

WESTBURY SUB MENDIP DARK SKIES POLICY

Approved: - 7th July 2021

All proposed developments should have regard to Westbury Sub Mendip current policies for dark skies, and proposals should avoid light pollution and protect the night-time environment of intrinsically dark areas of the village and countryside. Minimum lighting levels, controlled by sensors and timers, should be used where lighting is required.

The requirement for any 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 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. General street lighting is discouraged in all areas.

This policy encourages proposals that 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 recognises that artificial light offers valuable benefits to residents: safety, finding one's way around, preventing crime, facilitating sport and the night-time economy. However, inappropriate artificial lighting can contribute to a range of problems: it gives the village urban feel, it detracts from the enjoyment of the night sky, it can cause health problems and can also impact the normal behaviour of wildlife. Always on lighting does nothing to discourage crime and lights controlled by sensors are much more appropriate for this purpose.

Light pollution is primarily about light escaping from premises and street lighting. Artificial light escaping from premises can be prejudicial to human health and a statutory nuisance, as recognised in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, and this policy support the basic purpose of the Act and provides guidance about factors in development proposals which could lead to light pollution from premises.

Westbury Sub Mendip residents have been consulted on several occasions about the removal of street lighting, and the majority have been in support. The general view is that street lighting is more appropriate to more urban and suburban communities, whereas Westbury Sub Mendip is a rural community where the rules appropriate to the countryside should take priority. This policy therefore requires that new developments should avoid street lighting.

In all proposed developments, factors that will be taken into account 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 majority of Westbury Sub Mendip Parish benefits from truly dark skies and consequently thriving populations of nocturnal wildlife. Where this is threatened by encroaching development residents the Parish Council will make strenuous efforts to contain the light pollution.

Paragraph 125 of the NPPF encourages good design, planning policies and decisions to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light.

The National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 23, paragraph 2.18 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'.