



Dark Skies Policy

Horsmonden Parish Council

This policy encourages proposals which conserve and enhance the distinctive rural character of the area. It seeks to prevent light pollution and protect the night-time views of the rural area, heritage assets, and intrinsically dark areas.

The policy has been developed in accordance with Policy 7.7 of the Horsmonden Neighbourhood Development Plan (NHP) which states:

‘Lighting proposals that illuminate external areas around buildings must be designed to minimise both the ecological impact of the lighting and minimise glare and impact on the night sky.’

The Landscape Assessment carried out as part of the work for our NHP plan identified the importance of ‘dark skies’ in the parish, in particular: “Dark skies away from the main settlement of Horsmonden, particularly in the area north of Haymans Hill, indicate a sense of rural calm.” The NHP therefore proposed a policy to protect ‘dark skies’ and recommended that all development proposals, including small scale by individual households, seek to limit light pollution.

In addition to this:

The National Planning Policy Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution#what-light-pollution-considerations-does-planning-need-to-address> states that when preparing policies account should be taken of the effects on health, the natural environment, or general amenity, resulting from the release of light.

Whilst it is recognised that artificial light offers valuable benefits to residents: safety, finding one’s way around, preventing crime, facilitating sport and the night-time economy - inappropriate artificial lighting can contribute to a range of problems:

- It gives the village an urban feel

- It detracts from the enjoyment of the night sky
- It can cause health problems
- It can impact the normal behaviour of wildlife.
- Lighting which is 'always on' does nothing to discourage crime and lights controlled by sensors are considered much more appropriate for this purpose.

Some parts of Horsmonden as a rural village, still benefit from truly dark skies and consequently thriving populations of nocturnal wildlife. Where this is threatened by encroaching development residents and the Parish Council will make strenuous efforts to contain the light pollution.

Light pollution is primarily about light emitting from properties and their curtilage and inappropriate street lighting.

In all proposed developments, factors that 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 direction of the beam. Artificial lighting schemes that are likely to be approved will include good designs that:

- Seek innovative green solutions for low-level lighting.
- Reflect the type of area where they will be in operation
- Minimise brightness and do not over illuminate an area,
- Minimise hours of operation and have automatic PIR sensors and timed cut-off,
- Use light fittings that control the direction of the beam, which should not emit light at angles greater than 70 degrees and avoid any upward light emission.

The requirement for external lighting should be restricted to areas of specific concern and may include: Road safety in areas where there is a very specific risk to pedestrians and cyclists; deterring criminal activity; lighting entrances to building used after dark; lighting for evening sporting or recreational activities; supporting the night- time economy including lighting for farmers or businesses needing to work at night.

Innovative green solutions for appropriate lighting will be encouraged. Residential development should be designed to minimise light pollution, avoiding the use of unscreened roof-lights or atria.

With regards to street lighting the village has a minimal amount of street lighting already existing in its centre to guide and keep residents safe when out after dark, and much of this is managed using timers and solar activated panels to minimise the effects of

pollution and ensure it does not stay on when it is not required.

However, during the development of the NHP it was made clear that residents wish to ensure that lighting schemes on new developments and dwellings will not cause unacceptable levels of light pollution particularly in intrinsically dark areas. These can be areas very close to the countryside or where dark skies are enjoyed. General street lighting is therefore discouraged in new large developments, and more sympathetic lighting to be encouraged which pays respect to the individual rural aspect in which the development is located.

This policy was adopted by Horsmonden Parish Council on 2nd October 2023.

