



The countryside charity  
Oxfordshire

Campaigning to protect our rural county

[www.cpreoxon.org.uk](http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk)

# Reducing light pollution

TECHNICAL BULLETIN

## The Challenge

Urban development in the southeast of England, including South Oxfordshire, continues to increase the brightness of the night sky with negative impacts on:

- **Amenity:** light pollution disrupts the circadian rhythms of people which can lead to health issues, loss of attention, increased stress and fatigue and harm people's quality of life.
- **Culture:** light pollution reduces the natural beauty of the night sky and historic character of places.
- **Ecology:** research shows that the increasing use of artificial light at night is very disruptive to many different species; disrupting their circadian body clocks and also migration, movement and ecosystem integrity.
- **Climate Change:** unnecessary lighting wastes energy. Better lighting saves energy and reduces CO2 emissions from fossil-fuelled power stations.

## Crime and Safety

It is not a given that installing a security light will deter crime. The Commission for Dark Skies notes that, 'there is still no proven link between lighting levels and crime rates' and that 'recent switch-offs and dimming after midnight by more than half of Britain's local councils show that darkness does not encourage crime – it reduces it.'

## Policies

NPPF: The NPPF (para 185) requires planning decisions to ensure that new development considers the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment and seeks to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

The South Oxfordshire Local Plan recognises the potential harms of light pollution in policies ENV11, ENV12 which acknowledge the adverse impacts of light pollution on human health, the natural environment and/or local amenity.

## Reducing Light Pollution

The South Oxfordshire District of CPRE welcomed the passing, in March 2021, of a 'Dark Skies Motion' such that the Council will, among other measures, 'Ensure that limiting light pollution and preserving dark skies are key priorities for planning policies and design guides, including master-planning of sites'. CPRE South Oxfordshire also welcome Oxfordshire County Council's drafting of a policy (expected to be adopted in October 2022) for less street lighting to reduce Climate Change and environmental impacts including on dark skies and nature.

**CPRE urges that all applications for new dwellings, commercial recreational or other large developments should be required to include a lighting needs assessment and design clearly demonstrating how light pollution would be minimised.** The granting of planning permission should give consideration to how that would be achieved, including for example:

- Reducing large, glazed areas and roof lights and requiring tinting or window film to reduce transmittance.
- Low-level lighting for external areas.
- Imposing conditions covering such matters as:
  - Limiting the hours of illumination to when the light is needed.
  - Ensuring the height of external lighting and the light level is no more than is absolutely necessary for the task.
  - Requiring motion sensors, dimmer and/or timers on important outdoor lights.
  - Ensuring that all light to be directed downwards (horizontal cut-off).
  - Surrounding surfaces are of low reflective materials.
  - No permanent external lighting for purely decorative purposes.
  - Require 'warmer' lighting, lights with a more yellow tone than blue.
  - The retention of screening vegetation.