

Shouldham Neighbourhood Plan 2025-2040



**Dark Skies Assessment
April 2025**

Dark Skies

National and Local Policy Context

1. The NPPF (December 2024) notes how planning policies should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location considering effects of pollution (including light pollution) that could arise from the development on site and with its wider surroundings. In paragraph 198 Clause C planning policies and decisions should: “limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation”.¹
2. Guidelines have been created around planning for good exterior lighting which will be relevant for the Dark Skies policy. Outdoor lighting should be carefully designed to ensure appropriate placement, duration, colour, and timing. The quote “more light is not necessarily better light²” is discussed in some detail in the GOV Light Pollution Guidance and Dark Sky Society (2020) paper in relation to promoting safety. Where light fixtures give off an unsafe glare it can result in reduced visibility and cause accidents on the road and streets, especially when vision is readapting to darker areas³. Examples of fixture types that can be used to reduce glare and light trespassing in the night sky include:
 - Fully shielded fixtures (enclosed in full cut off or canopy fixtures);
 - Lighting which is directed downwards.
 - Using energy efficient bulbs/low light levels such as white LED, metal halide or fluorescent sources.
 - Controlled lighting on timers, motion detectors when needed including no dusk to dawn lights⁴.
 - Using warmer colour lights such as yellow where possible avoiding blue, or ultraviolet content since these are generally more disruptive to humans and wildlife.
3. The Local Plan does not have a Dark Skies or Lighting Policy for development proposals to consider specific criteria when reducing light spill. Instead, light pollution is covered as one amenity factor which proposals must consider when protecting and enhancing the amenity of the wider environment alongside noise, odour, air quality, water quality, visual impact, contamination and so forth.

Shouldham Context

4. The CPRE Dark Skies Mapping⁵ shows much of the parish falls into the darkest categories, suggesting that most of the parish is made up of a dark landscape with limited light pollution. However, the areas with the brighter night lights are around the built-up area.

¹ [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

² [Light pollution - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

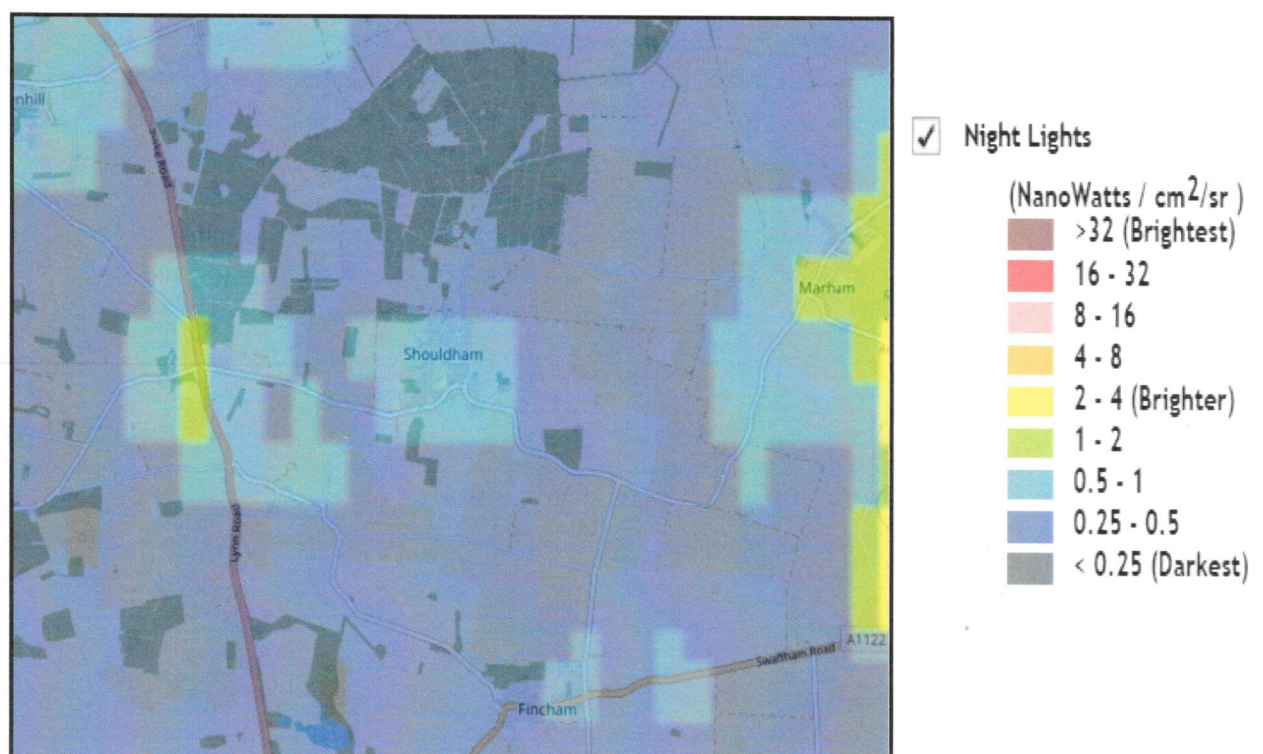
³ [LightingPlanGuidelines.pdf \(darksksociety.org\)](#)

⁴ [Towards-A-Dark-Sky-Standard-V1.1.pdf \(southdowns.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies \(cpre.org.uk\)](#)

5. Additional intrusive external or internal lights associated with new development would be detrimental to the character of the village and could harm local wildlife such as bats. Useful practice guidance documents have been made in relation to obtrusive lighting which applicants are encouraged to make themselves aware of and review these when developing proposals⁶.
6. This is because the location, height and orientation of new development can have a considerable impact on light spill. Small changes in terms of the placement of windows, open space and footpaths can all help to achieve a better outcome in terms of minimising light spill onto habitats and green areas. Examples of physical light screening options for external or internal lights are shown below from the Institution of Lighting Professional Guidance on Bats.

Figure 14- Dark Skies in Shouldham (Source: CPRE, 2024⁷)



7. It is noted that in many cases external and internal lights fall into permitted development, however, it is possible to influence lighting associated with new development and the evidence and national guidance on the benefits of sensitive lighting may encourage better design choices by others.

Specific Resident Consultation

8. In December 2023 residents were consulted on issues and options for the Neighbourhood Plan. In Question 4 of this survey a number of residents stated that an important factor in relation to the design of new housing is the lack of outdoor lighting to preserve our current dark skies. In Question 11 of the survey

⁶ Artificial Lighting Guidance - Buildings, planning and development - Bat Conservation Trust (bats.org.uk), layout (bats.org.uk) and Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light 2021 | Institution of Lighting Professionals (theilp.org.uk)

⁷ England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies (cpre.org.uk)

residents were asked if they would support inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan of a policy requiring new development to minimise light pollution to preserve dark skies in the village. Fifty-three people answered this question with 91% of responses (48 of 53) supporting such a policy. For this reason, we have included Policy SH06: Shouldham's Dark Skies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Figure 15-Internal lighting mitigation options. Source: Institution of Lighting Professionals, 2023

