

A NOTE ON SECURITY LIGHTING AND LIGHT POLLUTION

Security lighting, which is for the most part unregulated, can produce serious levels of light pollution, particularly in rural dark landscapes. Whilst security lighting is often used by businesses (including many farms), individual householders, who use sodium or high wattage halogen lamps to light their properties, also contribute significantly to light pollution.

Often decisions about security lighting are made without consideration being given to its environmental impact. CPRE Norfolk campaigns to have this impact evaluated and given weight in the decision making process. We also examine evidence and work with Norfolk Constabulary to influence advice given about security lighting to householders and businesses.

Lighting and Crime - Evidence Base

There is a growing body of evidence that shows that lighting, far from being an aid to crime reduction, is at best irrelevant and in some places (especially in rural areas) counter productive.

- The House of Commons Science and Technology committee's report into light pollution stated "*the evidence relating to the correlation between lighting and crime is not conclusive*" after studying research on the issue.
- A study by West Sussex police concluded that permanent (dusk to dawn) lighting on properties in the countryside can actually aid the work of the criminal through revealing places to enter and hide, as well as property to steal. Furthermore, that security lights, often visible over great distances at night, attract a burglar's attention to a property.
- Many local authorities, including Norfolk County Council, are introducing part night lighting. Street lights are switched off at particular locations for part of each night, usually between midnight and around 5.00am. Part night lighting trials in Essex have revealed crime rates falling, sometimes by as much as 18%, during that portion of the night when the lights are switched off. In Norfolk, in local areas where part-night lighting has been introduced, Norfolk Constabulary has reported that this has not resulted in increases in crime. This is further

evidence that lighting is often not relevant as a crime prevention measure - even in urban areas. It should be remembered that most burglaries take place during daylight hours (light aids the criminal).

- Paul Marchant, a Chartered Statistician working at Leeds Metropolitan University, has analysed the statistical evidence that is often used to justify additional lighting as a crime prevention measure. His work reveals that the statistical analysis used in such evidence is flawed and leads to dubious claims about the usefulness of lighting as a means of preventing crime. He concludes in his paper '*Shining a light on evidence-based policy: street lighting and crime*' that the claim 'lighting reduces crime' is not supported by the data.

For further details of lighting and crime research from around the UK and overseas, visit www.britastro.org/dark-skies/crime.html (the Campaign for Dark Skies website).

Policy Framework in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council's Environmental Lighting Zone's policy (ELZ) highlights the importance of dark skies and dark landscapes as special features of the Norfolk countryside, deserving protection. The policy defines most of the county (by area) as Rural Dark Landscape.

If the objectives of this policy are to be realised it is important that advice and decisions on security lighting fit sensitively within the ELZ landscape classifications as well as with district councils' policies aimed at combating light pollution.

Crime Prevention Advice on Security Lighting

One of the key advisors on security lighting is Norfolk Constabulary. As a result of consultations with CPRE Norfolk, Crime Prevention Officers have begun to take the issue of light pollution caused by security lighting seriously.

- In rural areas the provision of lighting is no longer always considered a pre-requisite for an award of Secured by Design status on a development.
- The Constabulary's generic advice is that a security light serves no useful purpose if there is no-one around to observe what is happening underneath it. By implication this means that security lighting is not a relevant crime prevention measure for most sites in rural Norfolk.

CPRE Norfolk's Advice on Security Lighting

Where security lighting is deemed to be relevant in rural areas careful attention needs to be paid to the type of light used.

CPRE Norfolk recommend movement sensor lights as they only illuminate when approached and draw attention to an area when triggered. Although they can be switched on by animal movements, the lights will be off for most of the night and do not contribute to light pollution.

Sodium lights (high pressure pink and low pressure orange) are especially intrusive in rural landscapes and we do not recommend their use. Not only do they cause the reddish sky-glow that overhangs much of Britain at night but they also introduce a very suburban feel into a previously dark countryside.

White low energy light sources (for example, LED and fluorescent lamps) are far less urbanising and produce better colour differentiation. When mounted in fully shielded, full cut off, flat glass fittings and angled downwards (not upwards or outwards) such lights produce minimal light pollution.

For further advice on lighting issues, please contact David Hook, CPRE Norfolk Light Pollution Campaign Co-ordinator, on hookd47@yahoo.com / 01508 498187.

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We will happily correct any factual errors or omissions in later versions.