

Cley Next the Sea Dark Skies Policy

Cley next the Sea, North Norfolk, is a small village at the heart of which is a conservation area. It is surrounded by sea and open countryside much of which has AONB or SSSI status.

Cley lies within an intrinsically dark rural and coastal landscape, close to designated Dark Sky Discovery Sites. The Parish Council considers the protection of this intrinsic darkness to be a key aspect of local character and community well-being.

North Norfolk is one of the darker districts in England and just across the Glaven Valley is the Wiveton Downs Dark Sky Discovery Site, one of only a few in Norfolk, which provides special opportunities for people to enjoy the dark skies.

Dark skies help Cley retain the rural character we all love and we want to play our part to preserve these. Over the years more light has been introduced into the village as houses and businesses are renovated and enlarged with more windows, skylights and outside lighting, which on occasion is overly bright, sometimes misdirected and not always carefully timed.

Why Dark Skies Matter

Artificial light is essential but it is important to get the right light in the right place and to use it at the right time. Otherwise, potentially it becomes light pollution and annoys our neighbours, is harmful to wildlife and undermines our enjoyment of the countryside and dark skies.

Light pollution is artificial light which shines when neither wanted nor needed:

- Skyglow – light glow from towns and cities
- Glare – uncomfortable brightness of a light source
- Light intrusion – light spilling beyond the property where it is located

Presence of Light:

In addition to skyglow, glare and light intrusion, the Parish Council recognises that the simple presence of artificial light in an otherwise dark view can itself affect the tranquillity, rural character and dark sky quality of Cley. The Parish Council therefore encourages the avoidance of new lighting in currently unlit locations wherever possible.

Impacts On Wildlife

Plants and animals depend on Earth's daily cycle of light and dark to govern life-sustaining behaviours such as breeding, feeding, sleeping and protection from predators. Artificial light disrupts this.

Some animals are attracted to light such as birds and insects, and some avoid light such as bats.

Since the original adoption of this Policy, national evidence has continued to strengthen the link between artificial night lighting and biodiversity loss. The Parish Council therefore places increased importance on ensuring that lighting does not undermine local wildlife, particularly along hedgerows, trees, waterways and open countryside corridors.

How To Avoid Light Pollution

Only light what is necessary:

- Position lights and choose their distribution to avoid spill into sky and onto neighbouring properties
- Shield existing light fittings so light points downwards
- External lighting should not be directed outside of properties into others or into the night sky
- Reduce or avoid lighting near or above horizontal
- Avoid floor lights and bollards
- Avoid lighting trees, hedgerows and natural features

Use only the amount of light needed:

- Modern LED lighting is efficient, so much lower output is often sufficient
- Minimise the number and brightness of fittings
- Use reflectors or solar lights
- Minimise use of skylights and large glazed areas
- Use blinds and curtains to reduce interior light spill at night

Use the right colour of light:

- The Parish Council strongly encourages the use of ultra-warm lighting, for example amber or warm white in the approximate range of 2200–2700K
- Bright cool-white lighting is discouraged due to its impact on wildlife, human sleep patterns and local character

Only light when necessary:

- Ensure security lights are not triggered by movement beyond the property boundary
- Avoid dusk-to-dawn lighting where possible
- Dim or switch off lighting during quieter late-night periods

Glazing, Light Spill And Local Character (New 2025)

Where large areas of glazing, roof lights or feature windows are proposed, the Parish Council encourages designs that limit night-time light spill while remaining appropriate to the age, historic setting and vernacular character of the building. This may include the thoughtful use of reduced light-transmission or low-reflectivity glass, recessed glazing, traditional proportions, and effective internal blinds or shutters.

Large Glazed Elevations and Rooflights:

Where extensive glazing, floor-to-ceiling windows, glazed gables or large rooflights are proposed, particularly on the edge of the village or facing open countryside, the Parish Council encourages careful design to avoid significant night-time glow. This may include limiting the extent of such glazing, using reduced light-transmission or low-reflectivity glass, and ensuring effective light-control measures are built in from the outset.

For rooflights or high-level glazing where manual blinds or curtains are impractical, the Parish Council encourages the use of automated blinds, louvres or equivalent measures that close at dusk or at set evening times, to reduce upward light spill into the night sky.

Conservatories And Sunrooms (New 2025)

Where conservatories, sunrooms or similar highly glazed extensions are proposed, the Parish Council encourages designs that carefully limit night-time light spill while remaining appropriate to the age, historic setting and vernacular character of the host building. This may include reduced light-transmission glass, limited roof glazing, subdued internal lighting in the evening, and effective blinds or shutters.

Parish Council Role In Planning

When commenting on planning applications, the Parish Council will consistently encourage applicants to demonstrate how their proposals minimise light pollution, protect dark skies and avoid harm to wildlife, in line with recognised good practice.

For proposals likely to introduce new or altered external lighting, the Parish Council will normally encourage applicants to provide a simple lighting concept or schedule indicating the location of lights, type of fitting, direction of light, colour temperature and proposed controls.

When considering lighting impacts, the Parish Council will have regard to recognised good-practice guidance on domestic and environmental lighting, including advice published by professional lighting bodies and environmental organisations.

The Parish Council may consider:

- Will light levels increase significantly?
- Will neighbours be affected by light intrusion?
- Are there large unshaded glazed areas?
- Is the site near dark landscape or wildlife corridors?
- Could lighting impact road safety?
- Could wildlife be disturbed?

Community Dark Skies Pledge

Residents and businesses are encouraged to:

1. 1. Enjoy the night skies
2. 2. Light only what needs lighting
3. 3. Use only the amount of light that is needed
4. 4. Shield lights and direct them downwards
5. 5. Light only when needed
6. 6. Use reflectors or solar lighting
7. 7. Use blinds and curtains
8. 8. Tell friends and neighbours
9. 9. Support sensitive street lighting
10. 10. Engage with the planning process

Policy Review And Community Monitoring (New 2025)

This Policy will be reviewed periodically by the Parish Council to ensure it remains aligned with best practice and community experience. Residents are encouraged to share examples of good and poor lighting so that continuous improvement can be supported.