



DARK SKIES POLICY

To protect the natural nighttime environment in Old Basing and Lychpit, the Parish Council supports a “Dark Skies” area within – and immediately adjacent to – the Conservation Area.

Whilst recognising that artificial light offers valuable benefits to residents, including safety and security, it can give a village an urban feel and detract from the enjoyment of the night sky for all, even at a considerable distance. It can cause health problems and can also adversely impact the behaviour of wildlife. Bats are especially vulnerable to disruption by light pollution.

For all proposed developments, factors which will be considered when deciding the appropriateness of artificial lighting include the location, the hours of operation, the quantity of lights proposed, brightness and control and the direction of the beam, including light spill. Street and urban lighting in the conservation area should be limited to essential use/purposes, such as safety and security. Essential lights should have day/night sensors and timers fitted and used where appropriate.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

185. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

LOCAL PLAN 2011-2029

Light Pollution

6.107 Artificial lighting schemes whether proposed or existing are a consideration for new or existing residential development and can often give rise to unwanted impact (such as on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscape and nature conservation) and in the worst cases statutory nuisance. Schemes which propose the above will have to consider the potential impact in line with recognised industry methods, and should conform to the recognised guides.

OLD BASING CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN SPD

Landscape

The landscape of the conservation area is made up of a network of watercourses, open spaces, trees, hedgerows, as well as built structures including the rail, road and canal bridges and the embankment.

*These features make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area. **This contribution can be adversely affected through light pollution and use of external lighting.** (Page 76-77)*

Further Guidance

One might be tempted to dismiss the whole Dark Sky movement as something for the benefit of astronomers, stargazers, and other fringe interest groups. To do that would seriously underestimate the central importance of dark skies to our own health and to the health of all the ecosystems which constitute the matrix within which we are able to sustain our lives.

All life on the planet evolved over millions of years in which the daily cycle of light and dark exercised a profound influence over physiology and behaviour. To interfere with that cycle by introducing artificial lighting is to invite profound disruption to the most basic processes of life.

- In humans, such disruption can lead to sleep disorders, and predispose the body to susceptibility to a number of serious diseases.
- Much the same applies to animals, which may also have their breeding cycles and migratory movements disrupted.
- Migratory birds may well have their movements disrupted, and several of our songbirds, notably the robin, will sing all night where there is constant artificial light.
- Sea creatures are easily disoriented by artificial light. Their breeding success can be adversely affected by intrusive artificial light.
- Insects are at the base of the food chain and perform important functions as scavengers and as pollinators. They are particularly vulnerable to light pollution; the behavioural cycles of diurnal species being disrupted as much as the nocturnal. Moths will circle lights until they die of exhaustion. Not far from us, a thriving colony of glow worms was wiped out by a (mostly unnecessary) lighting installation. The female glow worm glows to attract a mate. In quite low levels of light intensity, the males can't see the females. Reproductive activity comes to a full stop.
- Bats, some of them quite rare, fly into the village to forage. We know, of course, that bats are great echo-locators, but many species have eyesight geared to very low levels of light. They will avoid anything they perceive as glare, and that need not be very bright, and this can limit the areas over which they forage by blocking their access. What kinds of light pollution do we have, and what can we do to minimise their impact?

Sky glow

Sources of artificial light – principally street and large-scale industrial lighting - produce a characteristic glow in the sky over conurbations and increase light levels far from their points of origin. They represent inefficiency, waste of energy, and an unnecessary addition to our carbon footprint, because the light is spilling into the sky, rather than illuminating the ground where it is allegedly needed. One response is to suggest that energy-efficient LEDs are used to replace (typically) low pressure sodium units. That sounds good, in theory, but in fact the blue wavelengths of LED light are more damaging to the environment than what they replace.

Glare

The eye adapts to particular levels of light. If it is presented with a light source appreciably brighter than the level to which it has become accustomed, then discomfort will result with a loss of visual performance. All creatures with eyes are adversely affected by glare, but nocturnal creatures especially. High-intensity household security lights are a common source of glare.

Light spillage and trespass

Light can stray from its intended purpose, becoming an annoyance because of glare or because of an unwanted contribution to ambient light levels. Light from a neighbour's uncurtained window or rooflight may spill out as an annoyance. Sports grounds and industrial installations may also prove to be unnecessarily intrusive. In many cases, such intrusions may constitute a statutory nuisance and lead to

prosecutions, if pursued by the Local Authority.

Artificial light, road safety, and crime prevention

Recent research based on the experience of local authorities which have cut down on street and highway lighting suggests that lowering levels of artificial light has had no discernible effect either on traffic safety or on levels of crime.

Advice about lighting

Of all the forms of pollution, light pollution is one of those most easily influenced and reduced by individual action. Reducing domestic light pollution can be achieved simply by switching lights off. Old Basing & Lychpit Parish Council will insist that any planning consent includes conditions to ensure conformity with the Dark Skies Policy.

What can we do?

- Turn off exterior lights – don't leave porch or security lights burning all night long. They waste energy and annoy the neighbours.
- Make sure that any exterior lighting is controlled by a movement sensor – it will then shine only when it's needed.
- Reduce spillage from windows and, particularly, from roof lights by using thick curtains or blackout blinds. Light-activated controls for roof light blinds are quite easy to fit.
- Design – use only external light fittings specifically designed to reduce spillage and ensure that they are correctly fitted.
- Light only what you need – concentrate only on the features that you really need to see – trip hazards, steps or door locks.
- Use carefully directed lighting-use cones, shades, and appropriate aiming angles to ensure that light is directed to the ground, where it is needed.
- Don't use upward-facing ground lights to show where your drive is. They can confuse wildlife and contribute to skyglow. Illuminated bollards are no better.
- Be careful about colour temperatures – LED lights are typically high. Aim for lights with a colour temperature of between 1750 and 3000 Kelvin. That will minimise the more harmful blue wavelengths.

Legislation

There is encouraging news from the Government, in the form of the All-Party Parliamentary Group's The APPG for Dark Skies 'Ten Dark Sky Policies for the Government'. <https://appgdarkskies.co.uk/policy-plan> This initiative seeks to strengthen and update existing legislation, the better to protect our dark skies. It intends to address:

- the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework;
- planning regulations controlling obtrusive light;
- the strengthening of Statutory Nuisance provisions dealing with nuisance lighting;
- strengthening the rules governing outdoor lighting and light spill.

It seeks the creation of a Statutory Commission for Dark Skies, which would empower local authorities to enforce regulations, and the appointment of a Minister for Dark Skies. The Policy Plan contains even more information. It is worth supporting.