

## **Part-Night Lighting Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Wokingham Borough Council is proactively seeking ways to reduce energy, carbon dioxide emissions, and costs.

As part of this, we are rolling out a “Part-night Lighting” scheme. Not only will this cut carbon emissions, but the funding it saves will be directed to protect frontline public services.

### **What is Part-night Lighting?**

Part-night lighting is exactly how it sounds – a street light operates for part of the night. Certain street lights are switched off at those times when fewer people are out and about. For the purposes of the Borough’s scheme, the selected lights in the scheme will be switched off between 0:30am and 5.30am.

A trial scheme was introduced in the Borough in 2010, which worked and continues to work very well. This is why it is being extended.

### **Can the Council legally turn off the lights?**

Yes. There is no statutory requirement for local authorities in the UK to provide public lighting. The law says:

- The Highways Act empowers local authorities to light roads but does not place a duty to provide public lighting i.e. to light properties.
- The Council has a duty of care to road users and has an obligation to light obstructions on the highway.
- The Council has a statutory duty under the Highways Act to ensure the safety of the highway and this includes any lighting equipment placed on the highway.
- The Electricity at Work Regulations imposes a duty on owners and operators of electrical equipment to ensure its safety.

### **How many lights has the Council got in the Wokingham Borough?**

There are some 16,000 street lights across the Borough, which are maintained by us. Some parts of the Borough have street lights which are maintained by a Parish or Town Council – these lights will not be included in the Wokingham Borough Council Part-night lighting scheme.

### **Why has my street been chosen?**

When selecting street lights for part-night lighting we are using exemption criteria to determine which lights should not be operated part-night. The scheme will NOT be introduced in a street light where:

- Lights at major road junctions / roundabouts
- In town centres where there is CCTV, high security businesses like banks, and/or lots of people at night; for example near night clubs and train stations.
- Areas where street lights are needed to reduce road accidents
- Areas where there could be an increase in crime through reduced lighting such as near pubs and specific residential areas

- Remote alleys linking residential streets
- Near traffic islands, pedestrian crossings, footbridges, subways or where the council has a specific duty of care
- In public car parks
- At bus stops which have services operating after midnight
- At level crossings, speed humps, traffic lights
- Where there is sheltered housing for the elderly
- And, within reason, areas where Town and Parish councils have requested lights be considered for exemption.

As part of this scheme, the Council is also upgrading older street lights to use more energy efficient equipment and white lighting. The modern lanterns reduce light pollution (light directed upward or “sky glow”) and the whiter light better shows the surroundings.

### **How does Part-night Lighting work?**

Part night lighting can be operated by changing the street lighting controls to switch off between 0:30am and 5.30am. The equipment the Council is currently installing allows the timings to be changed remotely using wireless radio signals. This enables changes to be easily and quickly made should they be necessary.

### **Has a safety review been carried out on the roads affected?**

Yes, all street lights in these roads have been review by our Road Safety Team and the Police before any lights are switched off. Any concerns raised from the review are either addressed or the streetlight, or in some cases the entire road, taken out of the scheme.

### **If a light is not in operation will the roads become dangerous?**

Lights at major roundabouts and road junctions, at pedestrian crossings, traffic lights, speed humps or that are needed to ensure road safety, have not been selected for this scheme.

It’s also important to remember the lights will only be switched off from 0:30am, when most drivers are not on the road, and switched on again at 5.30am – at least an hour before the morning rush starts.

In addition, if a street light is turned off on the highway it will still need to be regularly inspected to ensure:

- Structural safety
- Electrical safety (if the electrical supply cable into the lighting column is retained)

### **Will this increase crime and traffic accidents within the Borough?**

The safety and wellbeing of residents and highway users is paramount, and has always been the biggest consideration of this scheme. Therefore street lights in areas with evidence of high accident levels at night will NOT be part of the scheme.

We have worked closely with Thames Valley Police in finalising the exemption criteria, and the roads where Part-night lighting will operate. Only those roads the Police have deemed as suitable will be part of the scheme.

The exemption criteria ensures that streetlights in higher crime rate residential areas, in town centres, near high security businesses like banks, near sheltered housing for the

elderly, near leisure facilities and nightclubs will not be part of the scheme. This also includes all lights needed for good road safety.

Accidents and crime in areas covered by the scheme will be closely monitored. If the levels of crime and accidents increase, the lights in those areas will be reviewed and removed from the scheme if appropriate.

### **Will 30mph speed limits be affected if lights are switched off?**

A 30mph speed limit automatically applies on any road containing a system of street lights placed not more than 200 yards apart, unless signposted with a different speed limit. There is no current law stating that these lights have to be switched on all night to be applicable. This has been discussed with the Police, and where there are concerns over potential speeding then lights will be left on all night as appropriate.

Motorists are therefore advised the usual 30mph speed limit remains regardless of whether the lights are switched on or not.

### **How much money and energy is this likely to save?**

Based on the current cost of energy, it will save the public purse up to £18,000 per year per 1,000 part-night lights.

### **Why can't the Council turn off every other light?**

One of the aims of part night lighting is to develop a safe and sustainable way to reduce the long term risks of energy price increases and financial penalties from carbon consumption. To meet this goal, the number of lights that can safely be part of the scheme needs to be maximised. Switching every other light off would not achieve this.

### **Why are some lights near footpaths/alleyways or at the end of a cul-de-sac operated Part-night?**

Safety audits have been carried for each street before they were included in the scheme. Although a Part-night light may be near a footpath or alleyway, its orientation and light distribution is lighting the street, rather than the alleyway or footpath. For this reason, these lights are included in the scheme and don't meet the exemption criteria.

Cul-de-sacs are not part of the exemption criteria. Although cars turn around at the end of these roads, headlights are sufficient for this operation. Also, traffic volumes will be low at the time of night the lights are switched off.

There is no statutory requirement for any local authority in the UK to provide public lighting.

### **Will my Council tax be reduced as a result of the part night lighting?**

Initial estimates based upon the cost of energy should save up to £18,000 per year per 1,000 part-night lights. All savings generated from this scheme will be directed to protect frontline public services. It cannot be used to reduce Council Tax bills.

### **How are home insurance and insurance claims affected by the part night lighting?**

Local governments do not have a statutory requirement to provide public lighting. Lighting is in place for areas of the highway, as a duty of care to road users and to light obstructions i.e. equipment placed on the highway. Lighting is not in place to protect private properties, so this is not taken into consideration as a factor in whether or not to proceed with this

scheme. Therefore, street lighting within the vicinity of your property is not an element insurance companies will or should take into account when developing home insurance or property policies.

### **What constitutes a lit alleyway?**

According to the exemption criteria, street lights that light remote alleys linking residential streets, are not operated as Part-night Lighting. These street lights must be in the alleyway itself to be considered as lighting it. Street lights next to the entrance or on the other side of the road from an entrance to an alleyway are not installed with the intention of lighting it, as these lights are designed and oriented to light the roads to which they are associated. Many of the alleyways throughout the Borough are privately owned and are therefore out of our control. The safety audits completed before the implementation of Part-night Lighting considered alleyways as part of the process.

### **When was the decision made about adopting Part-night Lighting?**

We ran a part night lighting trial from June 2009 to December 2010, which switched off 1,000 street lights within the Borough between approximately 00.30am and 5:30am to reduce energy. Upon reviewing the crime and safety figures, as well as the public response, the Executive decided to adopt Part-night Lighting operation as part of its programme to upgrade old street lights. Details of this decision can be found at:

<http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/council/meetings/minutes/archive/>

Search the archive using the following:

Committee – Executive  
Day – 27  
Month – January  
Category – 2011

The report is under the heading Agenda Page numbers: 89-117.

### **How can I raise questions or concerns about Part-night Lighting?**

Wokingham Borough Council's Customer Service team can be contacted by:

- telephone on (0118) 974 6000
- e-mail to [CustomerService@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:CustomerService@wokingham.gov.uk), or
- if you have limited access to the internet, please write to Customer Services, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BN.