

TEXT OF LETTER FROM ST MARY'S PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL TO
BABERGH DC PLANNING REGARDING THE SOLAR APPLICATION

The Parochial Church Council of St Mary's Church, Bentley ("the PCC") considered this planning application at its meeting on Friday, 19th January, 2024 at 2:30pm.

The PCC considered the application carefully and the following matters were raised:

1. The importance of the function and appearance of Church Road in connecting the main part of the village to the south with the Church to the north. This is the route used by most of Bentley village when visiting the Church for services, for tending the graves of family and friends or simply for coming to sit in the beautiful Churchyard to enjoy its peace and tranquility.
2. The approach from the village to the south is presently an especially attractive and rural one, through farmland with long views across fields to ancient woodlands. There is an increasing sense of peace and calm as the built-up area of the village is left behind and the Church and Churchyard are approached.
3. It is very difficult to see how these proposals, with so much industrializing development on both sides of Church Road, will do other than diminish the quality of this approach and damage it irreparably. The new gated fully-metalled access roads on either side, leading to security-fenced compounds with tens of thousands of solar panels, associated transformers and sub-station buildings and CCTV masts will be unfamiliar and alien features in this landscape.

4. Any electrical whirring, buzzing or humming will also diminish the special environment of the Church and Churchyard. The PCC does not have expertise on these matters but those who do are concerned that the noise impact report submitted with the application does not properly assess the noise impacts from the inverters, transformers and substations.
5. The PCC and Churchwarden have responsibility for the care of St Mary's Church, which is a Grade II* Listed Building, over 800 years old. So far as we can tell, it has always been set within a landscape of fields, woodlands and buildings associated with the farming of the land. The change of use of *so much* of the land on the southern approach, on both sides of Church Road will be bound adversely to affect the setting and appreciation of the Church as the most ancient and historic building in Bentley.
6. The Church and Churchyard are well known for their existing wildlife. The PCC would be concerned about development impacts which would disturb that wildlife.
7. Whilst the PCC is composed of Members of the congregation of St Mary's Bentley, is acutely aware that the Church and Churchyard are (very properly) regarded by the village as a community asset and many non-churchgoing villagers come to the Church to enjoy its beauty and tranquility. The PCC feels that the role of the Church and Churchyard as a "haven" and place for quiet and restorative contemplation will be adversely affected by the proposed development.
8. The PCC finds it difficult to believe that there are no better alternatives for industrial scale solar development in Babergh District than this site.

For all these reasons, the PCC objects to this application.