

DARK SKY POLICY AND LIGHTING MANAGEMENT PLAN

Adopted: March 2026

Review: March 2031

Objective

The council intends that this policy and lighting plan will provide a structure for informing choices about lighting in the parish, protecting the beauty of our dark skies now and into the future. It intends:

- To reduce glare, light spill and sky glow to improve the night-time environment.
- To promote awareness and understanding of the benefits of dark-sky preservation.
- To adopt lighting practices that minimise light pollution and energy waste.

Scope of the policy

To address outdoor lighting within parish boundaries, including public and private lighting installations, minimising all as far as possible and respecting professional guidelines on lighting zones and darkness preservation.

Introduction

Brightling village has a tradition of being unlit. We have no streetlights and the two community buildings in the centre of the village – the Church and the Village Hall – both have only limited lighting [1]. The parish has no large conurbations to contribute to nighttime skyglow, and the British Gypsum mine [2] is its only industrial site.

Our commitment to retaining a “dark” village and parish is driven by the desire to preserve the dark skies in both the whole of our parish and in the wider area. We are an E1 Natural Dark Environment [3] within the High Weald Natural Landscape, formerly known as High Weald Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB); this is an area characterised by some of the darkest skies in the south-east of England, with the least skyglow. As well as allowing visitors and residents the joy of better seeing constellations, including the Milky Way, these dark skies contribute to the area’s much-valued sense of remoteness and tranquility.

In addition, several nocturnal species identified as critical to East Sussex’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy (the government-mandated plan for biodiversity improvement) are resident in the parish. The Government’s Ministry of Housing,

Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government 2018-2021 Guidance on Light Pollution Report [4] recognised the impact that light pollution can have on such species, by interrupting critical survival behaviours including migration, reproduction and feeding patterns.

Policy

Brightling Parish Council will protect our night sky by promoting good practice among residents and resident businesses in the use of external lighting, and in reducing light spill from internal lighting. The council will do this by:

1. Providing parishioners with signposts to information that promotes effective design and industry best practice for anyone using, replacing, or installing new external lighting, whether or not they require planning permission to make such changes.

2. Commenting on planning applications based on the following documents and policies, which together guide the council and local planning authorities in their decision-making:

- Rother District Council Local Plan 2025-42: “Policy LAN3: Dark Skies” [5]

- High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-29. This defines “dark skies” as one of the eight defining components of the natural beauty of the High Weald; the plan was adopted by East Sussex County Council in May 2024 and Rother District Council in December 2024.

The legislation has been strengthened from a “duty of regard” to “seek to further” the policies within the Management Plan, specifically Dark Sky Objectives DS1 and DS2. [6]

- High Weald Dark Skies Planning Advice Note: “Dark Skies in the High Weald (2024)”, prepared in collaboration with 15 local authorities in the High Weald. [7]

- Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light 2021 [3]

- ILP/Bat Conservation Trust Guidance Note GN08/23: “Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night” [8]

- International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines 2018 Update, September 2023 [9]

3. Using all practicable available means to bring about:

- Shielding of light fixtures emitting more than 1000 lumens.

- LED lighting with a correlated colour temperature of 3000k or lower to reduce blue light emission.

- Use of motion sensors and dimmers to reduce unnecessary light during off-peak hours.

- Avoidance of over-lighting by focusing lighting on the area where it is needed.

Influence and enforcement

Not all lighting requires planning permission, and in general, light itself and minor domestic fittings are not subject to planning controls. If residents need to light their garden path, doorway, or driveway, they do not require planning permission.

However, when lighting is part of a new development, additional structures, an extension, conversion or a listed building, planning permission will be required from Rother District Council.

The parish council will consider, assess and comment on planning applications within Brightling or our neighbouring parishes based on the council's Dark Skies Policy and Lighting Plan as outlined above, and council's comments on individual applications will always reflect those policies.

For example, the parish council's comments on a planning application that includes external lighting could be as follows:

"We request that all lighting conforms to the highest standard of light pollution restrictions in force at the time. Security and other outside lighting that will adversely affect the amenities of other occupiers, neighbours or habitats, or which will cause unnecessary light pollution which reduces the quality of the dark night sky, will not be supported. All lighting should be designed to minimise light pollution, including light glare and sky glow, and to conserve energy, through the use of best available technology as recommended by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) for the environmental zone E1 (The Reduction of Obtrusive Light - Guidance Note 01/21, ILP). [10] Details should be submitted to and approved by Rother Planning Authority prior to its installation.

This will prevent light pollution within the dark skies of the High Weald Natural Landscape, in the interests of the amenities of the area, and will protect the dark sky environment and local ecology in accordance with Policies OSS4 (iii), RA3 (v) and EN1 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy, Policies DEN2, DEN4 and DEN7 of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan and Objectives DS1 and DS2 of the High Weald Management Plan."

Brightling Parish Council understands that at certain times residents and businesses may need to use external lighting so requests that appropriate lighting is used to light only the area needed and for a limited time, using timers and hooded shields as necessary.

Engagement

As well as commenting on planning applications, the Council will continue whenever appropriate to inform parishioners of the inherent value of dark skies, and provide them with information about how to reduce light pollution. Where appropriate, the council will work with and/or support Brightling Environment Group [11] to engage with parishioners by holding events that inform and encourage parishioners who wish to adopt Dark Skies-friendly lighting.

Such engagement might include, but not be limited to: holding talks; distributing information leaflets; providing guidance and links to further information on the village website [12]; providing guidance and links to further information in the information hub in the centre of the village; sharing information and guidance in The Messenger magazine; sharing information and guidance in the Welcome Pack given to all new parishioners.

Street lighting

The parish council policy is not to install any new street lighting in the parish. Hence any new illumination of residential roads in the parish would only be installed at the insistence, and under the aegis, of East Sussex County Council (ESCC).

If such lighting is deemed necessary by ESCC [13] for increasing road safety, reducing the incidence of night crime, or enhancing public safety [14] then under ESCC guidance it would be obliged to discuss the options with Brightling Parish Council. Should the policy of no street lighting in Brightling parish be challenged in the future, then the parish council would support a public consultation, in which both the Brightling Parish Dark Skies Policy and Lighting Plan and the High Weald National Landscape Management plan would be used to evaluate the potential effects on the environment, biodiversity and human wellbeing.

If after public consultation and discussion with ESCC new street lighting were to be agreed on, Brightling Parish Council policy is that High Weald National Landscape technical lighting specifications [7], already used as guidance by ESCC, should be followed in the specification and installation of any such lights.

Review and Updates

This statement will be reviewed after five years, so as to reflect any technological advancements in lighting and new findings related to light pollution.

Further reading

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/technical-advice-notes-tans/dark-skies-technical-advice-note-tan/>
<https://darksky.uk/light-pollution/>
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Towards-A-Dark-Sky-Standard-V1.1.pdf>

References

[1] The Church has a light on the gate and one in the porch. These are used only when there are nighttime events (an infrequent occurrence). The Village Hall has a single porch light, used only when the building is in use at night.

[2] The gypsum mine is in the parish of Brightling and situated in a dip surrounded by woodland. It has external security lights around the building and mine entrance which are a necessary safety requirement due to the fact that explosives are kept on site. The council is in discussion with the owners of the site about potential mitigation of this lighting.

[3] E1 Natural Dark Environment The Reduction of Obtrusive Light - Guidance Note 01/21, by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) The Reduction of Obtrusive Light – Guidance Note 01/21, by the Institute of Lighting Professionals

[4] ‘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.’ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution>

[5] <https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan/local-plan-review/>

[6] High Weald National Landscape (HWNL) Management Plan 2024-29:
DS1 To preserve the dark skies of the High Weald AONB by minimising light pollution, obtrusive external lighting and internal light spill from domestic, commercial and public premises in both existing and new developments within the High Weald, and from highways lighting. Rationale To protect and maintain the existing dark skies within the High Weald for the benefit of all, including future generations, for our health, wellbeing and enjoyment, to increase our understanding and sense of place in the universe; and for the benefit of wildlife and to reduce energy consumption.

DS2 To protect wildlife and habitats from light pollution across the High Weald. Rationale Light pollution affects a wide range of nocturnal species and those out during the day from feeding to finding a mate and the ability to safely migrate. Light pollution is an additional stress to habitat loss for already declining populations of many species across the High Weald

<https://highweald.org/aonb-management-plan/>

[7] <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/hdpjoaev/high-weald-national-landscape-dark-skies-planning-advice-note.pdf>

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

[9] <https://darksky.org/app/uploads/2018/07/IDSC-Guidelines-Jun2018.pdf>

[10] From The Reduction of Obtrusive Light - Guidance Note 01/21, by the Institute of Lighting Professionals

“4. No floodlighting, security lighting or other external means of illumination of the site shall be provided, installed or operated in the development, except in accordance with a detailed scheme - which shall be the minimum required, and designed to minimise light pollution including light glare and sky glow and to conserve energy, through the use of best available technology, having regard to the lighting levels recommended by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) for

the relevant environmental zone (The Reduction of Obtrusive Light - Guidance Note 01/21, by the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP)) - which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to its installation. The lighting scheme shall be installed and operated thereafter in accordance with the approved details.”

“To prevent light pollution within the dark skies of the High Weald AONB, in the interests of the amenities of the area and to protect the dark sky environment and local ecology, in accordance with Policies OSS4 (iii), RA3 (v) and EN1 of the Rother Local Plan Core Strategy, Policies DEN2, DEN4 and DEN7 of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan and Objectives DS1 and DS2 of the High Weald Management Plan.”

[11] <https://brightling.community/brightling-environment-group/>

[12] [10] <https://brightling.community/>

[13] <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roads-transport/roads/highway-policies/street-lighting>

[14] ESCC street lighting policy allows for different options of street lighting. These include part night lighting (12 midnight –5.30am); partial street lighting, ie with only alternate lamps on; dimming of all lamps; lamps switched off in rural areas; and, without incident after three years, removal of lamps.