

My name is Veronica Barlow. I have lived at Bentley Park all my life. My parents purchased the property in 1968 from other Tollemache descendants, having been particularly drawn to it because of strong family connections and historic land ownership. My late mother, Lady Jane Buxton, was sister to The Earl of Dysart (my uncle) who holds the most senior title within the Tollemache family.

I grew up with Angela Tollemache living at Bentley House and Ina Tollemache had recently moved out of Bentley Manor. The historic core of Bentley is important within the extended Tollemache family as a village which connects us through its heritage.

After a conversation with Lord Tollemache regarding Ms Garcia's claim that the family has no continuing interest in Bentley, he wrote a statement which I have attached.

In this he says that since 1510, when the family moved their main residence to Helmingham Hall, that "every generation since that time and certainly the current generation continue to hold a special memory and interest of the first residents the Tollemache family had at Bentley before moving to Helmingham". He concludes his statement with the following: "In summary, and contrary to what has been said, Bentley most certainly does continue to hold a special place in our hearts which we feel sure will continue for centuries to come."

For 55 years I have valued the peace, open landscape and rural character of this area. Our parkland is used regularly by residents, both local and from farther away, via the public footpaths that cross our fields, and my children also use the wider network of northern Bentley routes, often on their horses. As a landowner, I have always supported responsible public access, and I am very keen for local people to continue enjoying the beautiful views and peaceful landscape of the trails of which our paths are a small part. If the solar development went ahead it would be a great sadness to us that the bridleway next to Engrly Wood would no longer be able to be used by horses due to the danger of glint and glare from the solar panels, which could terrify horses with the possibility of fatal consequences. It is a risk that we cannot take, especially with the whole 1km length of Potash Lane being directly south of the proposed solar arrays, so in the firing line for any glint or glare.

I have extensive experience of driving on Church Road over a period of 36 years and I can confirm that it is an extremely narrow lane where vehicles frequently need to reverse to reach passing places. These passing places are often unavailable due to misuse by visitors who do not understand how the road functions. Even for local drivers, reversing 50 yards, sometimes around bends, can be a frightening occurrence. The added issue of overgrown verges during spring and summer, which I believe you will not have seen, exacerbates this danger significantly. Therefore, this road is not suitable for any construction traffic.

I have seen the expansion of Ipswich over 55 years, and it has become apparent to me that the A14 acts as a powerful barrier between Ipswich and the rural area south of the A14. The pocket of northern Bentley which we are considering here is extraordinarily rural and remote given its proximity to road and rail connections. It retains an unusually strong rural character and appearance, reinforced by the network of historic woodlands and lanes which it contains. This value is now confirmed by the designation of the conservation area and I am pleased that the parish council has commissioned a large visual map to help guide walkers around the Conservation Area and illustrate the history of the features which they will see.

I want to be clear that this is not opposition to renewable energy in principle. We have installed 38 solar panels at Bentley Park which often supply the grid. They are carefully located so that they do not affect neighbours, public viewpoints, or local amenity. I expect that very few people know that we have them. My concern is that the Grove Farm Solar Farm proposal is not in the right place, given the impact on the historical character and rich heritage of this area.

For these reasons, I support the Council's decision to refuse the application.



HELMINGHAM HALL
ESTATE

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Solar development in Bentley

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Although the Tollemache family moved their main residence from Bentley to Helmingham in 1510 and at that stage kept ownership of the woodlands on the Bentley Estate, every generation since that time and certainly the current generation continue to hold a special memory and interest of the first residents the Tollemache family had at Bentley before moving to Helmingham.

In particular this is because the Tollemache family first moved to Suffolk and to Bentley for several generations before they moved their prime residence to Helmingham which naturally took first place, and although it reduced their presence in Bentley, nevertheless every generation since that time has always included Bentley in their thoughts and minds and continues to do so until this day for three reasons.

1. Following the move to Helmingham in 1510 the family also rebuilt Bentley Hall and the long barn opposite. The woodlands were retained until the 1950's by the then Lord Tollemache but sold on purpose to a Tollemache cousin, Peter Strutt.
2. In more recent times, various members of the family have been drawn back to Bentley, in particular Bentley Manor, Bentley House and Bentley Park, all fall into this category and recently a member of the Tollemache family was buried in Bentley churchyard in 2014.
3. Helmingham retains an important archive of documents relating to Bentley which bring to light the family's links to the parish over many centuries.

In summary, and contrary to what has been said, Bentley most certainly does continue to hold a special place in our hearts which we feel sure will continue for centuries to come.

Lord Tollemacne