

<b>Date agreed</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Minute number</b>	<b>Renewal date</b>
13 Apr 2026	Environment	654.2/25	April 2027

## **BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Dark Skies Policy**

#### **1. Policy Statement**

Buckingham lies within a rural setting where dark skies remain an important part of the town's character, heritage, biodiversity and community wellbeing. The Town Council recognises that excessive or poorly designed artificial lighting can cause skyglow, glare and light trespass, leading to:

- Loss of visibility of the night sky
- Harm to wildlife and biodiversity
- Impacts on human health and wellbeing
- Unnecessary energy consumption and carbon emissions

Buckingham Town Council is committed to promoting responsible outdoor lighting that balances safety and accessibility with environmental stewardship and the protection of dark skies. This policy sets out the principles that will guide lighting across Town Council landholdings, facilities and decision-making processes.

#### **2. Purpose and Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All lighting owned, managed or installed by Buckingham Town Council
- New lighting proposals on Town Council land
- Replacement and upgrade programmes
- Temporary lighting for events

This policy does not override statutory lighting requirements relating to highways (managed by Buckinghamshire Council) or emergency services. This policy does not apply to any planning applications that Buckingham Town Council are consulted on by the planning authority. The Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan (2025-2045) references lighting within its Design code and relevant policies. ([link to BNDP](#))

#### **3. Policy Objectives**

The Town Council will:

- Protect and enhance Buckingham's dark skies and rural character
- Reduce light pollution across Town Council-managed land
- Support biodiversity by minimising artificial light impacts
- Improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions
- Ensure lighting is installed only where necessary for safety, accessibility or operational purposes
- Promote responsible lighting practices within the wider community

## **4. Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting**

All Town Council lighting will follow these principles:

### **4.1 Necessary**

Lighting will only be installed where it serves a clear purpose, such as safety, accessibility or security. Decorative or permanent floodlighting will generally be avoided unless a clear community benefit is demonstrated.

### **4.2 Directed**

Lighting will be carefully directed to the area requiring illumination.

- Full cut-off or shielded fittings will be used wherever practicable.
- Upward light spill and intrusion into neighbouring properties will be minimised.

### **4.3 Minimal**

Lighting will be no brighter than required. Over-illumination will not be supported.

### **4.4 Controlled**

Lighting will operate only when required and will incorporate controls such as:

- Timers
- Motion sensors
- Dimming regimes
- Photocells

### **4.5 Warm-Coloured**

Where practicable, lighting will use warm colour temperatures (3000K or lower). Blue-rich lighting will be avoided due to its increased contribution to skyglow and ecological disruption.

## **5. Council-Owned Lighting and Phased Replacement**

The Town Council manages lighting in parks, cemeteries, open spaces, community buildings and other landholdings.

### **5.1 Audit and Review**

The Council will maintain an inventory of its lighting assets and periodically review them to assess:

- Continued necessity
- Energy efficiency
- Compliance with this policy
- Ecological impact

### **5.2 Phased Sustainable Replacement Programme**

Subject to available budgets, the Council will implement a phased programme of lighting improvement across its landholdings. This will prioritise:

- Replacement of outdated or inefficient fittings
- Installation of shielded, downward-facing luminaires
- Transition to energy-efficient LED fittings (warm-coloured)
- Introduction of adaptive controls such as timers and motion sensors

Upgrades will be incorporated into routine maintenance and capital works programmes to ensure gradual and financially responsible improvement.

### **5.3 Removal of Redundant Lighting**

Where lighting no longer serves a clear operational or safety purpose, its removal will be considered.

### **6. Security Lighting**

The Council recognises the need for security lighting at:

- Council buildings
- Storage compounds
- Public conveniences
- Other vulnerable locations

Security lighting will:

- Be motion-activated wherever possible
- Use shielded, warm-coloured fittings
- Be directed only to the area requiring surveillance
- Avoid constant dusk-to-dawn operation unless clearly justified

Security needs will be balanced carefully against environmental impact.

### **7. Town Council Owned Sports Pitch Lighting (Exception)**

Sports pitch lighting on Town Council owned/controlled land is recognised as an exception to this policy due to its role in supporting organised sport, health and community participation.

Where sports lighting exists or is proposed, the Council will ensure that:

- Lighting is professionally designed and appropriately specified
- Glare and light spill are minimised
- Operational hours are clearly defined and restricted
- Lighting is not used outside booked or organised activities
- Modern, energy-efficient systems are utilised

All proposals will seek to minimise environmental and residential impact.

### **8. Biodiversity and Environmental Protection**

Artificial light at night can adversely affect bats, insects, birds and other nocturnal species.

The Council will:

- Avoid installing lighting near hedgerows, tree lines, watercourses and sensitive habitats unless essential
- Seek ecological advice where appropriate
- Support the retention of “dark corridors” to allow wildlife movement
- Align lighting decisions with the Council’s Biodiversity Policy

### **9. Planning and Community Leadership**

In its role as a statutory consultee, the Council will:

- Encourage applicants to demonstrate compliance with relevant policies in the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan as well as national and local plan policies.

The Council will also promote awareness of responsible lighting practices through its website, newsletters and community engagement.

## **10. Energy Efficiency and Climate Responsibility**

Reducing unnecessary lighting supports the Council's climate commitments. The Council will:

- Improve energy efficiency across its estate
- Reduce unnecessary illumination
- Encourage low-energy lighting solutions
- Highlight the link between reduced lighting, lower emissions and cost savings