

Godshill Parish Council

Dark Night Skies and Light Pollution Position Statement

*To support the aim of the New Forest National Park to acquire
International Dark Skies Reserve status*

Adopted 12th March 2024 Minute 141.23

1.0 Introduction - The Purpose of this Position Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of the Position Statement is to inform developers, householders, local authority decision makers, landowners of equestrian establishments and agricultural holdings and others about Godshill Parish Council's stance in ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the dark night skies specifically in the Western Escarpment Conservation Area but also generally across the whole of the New Forest National Park. This is particularly relevant when considering planning applications.
- 1.2 The Position Statement aims to achieve a consistent approach to conserving and enhancing dark skies by using recognised and respected standards developed by the Institute of Lighting Professionals and Commission for Dark Skies.

2.0 Rationale for a Dark Night Skies and Lighting Position Statement

- 2.1 The Western Escarpment Conservation Area is one of twenty conservation areas located in the New Forest National Park which derive much of their beauty from its qualities of tranquility, remoteness, and sense of naturalness. Light pollution has the potential to erode and destroy that tranquillity and sense of remoteness, by disrupting views in towards, and out from, the National Park. Light pollution can have a significant effect on the circadian rhythms of fauna and flora, and adverse effects on human mental, and physical health and well-being from disrupted sleep and suppressed immune systems. Poorly designed or installed artificial lighting can not only be a nuisance to neighbours but can be hazardous to road users.
- 2.2 The New Forest National Park has significant and extensive areas of naturally Dark Night Skies and remains an area where the wonders of the night sky can be enjoyed as an integral part of its natural beauty. Tranquility is defined as one of the 'special qualities' of the New Forest National Park and is relevant to the delivery of the second statutory National Park purpose - to promote the understanding and enjoyment of the 'special qualities' of the National Park by the public - see [Special qualities of the New Forest National Park - New Forest National Park Authority \(newforestnpa.gov.uk\)](https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/special-qualities).
- 2.3 Turning night into twilight or broad daylight can only be harmful to a vast range of night-active creatures which have been evolving for millions of years in harmony with the day-night circadian rhythm: among countless examples are moths lured to their deaths by badly aimed lights, bats whose foraging ranges are severely reduced, and sea turtle hatchlings disoriented and drawn to die in land. Humans are causing the sixth great extinction: our artificial light is playing its part.
- 2.4 The New Forest National Park Partnership Plan 2022-2027 sets out as one of its priorities the commitment of developing a better understanding of the impact of development and activities on dark night skies and taking opportunities to mitigate those impacts.
- 2.5 Godshill Parish Council aims to support the New Forest National Park Authority and other authorities, representatives of local communities and special interest

groups in adopting and promoting common standards which help to establish practical measures to reduce light pollution, in order to enhance and conserve the dark night skies of the Western Escarpment Conservation Area and the New Forest National Park as a whole.

3.0 Godshill Parish Council Objective: Dark Night Skies

Proposals which are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Western Escarpment Conservation Area and the 19 other conservation areas in the Forest National Park should be compliant with Policy SP15 of the New Forest National Park Authority's Local Plan - Tranquility - and have regard to the New Forest National Park Authority's Design Guide <https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning/design-guide/> (see pages 63-65) in order to protect the dark night skies by seeking to (a) avoid and (b) minimise light pollution by:

- i. Ensuring external lighting shall only be erected or installed if it can be shown to be essential for security and safety, and only using the minimum quantity of lighting to achieve it;
- ii. Ensuring that external lighting should be designed, shielded, and installed to prevent upward, sideways, or outward spillage in accordance with up-to-date ILP Guidance;
- iii. Ensuring the colour and intensity of lighting is appropriate for the wider setting;
- iv. Ensuring that external lighting avoids highlighting a structure or feature that would have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding landscape;
- v. Utilising the most energy - and pollution-efficient equipment reasonably available.
- vi. Ensuring design and quantity of fenestration is carefully selected to minimise light glow and spillage.

4.0 National Planning Policy Relating to the Significance of the New Forest National Park and Light Pollution

4.1 The significance of the National Park is set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) para 176;

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.'

NPPF (2021) para 185 states;

'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:

- i. *mitigate and reduce to a minimum, potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;*
- ii. *identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and*
- iii. *limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.'*

4.2 The Government's National Planning Policy Guidance ('NPPG') section on 'Light pollution' <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution> observed that:

'Artificial light is not always necessary. It has the potential to become what is termed 'light pollution' or 'obtrusive light', and not all modern lighting is suitable in all locations. It can be a source of annoyance to people, harmful to wildlife and undermine enjoyment of the countryside or the night sky, especially in areas with intrinsically dark landscapes. Intrinsically dark landscapes are those entirely, or largely, uninterrupted by artificial light. National parks and nature reserves can serve as good examples, particularly where they support habitats for native nocturnal animals'.

It also includes the factors which should be considered when assessing whether a development proposal might have implications for light pollution:

- *'Will a new development, or a proposed change to an existing site, be likely to materially alter light levels in the environment around the site and/or have the potential to adversely affect the use or enjoyment of nearby buildings or open spaces?'*
- *'Is the development in or near a protected area of dark sky or an intrinsically dark landscape where new lighting would be conspicuously out of keeping with local nocturnal light levels, making it desirable to minimise or avoid new lighting?'*
- *'Is a proposal likely to have a significant impact on a protected site or species? This could be a particular concern where forms of artificial light with a potentially high impact on wildlife and ecosystems (e.g. white or ultraviolet light) are being proposed close to protected sites, sensitive wildlife receptors or areas, including where the light is likely to shine on water where bats feed.'*
- *'Does the proposed development include smooth, reflective building materials, including large horizontal expanses of glass, particularly near water bodies? (As it may change natural light, creating polarised light pollution that can affect wildlife behaviour.)'*

4.3 DEFRA's 25-year plan (2017) states in respect of AONBs and National Parks that:

'Over the next 25 years we want to make sure they are not only conserved but enhanced. Many of the policies set out in the rest of the Plan will contribute to

making all areas more beautiful.'

DEFRA policies commit not just to minimising additional pollution but to '*cut all forms of pollution*' – including light:

'Over the next 25 years, we must significantly cut all forms of pollution and ease the pressure on the environment. We must ensure that noise and light pollution are managed effectively.'

5.0 Further Policy and Information on Light Pollution includes;

Planning Policy Guidance: Light Pollution

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution>

New Forest National Park Authority Design Guide

<https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning/design-guide/> (see pages 63-65)

Commission for Dark Skies

<https://britastro.org/dark-skies/enquiries.php>

Institution of Lighting Professionals '*Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light 2021*'

<https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021/>

Information from the Bat Conservation Trust on artificial lighting

<https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2023/08/bats-and-artificial-lighting-at-night-ilp-guidance-note-update-released>