

SHRAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL

DARK SKIES POLICY

1. Introduction

Shrawley Parish Council recognises and values the predominantly rural character of the Parish and the importance of preserving its dark night skies.

Artificial lighting can be necessary for reasons of safety, security and accessibility. However, unnecessary, excessive or poorly designed external lighting can cause light pollution, adversely affect the character and tranquillity of the countryside, disturb neighbouring properties and have harmful effects on wildlife.

Shrawley Parish Council therefore seeks to encourage the responsible use of artificial lighting throughout the Parish and to protect areas which remain substantially free from artificial illumination.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- protect and preserve the dark skies and rural character of Shrawley;
- minimise unnecessary artificial lighting;
- reduce light spill, glare and sky glow;
- protect the amenity of residents;
- protect wildlife, habitats and ecological corridors;
- promote appropriate, proportionate and energy-efficient lighting; and
- provide a consistent basis for the Parish Council when considering planning applications and other proposals involving external lighting.

3. General Principles

Shrawley Parish Council supports the principle that artificial lighting should be provided only where there is a genuine need.

Where external lighting is necessary, the Council encourages the use of:

the right light, in the right place, at the right level and only for as long as it is needed.

Lighting should therefore, wherever practicable:

- be kept to the minimum brightness necessary for its purpose;
- be positioned and designed so that light is directed downwards;
- avoid unnecessary upward illumination;
- avoid light spilling beyond the area which genuinely requires illumination;
- be appropriately shielded to minimise glare;
- avoid illuminating neighbouring properties, gardens, hedgerows, trees, woodland and watercourses unnecessarily;
- use warm-coloured lighting rather than unnecessarily bright or harsh light sources;
- use timers, motion sensors, dimmers or other controls where appropriate; and
- be switched off when it is no longer required.

Permanent overnight external lighting should be avoided unless there is a clear operational, safety or security justification.

4. Planning Applications

Shrawley Parish Council will have regard to this policy when considering and commenting upon planning applications involving external lighting or where lighting is likely to form part of a development.

The Council will consider whether proposed lighting:

- is genuinely necessary;
- is appropriate to the rural location;
- could result in an urbanising effect on the countryside;
- would increase sky glow or light pollution;
- could adversely affect neighbouring residents;
- could affect wildlife or established habitats;
- would illuminate hedgerows, woodland, trees or watercourses;
- is appropriately positioned and shielded;
- is limited in intensity and duration; and
- could reasonably be controlled by timers, motion sensors or other means.

Where the Parish Council considers that lighting may have a significant impact, it may ask the Local Planning Authority to require a detailed external lighting scheme as part of the application or by planning condition.

Such a scheme may appropriately include:

- the location and height of lighting;
- the type of light fittings proposed;
- the brightness and colour temperature of lighting;
- the direction and extent of illumination;
- measures to prevent upward light and overspill;
- hours of operation;
- details of timers, PIR sensors or dimming controls;
- identification of areas to remain dark; and
- appropriate measures to protect wildlife and neighbouring properties.

5. New Development

The Parish Council expects external lighting to be considered at the design stage of new development rather than added as an afterthought.

Development within the Parish should avoid introducing levels of artificial lighting which would be inappropriate to Shrawley's rural setting.

Particular care should be taken at settlement edges and in locations adjoining open countryside, woodland, hedgerows or other sensitive habitats.

Where lighting is proposed, applicants should demonstrate that it is necessary and that reasonable steps have been taken to minimise its impact.

The Parish Council will generally encourage low-power, warm-coloured and downward-facing lighting, appropriately controlled by timers or movement sensors.

6. Wildlife and Biodiversity

Artificial lighting can affect the feeding, movement, breeding and behaviour of nocturnal wildlife.

Particular consideration should therefore be given to:

- bats and their flight paths;
- birds;
- moths and other insects;
- hedgehogs and other nocturnal mammals;
- mature trees;
- hedgerows;
- woodland;
- ponds and watercourses; and
- other important habitats and ecological corridors.

Continuous illumination of hedgerows, woodland edges, watercourses and known wildlife corridors should be avoided wherever possible.

Where a development may affect protected species or sensitive habitats, the Parish Council may request that appropriate ecological advice and a suitable lighting strategy are provided to the Local Planning Authority.

7. Domestic Lighting

The Parish Council encourages residents to consider the effect that external lighting may have on neighbours, wildlife and the wider landscape.

Residents are encouraged to:

- turn exterior lights off when they are not required;
- avoid leaving porch, garden or security lighting illuminated throughout the night unless necessary;
- direct lighting downwards rather than outwards or upwards;
- use the lowest suitable level of illumination;
- correctly position and adjust motion sensors;
- avoid excessively powerful floodlights where lower-level lighting would be sufficient; and
- consider warm-coloured external lighting.

Security lighting should be positioned so that it illuminates the property or area requiring protection rather than neighbouring properties, highways or the wider countryside.

8. Commercial, Agricultural and Community Premises

The Parish Council recognises that farms, businesses, community facilities and other premises may reasonably require external lighting.

Where such lighting is necessary, it should be proportionate to the activity taking place and designed to minimise its wider impact.

The Council will encourage premises to:

- limit the number and brightness of external lights;
- direct lighting only towards the area requiring illumination;
- avoid unnecessary floodlighting;
- minimise upward light;
- restrict operating hours;
- use timers and sensors where practicable; and
- avoid unnecessary illumination when premises are not in use.

9. Street Lighting and Highway Lighting

Shrawley Parish Council recognises that highway safety must be properly considered when decisions are made regarding street lighting.

However, additional highway or street lighting should not automatically be assumed to be necessary in a rural location.

Where the Parish Council is consulted on new highway lighting, it will encourage solutions which meet genuine safety requirements while minimising unnecessary illumination and protecting the rural character of Shrawley.

10. Parish Council Property

When installing or replacing lighting on land or assets under its control, Shrawley Parish Council will apply the principles contained within this policy.

Before installing additional lighting, the Council will consider whether:

- lighting is actually required;
- the same objective could be achieved by another means;
- the proposed brightness is proportionate;
- the fitting can be shielded and directed downwards; and
- the hours of illumination can be restricted.

11. Lighting Specifications

Where appropriate, Shrawley Parish Council will encourage external lighting which is:

- warm in colour;
- low output;
- downward-facing;
- fully shielded wherever practicable; and
- activated only for the period for which it is required.

As a general guide, the Council will support the use of warm LED lighting below 3000 Kelvin where external lighting is necessary, with lower colour temperatures preferred in particularly sensitive rural or ecological locations.

The precise level and specification required will depend upon the location and purpose of the lighting.

12. Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

In applying this policy, Shrawley Parish Council will have regard, where relevant, to:

- the National Planning Policy Framework;
- national Planning Practice Guidance relating to light pollution;
- the adopted South Worcestershire Development Plan Review;
- relevant policies and guidance issued by Malvern Hills District Council;
- guidance produced by the Institution of Lighting Professionals; and
- appropriate ecological and biodiversity guidance.

The South Worcestershire Development Plan Review includes policies intended to protect biodiversity and intrinsically dark landscapes from inappropriate artificial lighting.

13. Role of Shrawley Parish Council

Shrawley Parish Council is a statutory consultee on relevant planning applications but is not the Local Planning Authority.

Decisions on planning applications and the imposition or enforcement of planning conditions are matters for Malvern Hills District Council as the Local Planning Authority.

This policy will therefore be used to:

- guide the Parish Council's responses to planning applications;
- support representations requesting appropriate lighting controls or planning conditions;
- guide decisions concerning Parish Council-owned land and assets;
- raise awareness of the importance of Shrawley's dark skies; and
- encourage residents, businesses, developers and other organisations to adopt responsible lighting practices.

14. Community Awareness

Shrawley Parish Council will seek to promote awareness of the value of dark skies and the effects of unnecessary artificial lighting.

Where appropriate, the Council may provide information through its website, newsletters, noticeboards or other community communications encouraging residents and businesses to consider simple measures to reduce light pollution.

The policy is intended to encourage sensible and proportionate lighting rather than prevent lighting which is genuinely required.

15. Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically and may be amended following changes to legislation, national or local planning policy, recognised lighting guidance or local circumstances.

Adopted by Shrawley Parish Council:
