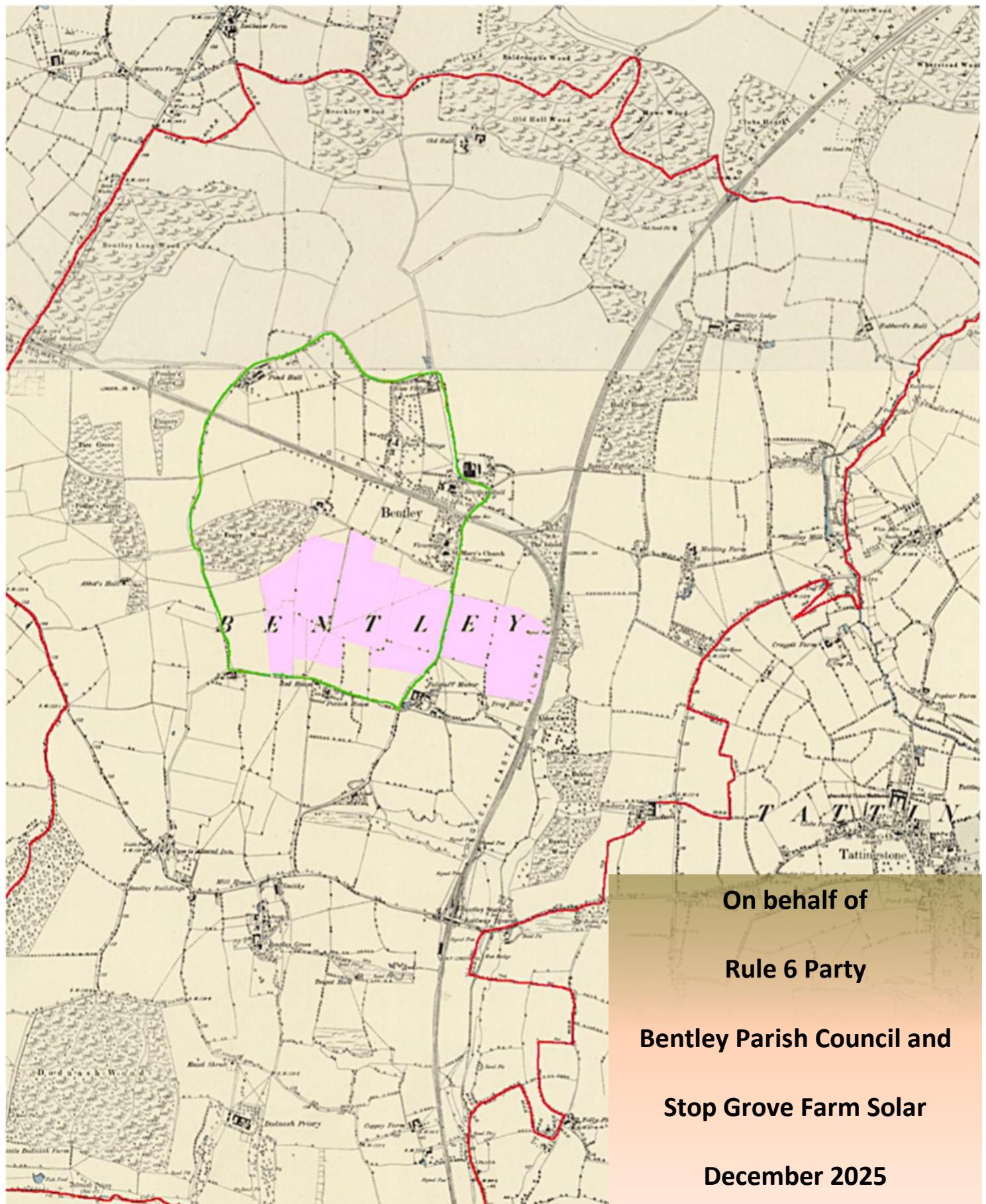


STATEMENT OF RAELEEN AND SIMON GLADWELL, POTASH FARM

Grove Solar Farm, Bentley, Suffolk



This is the joint witness statement of Raeleen Gladwell & Simon Gladwell, of Potash Farm, Potash Lane, Bentley, Suffolk IP9 2BY.

Impact on Residents and Users of Potash Lane

This statement reflects the experience of both current and future residents of Potash Lane, as well as the many people who regularly use this rural lane.

While we are current residents, we are unlikely to remain here for the full lifespan of the proposed solar park. Many residents are older than us and even less likely to do so. For this reason, we speak not only for ourselves, but also on behalf of future residents whose quality of life would be affected by this development.

Potash Lane has, for centuries, been carefully preserved as a quiet rural environment. Its character is defined by open countryside views, tranquility, the absence of industrial noise, and dark skies free from artificial lighting. Its stewardship has ensured that the lane remains a peaceful place to live and a valued countryside route for the wider community.

Industrial Nature of the Proposal

The proposed solar panels are planned to face directly onto Potash Lane. As residents, we would be confronted by a large expanse of industrial infrastructure immediately outside our homes. Even on dull or overcast days, the reflective surfaces of the panels would be visually dominant, while the constant hum from inverters would introduce an ongoing background noise entirely out of keeping with this rural setting.

The proposal represents the industrialisation of a rural landscape that has historically been free from large-scale infrastructure. The scale, density, and proximity of the solar park to residential properties along Potash Lane would introduce industrial elements such as panels, fencing, access tracks, and associated infrastructure into an otherwise open countryside setting that currently forms the immediate outlook for residents.

Impact on Residential Amenity

For properties along Potash Lane, many of which directly face the proposed site, the visual and sensory impact would be substantial. Reflections from the solar panels would be a regular and unavoidable feature rather than an occasional occurrence.

Glint and glare are visual effects caused by sunlight reflecting from the surface of solar panels. Glint refers to a concentrated flash of reflected light, while glare describes a more diffused but sustained reflection. In the proposed development, panels would face directly towards Potash Lane and nearby residential properties. This orientation means that, particularly during early morning and late afternoon when the sun is low in the sky, reflections in the form of glint and or glare would be visible from homes and from the lane itself. As the panels would remain in place for the lifetime of the development, these reflections would occur repeatedly over extended periods of the year rather than as isolated incidents.

There is currently no formal national guidance for assessing glint and glare from solar developments. However, industry specialists commonly rely on guidance published by Pager

Power, Independent Solar Photovoltaic and Building Development Glint and Glare Guidance, 3rd Edition, April 2021. This guidance recognises the particular sensitivity of residential locations, noting that residents are key stakeholders because they live in close proximity to solar developments and may have views of the panels throughout the lifetime of the scheme. Where such views exist, solar reflections may occur and can have a harmful impact on residential amenity.

Because solar panels have reflective surfaces, glare can occur from any point where the panel face is visible, particularly when low sun angles allow reflected light to be directed towards nearby homes or users of the surrounding area.

The Glint and Glare Report submitted with the application confirms that several dwellings would experience glint, meaning more concentrated flashes of light. In particular, dwellings numbered 4 and 130 to 137 would be affected between approximately 05:22 and 06:10 from mid March to early October, and between approximately 18:09 and 18:32 from mid April to late September. Dwelling 132 is identified as having no screening and would be affected between approximately 05:27 and 06:10 from mid March to early October, and between approximately 18:09 and 18:31 from mid April to late August.

These predicted periods of repeated and prolonged glint would result in a significant and unacceptable impact on residential amenity, particularly for the directly affected properties but also for residents along the lane more generally.

The introduction of inverter noise into an otherwise tranquil environment, combined with ongoing visual disturbance, would result in a materially harmful change to residential amenity.

Impact on Lane Users and Rural Enjoyment

Potash Lane is heavily used by walkers, dog walkers, and horse riders, as evidenced by the well-used dog waste bin along the route. It is a valued recreational lane enjoyed by many members of the local and wider community.

Daily, the lane is used by dozens of people, including runners, walkers, dog walkers, and horse riders, even during cold winter days. In summer, usage increases further, with school groups and other organised groups using the lane as part of training and expedition routes.

The development would result in the full length of the lane facing an industrial installation, replacing open countryside views with an industrial landscape and introducing sensory impacts that would significantly reduce the enjoyment of this well-used rural route for both people and animals.

Loss of Dark Skies

The rural character of Potash Lane includes the absence of artificial lighting. Security lighting, CCTV infrastructure, and operational lighting associated with the solar park would introduce urbanising elements into an area currently characterised by darkness at night, further eroding the lane's rural identity.

Proposed Mitigation

Although landscaping and screening are proposed, they cannot adequately mitigate the scale or industrial nature of the development. Screening would be ineffective during winter months, uncertain in long-term growth and maintenance, and incapable of addressing the loss of openness or sense of enclosure created by the installation. In addition, the constant hum of the inverters cannot be effectively mitigated in this location. For residents and lane users, the harm would therefore remain substantial.

Long-Term and Irreversible Change

The proposed development would result in a long-term and effectively permanent change to Potash Lane. While described as temporary, the lifespan of the solar park far exceeds that of a generation of residents. Within any meaningful human timescale, this level of change cannot reasonably be considered reversible.

Availability of More Suitable Alternative Sites

Babergh District contains many areas where large-scale solar development would be more appropriate and would not be located in such close proximity to residential properties or valued rural landscapes. Sites already influenced by existing infrastructure, or those more remote from homes and recreational routes, would be far better suited to accommodating this type of development. The selection of this site, directly adjacent to a residential rural lane, is therefore difficult to justify given the availability of more suitable alternatives within the district.

Taken together, the scale, siting, and duration of the proposal would cause lasting harm to the character, tranquility, and amenity of Potash Lane. A landscape that has been carefully protected for generations would be fundamentally altered, resulting in a loss that cannot be justified or adequately mitigated.

Raeleen Gladwell

Simon Gladwell

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