

**Report To:** Planning Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 12 May 2021

**Lead Members/Officer:** Cllr. Mark Young, Planning, Public Protection and Safer Communities and Cllr Tony Thomas, Housing and Communities/Howard Sutcliffe, AONB Officer

**Report Author:** Tony Hughes, AONB Planning Officer

**Title:** **‘Planning for Dark Night Skies’ - Supplementary Planning Guidance for lighting in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB – Consultation draft**

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## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 This report relates to draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for lighting in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which, if adopted, will be used in the determination of planning applications.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1 The adopted AONB Management Plan defines the Special Qualities which make the area a nationally protected landscape. One of the special qualities is tranquillity – which is defined as ‘an atmosphere of calm and stillness; peace and quiet; and with **dark night skies**’. The SPG will help conserve this special quality by providing further guidance for developers and local planning authorities on lighting. In addition, the AONB Joint Committee and Partnership is seeking formal recognition of the area as a Dark Sky Community by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) and the SPG is an essential pre-requisite to such a designation.
- 2.2 The draft SPG for public consultation is attached to this report (Appendix 1).

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 That Planning Committee agree the draft SPG ‘Planning for Dark Night Skies - Supplementary Planning Guidance for lighting in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB’ for public consultation.

## **4. Report details**

- 4.1 The draft SPG supplements adopted LDP policies VOE2: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and RD1: Sustainable development and good design. The draft Key Policies in the emerging replacement LDP which are relevant are Placemaking and Natural and Built Environment. The document provides additional guidance on the lighting of development to ensure that it is designed and specified to conserve the AONB’s dark sky and nocturnal wildlife.

4.2 The public consultation period would be a minimum of 8 weeks which it is anticipated will commence in May 2021. Given current Covid Regulations an online only consultation is currently proposed but if restrictions are eased a public drop-in session could be held at Loggerheads Country Park. It is anticipated that the results of the consultation will be reported back to the Planning Strategy Group and Planning Committee later this summer with a view to securing formal adoption of the document. If adopted, the SPG will be a material planning consideration when assessing planning applications.

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

5.1 The draft SPG contributes to Corporate Priority: Environment – ‘attractive and protected, supporting well-being and economic prosperity’. Reducing light pollution will reduce carbon emissions, contribute to human health and well-being and reduce the negative effects of excessive light on biodiversity. It will also assist in conserving the special qualities of the AONB as a nationally protected landscape and enhance its appeal to visitors. There will also be a positive effect on the local economy by enhancing opportunities for astro-tourism during the off-peak autumn/winter months.

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

6.1 Agreeing the SPG for consultation is not anticipated to create any additional costs. Other services will be affected when they are proposing external lighting schemes or associated development which should be designed and specified to be dark sky friendly. Please note that a dark sky friendly lighting design will not necessarily incur increased costs.

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

7.1 The main conclusions are that the draft SPG will overall have positive impacts on the local economy, health and well-being and biodiversity. It will also contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions. The completed Well-being Impact Assessment is appended to this report.

## **8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

8.1 The AONB covers part of three local planning authority areas – Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham – and the SPG will apply to the relevant area of all three authorities. An Officer Working Group comprising planning officers from the three authorities together with representatives from the AONB and NRW was established to take forward and co-ordinate preparation of the draft SPG. Flintshire’s Planning Strategy Group has approved the SPG for consultation and Wrexham have also agreed the document for public consultation. Denbighshire’s Planning Strategy Group has endorsed the SPG in principle. In addition, the AONB Partnership has also approved the document for consultation purposes.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1 There are no direct negative financial consequences of the recommendations.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1 Failure to put in place an SPG to provide dark sky friendly lighting advice and guidance for developers in and around the AONB will undermine efforts to conserve and enhance tranquillity as one of the AONB's Special Qualities. In addition, such a failure would present a significant barrier to the AONB's aspiration to secure formal recognition of the area as a Dark Sky Community by the IDA.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

11.1 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004).