatives which fall outside of the land planning system. Overall, it is recognised that it may be necessary for a number of States Departments to work together to fully resolve this issue.

- 1.7 For the purposes of this report a *redundant glasshouse site* has been defined as “a *glasshouse or glasshouses together with ancillary structures and land where the horticultural operation has ceased and the glass and ancillary structures have fallen out of authorised use. Often the condition of such structures will deteriorate over time through lack of use and management to leave only partial remnants of structures*”. Under the Land Planning and Development (Guernsey) Law, 2005 certain land which is, or was, covered by glasshouses must also be treated as agricultural land for the purpose of the Law and any development plan.

2 Background

- 2.1 Commercial horticultural operations, which were formerly the basis of Guernsey’s economy, have greatly reduced in number and are consolidating on fewer, larger holdings with the inevitable consequence of a legacy of areas of redundant glasshouses in varying states of repair.
- 2.2 A scheme for large-scale clearance of redundant glasshouses, run with States assistance, operated from the 1970s until the end of 2003 and was often free and open to all. Subsidies were applied, depending on the structures remaining on the land, the condition of those structures and whether an after use was determined, including enhancement of the most important rural land. The aim of the scheme was primarily to provide jobs at a time of low employment and as such the clearance methods used were mainly by hand. The scheme ceased as the employment situation improved and experienced foremen obtained jobs and left the scheme which led to Health and Safety concerns. While there are not accurate figures for the amount of glass cleared it is thought that approximately 120 acres (296 vergées) of glass was cleared under this scheme.
- 2.3 Over the past decade, the cost of clearance of redundant glasshouses (c. £10k per vergée) versus their value as agricultural land has proved a barrier to their removal and sites are, in many instances, left to deteriorate. Once redundant it is often the case that glasshouses are left to stand empty and there are very limited opportunities for alternative uses allowable under the existing Development Plan policies. Other than a policy which allows for the development of redundant horticultural sites as open yards on an exceptional basis there are no other gateway policies in the current Development Plans which allow the use of redundant horticultural sites for anything other than agriculture.
- 2.4 The visual appearance of redundant glass reduces the quality of the landscape but wholesale development of glasshouse sites in order to facilitate their removal will be equally unacceptable in landscape and character terms, will potentially reward

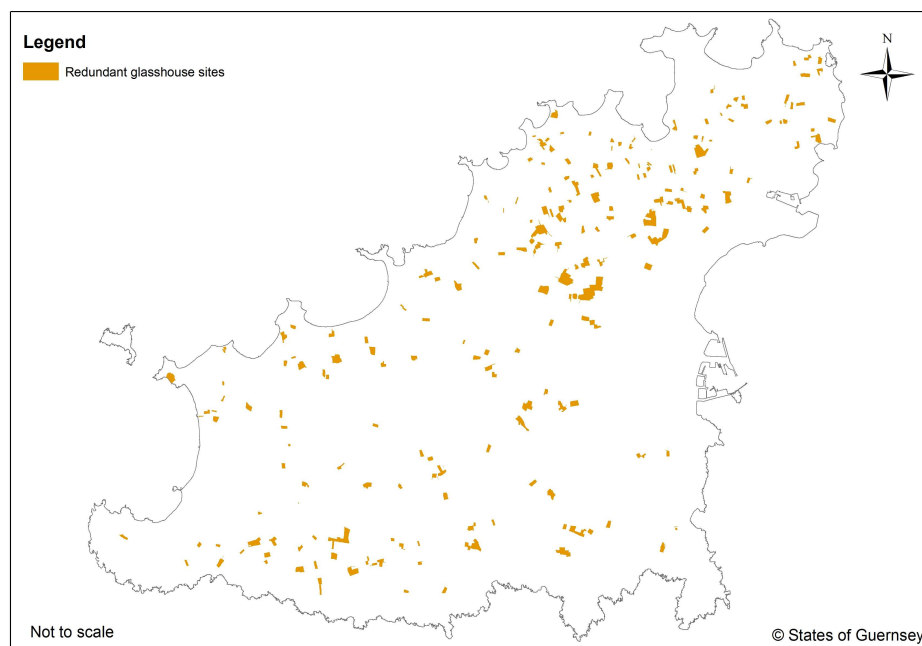
dereliction and will lose otherwise open land permanently to development. In terms of landscape character it would urbanise the countryside and run counter to the spatial strategy of the Strategic Land Use Plan.

- 2.5 Those glasshouses which have fallen into disrepair can provide a habitat for wildlife however are often unsightly and can constitute a hazard to members of the public. Some redundant sites have been cleared and returned to other forms of agricultural use. Others, as research shows, are being leased as allotments, financing maintenance of the structures and avoiding dereliction.

Island Development Plan – Key Messages, Issues and Options, 2013

- 2.6 In 2013, the Environment Department published and consulted on Key Messages, Issues and Options. That stage of the Plan review process set out the nature and scale of the issue of redundant glasshouse sites, following the direction given to the Island Development Plan by the Strategic Land Use Plan, and a potential approach to redundant glasshouse sites. Feedback was sought via the public consultation on the research undertaken by the Department.
- 2.7 The report 'Approach to Agriculture and Redundant Vineries, July 2013' supported the consultation and identified over 250 redundant glasshouse sites of varying sizes distributed across the Island. Due to topography, soil quality and the historic development of Guernsey, it is not surprising to note that a significant proportion of redundant glass is located in the northern part of the Island. A notable belt of redundant glasshouse sites is apparent running North East to South West within the northern part of the Island. A further, less obvious, band is present across the southern parishes, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1



- 2.8 The condition of structures remaining on redundant glasshouse sites varies significantly, from good quality yet unused glass to dilapidated, overgrown structures with many broken and/or missing panes. In some cases even access to sites is unclear due to a lack of basic maintenance.
- 2.9 The report mapped and created a database of existing redundant glasshouse sites in the Island. Redundant glasshouses were identified for assessment using the following sources:
- Consultation with the Commerce and Employment Department;
 - Recent planning applications and appeal outcomes;
 - Previous research undertaken for an amendment to the Rural Area Plan in 2009;
 - Land suggested to date as part of the Plan Review for alternative uses by the site owners, and;
 - Aerial photographs of the Island taken in 2009.
- 2.10 Redundant glasshouse sites forming part of the 'Housing Target Areas' were omitted from the study as those were being covered by a different work stream.
- 2.11 The consultation focused on the key issues of the declining commercial horticultural industry and increasing legacy of redundant glasshouse sites. Information was presented on the current nature, scale and location of these sites and options put forward for comment regarding their possible future uses, taking account of the limitations for future use set out in the Strategic Land Use Plan. This subject was the area which attracted most comments and the widest range of views in the public consultation.
- 2.12 The feedback to the consultation has informed this study and will inform the policies of the draft Island Development Plan. In summary, the feedback was:
- Support for the use of redundant glasshouse sites in open countryside for other forms of agricultural use or for open community uses, such as allotments, and as wildlife habitat;
 - Flexibility should be applied in identifying redundant glasshouse sites within and around the Main Centres and within the Local Centres for development whether for housing or for small scale employment uses;
 - There was support for release, in exceptional cases, outside the Main and Local Centres, of appropriate redundant glasshouse sites for small scale businesses – offices, light industrial units, storage yards – or for renewable energy, through an assessment of sites to identify those most suitable for such uses;
 - Support for exception sites outside the Main and Local Centres could provide an opportunity for housing development where these relate well to existing built form and are in sustainable locations;
 - Suggestion that taxation or financial incentives could be used to encourage clearance;
 - Opposition to enabling development on any redundant glasshouse site where this would be rewarding dereliction.

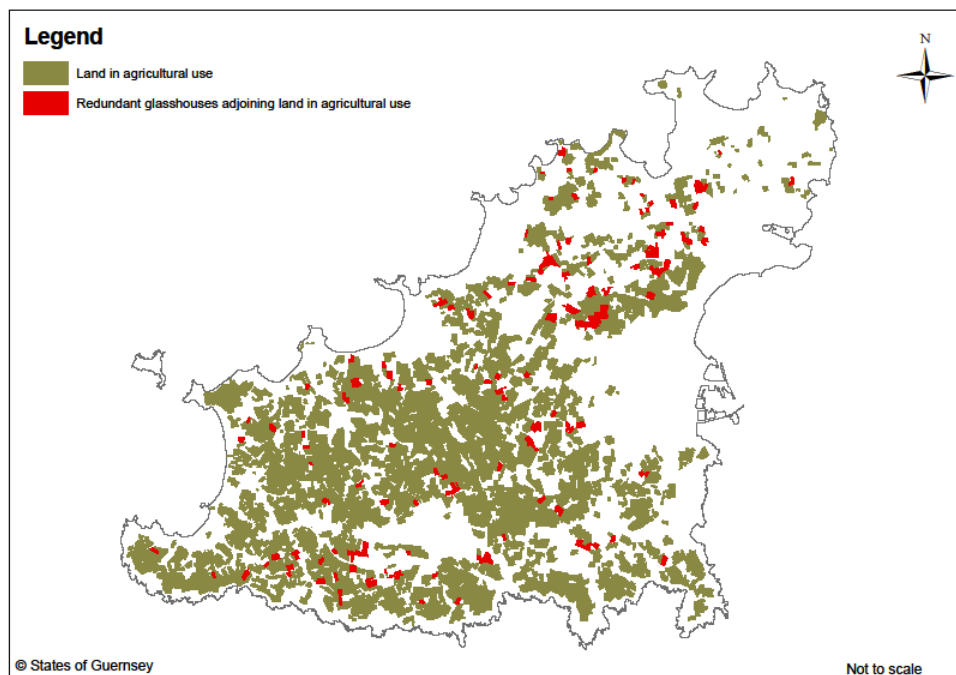
- 2.13 Following the Key Messages, Issues and Options consultation, the Environment Department continued the research on redundant glasshouses and drafted policies and proposals to reflect the feedback and the direction given by the Strategic Land Use Plan in preparing the draft Plan.

3 Future Uses of Redundant Glasshouse Sites

Option 1 – Contribution to commercial agricultural land

- 3.1 In Policy SLP8, the Strategic Land Use Plan seeks to promote a viable agricultural industry. In doing so, it is recognised that some of the challenges to agriculture in the Island relate to fragmented land ownership and small field patterns, leading to greater operational costs. The SLUP requires that large areas of contiguous agricultural land and other suitable areas well related to established agricultural operations are identified and protected to meet the industry's current and future needs whilst balancing and addressing the demands on land of other legitimate development requirements.
- 3.2 The Strategic Land Use Plan requires the Island Development Plan to identify redundant glasshouse sites which would, if cleared, make a positive contribution to agricultural land provision. The potential contribution of redundant glasshouse sites towards these larger tracts of contiguous commercial agricultural land has been assessed in the report 'Agriculture Priority Area, October 2014'. The report identifies that 142 existing redundant glasshouse sites are immediately adjoining land in agricultural use (see Figure 2 below). This represents over 56% of all sites identified in the survey. 109 redundant glasshouse sites are included in the proposed Agriculture Priority Area. It is clear that using redundant glasshouse sites for other agricultural uses would make a significant contribution to commercial agricultural use.

Figure 2



- 3.3 The consultation undertaken for the Dairy Industry Review found support for the restoration of horticultural land to its former open state for use in agriculture. The report notes that “while not all such sites are suitable for restoration, many are on good or potentially good farm land and are linked to existing farmed fields. They could, if restored properly and returned to farming use, create vital links to connect fields or groups of fields”.
- 3.4 In addition, the 2014 Guernsey Economic Development Framework contains a strategic aim to ensure an adequate supply of affordable commercial premises. In terms of agriculture (including horticulture) the Commerce and Employment Department wish to see: Restoration of redundant horticultural land to agricultural use, and not domestic curtilage.

Option 2 – Contribution to open land including for biodiversity, leisure and recreation or curtilage

- 3.5 Whilst identifying valuable land for commercial agriculture, the Strategic Land Use Plan recognises the importance and value of open land to the character of Guernsey’s landscape, its biodiversity and the quality of life for residents (policies SLP27, SLP28 and SLP30). Outside of areas identified for commercial agriculture, redundant glasshouse sites could make a contribution to open land and enhance character and biodiversity.
- 3.6 Often open land is located between and immediately behind areas of development, playing an important role in providing visual access to open space for the public. Clearance of redundant glasshouse sites, particularly within and around existing areas of development, would greatly enhance the quality of surrounding areas, especially in

visually prominent locations around the coast. In other cases, clearance of redundant glasshouse sites located near key habitats could improve access to these areas or increase their extent and their value for biodiversity.

- 3.7 In some cases where it is not economically viable to restore the land for commercial agriculture due to its small size or restricted access for example, and where it is not visually prominent or would not adversely affect the character of the surrounding landscape, the Strategic Land Use Plan allows for redundant sites to be incorporated within existing curtilages of adjacent buildings where this would secure restoration of the site (policy LP13). It may be the case that certain smaller redundant sites might lend themselves to incorporation within the curtilage of neighbouring buildings, whether that land has a domestic or other authorised use, if this would secure site clearance. However, it would be difficult to identify specific sites where such management of land might be appropriate. Provision for such sites to come forward could be allowed for in new planning policy balanced against the aims of contributing to agriculture and other uses and assessing other impacts such as on character and visual amenity.
- 3.8 An assessment of the redundant glasshouse sites located within areas of interest for biodiversity emerging in the draft Plan - Sites of Special Significance (SSS) and Areas of Biodiversity Importance (ABI) - showed there are 4 redundant glasshouse sites within SSSs and 3 within ABIs. Clearance of these sites could, if undertaken sensitively, assist with public access to these sites or contribute to their extent or value to biodiversity. Development of redundant glasshouse sites located within either a proposed Site of Special Significance or an Area of Biodiversity Importance would need to take into account the relevant policy and the nature conservation interest of the site. Refer to the reports 'Approach to the Designation of Sites of Special Significance, October 2014' and 'Approach to the Designation of Areas of Biodiversity Importance, October 2014' for further information.
- 3.9 Further options for a new use for redundant glasshouse sites that would contribute to open land, as envisaged in the Strategic Land Use Plan, would be use for camping (policy SLP7), outdoor formal recreation or informal recreation and leisure use (policy SLP10). Draft Island Development Plan policies should consider the potential for these options.

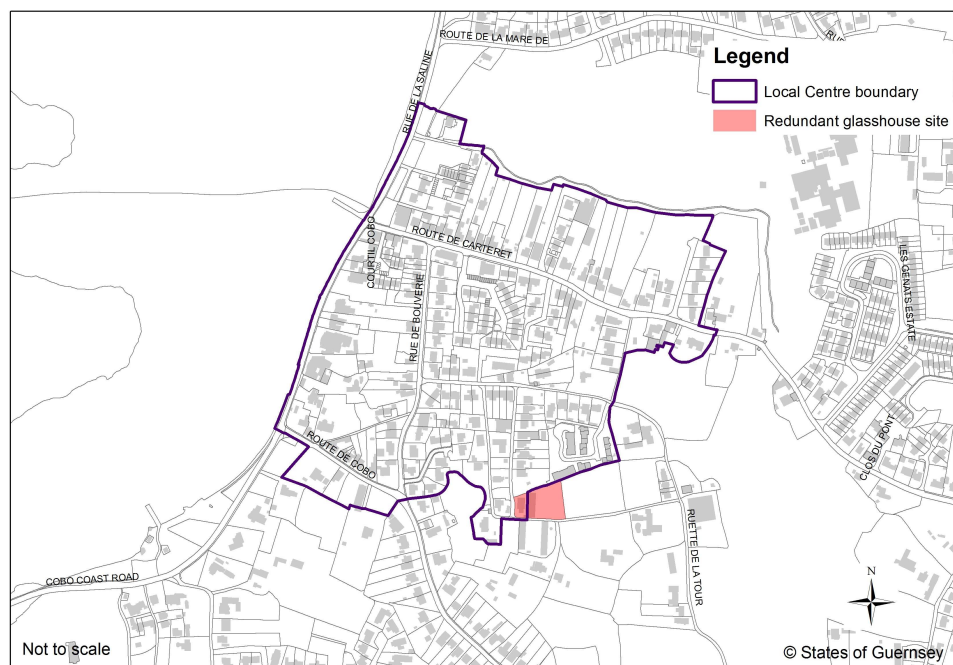
Option 3 – Development of sites within and around Main Centres and within Local Centres

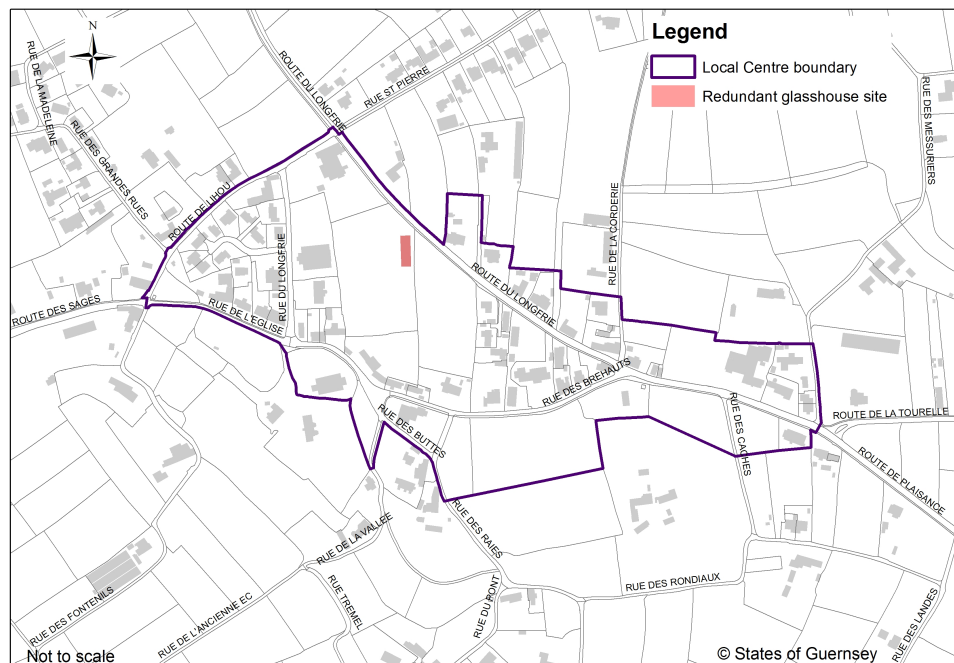
- 3.10 The spatial strategy of the Strategic Land Use Plan (SLUP), would allow redundant glasshouse sites located within or around the Main and within the Local Centres to be considered for a mix of uses and development.
- 3.11 The SLUP focuses development within and around the Main Centres with limited development opportunities within the Local Centres where this is for community growth and the reinforcement of the sustainability of that centre. Redundant

glasshouse sites provide one such opportunity for development to provide visual amenity, open spaces or a mix of uses within and around those centres.

- 3.12 A comparison of the location of potential Local Centres with the spread of redundant glasshouse sites has identified a weak correlation, the majority of horticultural sites lying outside the centres, in the countryside, isolated from the potential Local Centres. An overlap of approximately 10 redundant glasshouse sites is noted – a very small proportion of the overall number of redundant glasshouse sites – which might lend themselves to development in accordance with the direction set out in the SLUP. Figure 3 shows the redundant glasshouse sites compared to the location of potential Local Centres.

Figure 3





Option 4 – Use for small-scale business or renewable energy

- 3.14 The Strategic Land Use Plan seeks to accommodate limited provision for small-scale business development and other appropriate uses outside the Main and Local Centres (policy SLP4). Such limited development would be required to respect the scale and character of the surroundings. The 2014 Guernsey Economic Development Framework contains a strategic aim to ensure an adequate supply of affordable commercial premises. In terms of agriculture (including horticulture) the Commerce and Employment Department wish to see: support for the conversion of some redundant horticultural sites to business or renewable energy use, especially where a return to agricultural use is unrealistic.
- 3.15 Certain small scale businesses can have special requirements which may justify a need to be located outside the Main and Local Centres. These could include those businesses requiring workshops, secure storage, open yards or development associated with home-based working. Small-scale business use could potentially incorporate the conversion of a redundant ancillary building. The future use of redundant glasshouse sites for small scale business use will be considered in detail in a separate report.
- 3.16 Other uses which may be considered appropriate development outside the centres could include renewable energy. The SLUP seeks to facilitate the production of renewable energy (policy LP2) and clearance of redundant glasshouse sites for such purposes could, in principle, contribute to this objective. The States-agreed Energy Resource Plan sets out a general aim to reduce the Island's dependence on fossil fuels and one way of achieving this is through the production of energy by renewable means. Renewable energy ranges from energy produced on a commercial basis at a scale at which the majority of the energy produced is used beyond the generation site, to the production of energy primarily for use on the particular site concerned and generally at a much smaller scale. The scale of renewable energy development possible on redundant glasshouse sites would be dependent on the visual impact on the openness of the locality and the impact on amenity etc. Such development is most likely to involve solar heat or solar photo-voltaic energy production and it may be possible to have dual use for both agriculture and renewable energy.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 Commercial horticultural operations, which were formerly the basis of Guernsey's economy, have greatly reduced in number with the inevitable consequence of a legacy of areas of redundant glasshouses in varying states of repair. Over 250 redundant glasshouse sites have been identified in the Island.
- 4.2 Under the Land Planning and Development (Guernsey) Law, 2005 certain land which is, or was, covered by glasshouses must also be treated as agricultural land for the purpose of the Law and any development plan. The Strategic Land Use Plan requires the Island Development Plan to identify redundant glasshouse sites which would, if cleared, make a positive contribution to agricultural land provision. Around 40% of the

redundant glasshouse sites in the Island are incorporated into the proposed Agriculture Priority Area.

- 4.3 The Strategic Land Use Plan outlines other options for redundant glasshouse sites and this should be reflected in the draft Island Development Plan. The policy approach should reflect the spatial strategy, where redundant glasshouse sites within and around the Main Centres and within Local Centres have the potential to be developed, but also provide flexibility for sites outside of the centres, as appropriate to the options outlined above, to encourage the removal of redundant glasshouses and associated structures and infrastructure.