

SDCC Light Pollution Pre Planning Guidance

Artificial light provides valuable benefits to society, including security, extending opportunities for recreation, and promoting architectural heritage. Equally, artificial light is not always necessary; as it has the potential to become 'light pollution' or 'obtrusive light'. While adequate lighting is essential in the promotion of a safe and secure environment, light pollution can be a public health issue due to sleep impairment, a source of annoyance to people, harmful to wildlife, undermine enjoyment of the countryside or detract from enjoyment of the night sky ("Sky glow").

Light pollution occurs when the light 'spills' beyond the area being lit. In terms of sustainability, a significant amount of energy is wasted as a consequence of inappropriate lighting. Waste of electricity using fossil fuels causes continued air pollution and is at odds with the Government's climate change policy. Glare, the uncomfortable brightness of a light source due to the excessive contrast between bright and dark areas in the field of view is also light pollution to be avoided, particularly for safety.

For maximum benefit, the best use of artificial light is about getting the right light, in the right place and providing light at the right time.

It is Council policy to ensure that the design of all external lighting schemes minimise light spillage or pollution in the immediate surrounding environment and has regard to the amenities of surrounding areas.

Lighting schemes can be costly and difficult to change, so getting the design right and the setting of appropriate conditions at the planning stage is important. Good design, correct installation and ongoing maintenance are essential to the effectiveness of lighting schemes.

Lighting columns and other fixtures can have an effect on the appearance of buildings and the environment. Where proposals for new lighting require planning permission, the Council will ensure that they are carefully and sensitively designed to provide only the light necessary and shield the light given out in order to avoid creating glare or emitting light above a horizontal plane.

Where an external lighting component within a development site is proposed, applicants should submit adequate information with their planning application which comprehensively details the lighting scheme and satisfactorily demonstrates that the proposed scheme is appropriate in terms of its purpose and that light pollution is minimised.

Where the council decides to grant planning permission, it may decide to impose conditions covering such matters as:

- Hours of illumination
- No distraction to a public road
- Light levels and the level of impact on nearby dwellings
- Column heights
- Use of demountable columns
- Specification and colour treatment for lamps and luminaries
- The need for full horizontal cut-off
- Retention of screening vegetation
- Use of planting and bunding to contain lighting effects

The Planning Authority will seek to minimise light pollution resulting from new development proposals within the rural area.

Illuminated advertisements

The two forms of advertisement that have the potential to cause light pollution problems; illuminated poster advertisements and internally or externally illuminated shop fascias. Poster advertisements, where illuminated, should be lit from the top down using a lighting system that ensures no light spill beyond the extent of the advertisement. Shop fascias should not be significantly brighter than those of neighbouring shops. Shopfront and fascia lighting should not contribute to light pollution and sharp contrasts caused by overbright shopfronts must be avoided. Care must be taken to ensure that they are not positioned where they may affect the clarity of traffic signs or disturb those living close by. In commercial areas generally, advertisements and lighting should not be used primarily to create an impression of a presence at night.