

Part-night street lighting

Stakeholder engagement

report

April 2025

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1. Executive summary

1.1 The council aims to set a new framework for part-night lighting that supports its net zero ambitions and reduces the negative impacts of light pollution on the natural environment from a carbon and biodiversity perspective. This report presents the findings from the stakeholder engagement activities conducted for the part-night street lighting initiative in Oxfordshire.

The key objectives of this phase one engagement activity were to share the council's emerging plans, understand concerns and impacts surrounding part-night lighting and how these might be mitigated, and develop the formal consultation process.

The engagement activity consisted of five targeted online workshops key stakeholders:

- Representatives of community groups
- District, town and parish councillors
- Emergency services and community safety teams
- Representatives of women and girl's groups
- Employers, including of shift and night time economy workers.

A session was held with Colleague Inclusion Network leads prior to the workshops to seek views, inform approach, and widen stakeholder contact lists.

Five key questions were asked of all groups to focus discussion and ensure equity across the engagement workshops. The responses and feedback from the different groups highlighted several key themes:

1. **Safety Concerns:** Many participants, particularly representatives of community groups, women and girl's groups, and emergency services highlighted the potential negative impact on safety. Concerns were raised about increased crime rates, fear of walking in unlit areas, and the safety of vulnerable groups such as women, visually impaired individuals, and shift workers.
2. **Psychological Impact:** The psychological safety provided by street lighting was a recurring theme. Participants emphasised that well-lit areas contribute to a sense of security and reduce the need for extra planning and precautions when going out.
3. **Environmental and Biodiversity Benefits:** Some stakeholders, particularly district, town, and parish councillors, valued the environmental benefits of reduced light pollution and the positive impact on biodiversity.
4. **Tailored Solutions:** There was a strong call for tailored solutions that consider the specific needs of different areas, including urban and rural contexts, public transport areas, and high footfall locations.
5. **Community Engagement:** Effective communication and engagement with residents were deemed crucial. Participants stressed the importance of local community feedback and insights in informing decision-making and implementation.

The stakeholder engagement has provided valuable insights into the perspectives and concerns of various community groups. While the part-night street lighting initiative has the potential to support the council's net zero ambitions and improve the night time environment, it is essential to carefully consider the safety and well-being of all community

members. Tailored solutions and ongoing community engagement will be key to the successful implementation of this initiative.

2. Introduction

2.1 The council's aim is to set a new framework for part-night lighting for Oxfordshire that supports the council's net zero ambitions and reduces the negative impacts of light pollution on the natural environment from a carbon and biodiversity perspective.

Central to the development of the council's proposals is giving communities the choice to introduce part-night lighting in their local area and recognising that one size does not fit all. This pre-consultation engagement activity focussed on understanding concerns and impacts surrounding part-night lighting, and how these might be mitigated.

Key objectives of this phase one engagement activity were to:

- share the council's emerging plans for a part-night lighting framework for Oxfordshire based on community choice, including operating hours, levels of light intensity and exemptions and how these might apply to different areas
- hear people's views and concerns on introducing part-night lighting in different circumstances, with a specific emphasis of understanding potential impacts on different groups of people who are perceived as being 'at risk' from crime or harm
- share the council's early thoughts on the process for consideration of part-night lighting to ensure the choice to opt-in is community led
- share the council's initial findings from the data analysis phase and exploring any gaps
- listen to ideas and feedback on the council's plans
- explore the potential benefits and impacts on carbon and biodiversity of not introducing part-night lighting; and
- develop the formal consultation process for specific locations which will be taken through the CMD approval process for decision.

3. Methodology

3.1 The engagement activity consisted of five targeted online workshops for:

- Representatives of community groups (9 attendees)
- District, town and parish councillors (13 attendees)
- Emergency services and community safety teams (11 attendees)
- Representatives of women and girl's groups (3 attendees)
- Large employers, including of shift and night-time economy workers (8 attendees)

A full list of groups, organisations and areas represented by attendees can be found in Annex 1.

Participants were welcomed by Sean Rooney (Head of Highway Maintenance and Road Safety) and prior to group discussion, given an overview of part-night lighting and common myths surrounding the issue. It was emphasised that these sessions were

taking place at an early stage of the project and would inform the development of the part-night lighting framework, which would be consulted on separately.

- 3.2 Participants were recruited by email to existing stakeholder contact lists (supplemented with contacts supplied by inclusion network colleagues) and invited to register for their workshop on the council's engagement platform Let's talk Oxfordshire. Reminders were sent to representatives/organisations who had not registered a week prior to the events.
- 3.3 A session was held with Colleague Inclusion Network leads prior to the workshops taking place, to seek views, inform approach and widen stakeholder contact lists.

4. Findings

- 4.1 Five key questions were asked of all groups, to focus discussion and ensure equity across the engagement workshops. It was emphasised that these sessions were taking place at an early stage of the project and would inform the development of the part-night lighting framework, which would be consulted on separately.

Each of these key questions is outlined below, with the responses and feedback from the different groups.

- 4.2 How do you think part-night lighting could affect the safety and well-being of your communities?

Representatives of community groups:

Issues discussed included the potential effect on crime rates, safety for shift workers travelling during unsociable hours, and the impact on vulnerable groups such as women and visually impaired individuals.

Concerns were raised for the safety of students, especially those traveling late at night, living in residential areas or traveling to placements. Examples were given of areas where students have been victims of crime and it was highlighted that are existing student campaigns for an increase in street lighting.

The safety of people (especially those with a disability) using paths and pavements was discussed in relation to potential injury. There were concerns that people would be unable to see obstacles or damaged/uneven surfaces. It was felt that many people with a visual impairment would feel less confident in going out because of this, which could lead to isolation.

High crime rates were highlighted in other areas, with some participants feeling that street lighting is necessary to ensure the safety of shift workers and late-night commuters.

It was felt that part-night lighting would cause more people to choose to travel by car than foot if they had to go out, reducing the health benefits of walking and increasing their environmental impact.

Participants sought reassurance that the police were also being engaged as part of this process, and it was confirmed that they are.

District, town and parish councillors:

Participants shared their concerns and views on how part-night lighting could affect their communities. Issues raised included safety, fear, light pollution, and the need for tailored solutions for different areas.

Concerns were raised about safety, including psychological safety and the fear associated with walking in unlit areas at night. Some participants felt they would feel unsafe walking home if the streetlights were turned off, which could lead to more people using cars instead of walking.

Some participants questioned the potential impact of part-night lighting on public transport users. It was suggested that bus stops and other public transport areas should be considered for exemptions to ensure the safety of people using these services at night.

Others raised the issue of light pollution, its impact on residents and wildlife, and the importance of maintaining dark skies. A representative highlighted that her rural community values dark skies for biodiversity and the ability to observe the night sky without light pollution.

Differences in opinion between representatives from urban and rural areas were noted. Overall, rural representatives showed more positive attitudes towards part-night lighting, whereas urban representatives demonstrated greater concern regarding its implementation.

Emergency services and community safety teams:

Participants flagged up the different lighting requirements between urban and rural areas and noted the importance of considering local contexts and ensuring community input, particularly in high footfall locals and rural areas. Urban areas have higher footfall and therefore generate higher crime rates and need lighting. Participants feedback the crime survey work that has been carried in Oxford City with Universities and the concerns raised by students regarding violence towards women; streetlighting is always flagged up as deterrent. There is also a focus on having well-lit spaces for the route home. Advice is given to women not to walk alone and to use well-lit routes.

How well an area is lit, does affect fear of crime and safety perceptions. For example, crimes such as drug dealing gravitates towards unlit spaces; but doesn't always show up in crime figures. Residents may be aware of it, and it generates fears, but is not always reported. Unlit spaces in neighbourhoods do affect safety perception issues.

The public perception of crime can be reported via national online platforms such as 'Street Safe 'and Common Spaces'. There was a request for OCC to use these platforms when designing PNL schemes and a request was made for OCC to promote them to residents.

Representatives of women and girl's groups:

Participants feedback a key aspect of street lighting is the psychological safety it provides for woman and girls and how it unlit spaces affects behaviour change in women. Street lighting is crucial for their sense of security. The presence of lighting provides a sense of security and reduces the need for extra planning and precautions when going out. Woman and girls already change their behaviours and route choices depending on street lighting levels, and extra planning and forethought are required in advance. Street lighting also provides assurance, when incidents do occur, you can see better.

Lower levels of light and unlit spaces also discourage women and girls from accessing outside areas, for instance engaging with leisure and sports activities such as group sport activities in parks, or jogging residential roads. Reports indicate women are much less likely to engage with sport activities in the winter months due to darker mornings / evenings for instance.

Concerns raised for night economy workers, and shift workers, who finish their shifts at various times during the night, also rely on street lighting for their safety. The absence of lighting can increase the risk and inconvenience for these workers, and the effects it could potentially have on social night life. Consideration is already required for later journey times home in the dark, and part night lighting may restrict this further.

The focus of the PNL programme was also queried; if the focus on public street lighting is for environmental impact, it suggesting that large employers and businesses should also be targeted for keeping large warehouse and office lights on.

Large employers, including of shift and night-time economy workers:

Concerns were raised about the safety of shift workers who travel during early morning or late-night hours. Participants felt that it was important that surrounding areas be well-lit to ensure their safety while commuting.

Participants discussed the large involvement of students in the night time economy, both as employees and customers. They emphasised that students often travel late at night on residential roads to return home.

The impact on more vulnerable groups was highlighted, in particular women and people with disabilities. They stressed the importance of maintaining adequate lighting to ensure these groups feel safe and secure in their communities, and that for people with a visual impairment low lighting can make the difference between some and no sight of the road.

Concerns were also raised for cyclists and a potential for more accidents, with low lighting making it more difficult to see (and avoid) pot holes.

4.3 What steps would you like to see to minimise the risks to, and the concerns of, your communities in relation to part-night lighting?

Representatives of community groups:

Concerns were raised about the previous Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) and the need for inclusive consultation, so that the impacts on all communities to be understood, was emphasised.

District, town and parish councillors:

Participants emphasised the need for tailored solutions for different areas and for the needs of each area should be considered individually. In particular, the differing want and needs of urban and rural areas were highlighted.

It was suggested that bus stops and other public transport areas should be considered for exemptions to ensure the safety of people using these services at night.

The possibility of providing regular, transparent reports on local crime and road traffic incident data to parishes for publication was discussed, as it was felt this could reduce the fear of crime and road incidents in unlit areas.

Emergency services and community safety teams:

The dynamic capability of lighting systems is needed to allow for quick adjustments in response to crime or significant events. It was noted that having the ability to 'reserve' or stand down a scheme, if it was found to increase crime or affect residents' perception of safety would provide assurance.

It was raised that engagement with Emergency and community safety services and their communities is vital. There will be different requirements depending in the different communities. It was underlined that considering community safety in high footfall locations, such as city centres, lightning is crucial for preventing crime and ensuring public safety.

Reliable transport home routes must be considered. There are unique challenges faced by rural communities, where lighting is essential for safety, particularly at bus stops and along major routes. The late-night journey home routes from well-lit urban areas, out to rural areas that don't have lighting needs to be planned carefully. Many rural areas do not have lighting near bus stops, and close engagement and discussions with bus companies should be considered.

Representatives of women and girl's groups:

Concerns were raised, about the potential impact on women and girls' safety and freedom. It was emphasized that reducing street lighting could restrict their ability to engage in activities and feel safe in public space, and participants feedback that it will be very useful to know in advance which areas are being considered for part night lighting, and which areas have part night lighting so woman can plan ahead accordingly.

It was noted that good communication and good engagement with residents in the consultation processes is key. Assurance would be provided by the fact that the parish application process would be an 'opt in' option for Parish's, and not an 'opt out' option.

The consideration of a broader view, across all areas; not just public or main spaces, was highlighted. Evidencing a joined-up approach to environmental and cost-saving measures, considering the broader impact on communities and ensuring that actions taken do not disproportionately affect women and girls.

Large employers, including of shift and night-time economy workers:

Participants felt that lighting should be maintained around public transport, both at defined sites (e.g. bus stops) and the key walking routes to them.

The group discussed increased risk to cyclists and felt that it was important that the council be measured in their response, as they felt responsibility for lighting lies with cyclists and that the council should not "nanny" them. It was suggested that an awareness campaign about appropriate lighting (to be seen vs. to see) could be helpful.

It was felt that lighting in areas of night time economy and on key residential routes where people will be returning home should not be turned off.

4.4 Part night lighting isn't one size fits all, and some things will make an area unsuitable for it. This is a list of our proposed exemptions:

- a. Major road junctions, including roundabouts, slip roads and rail crossings
- b. Where there are traffic calming measures, significant road narrowing or intrusions
- c. Controlled crossing points
- d. Areas supporting a night-time economy
- e. Steps / stairs / gates / obstacles
- f. Waterside paths
- g. Remote alleyways
- h. Subways and underpasses
- i. Where there is Local Authority / police CCTV / ANPR
- j. Areas with high levels of crime or road traffic collisions

Are these the right criteria to make an area exempt? Have we missed something?

Representatives of community groups:

Participants felt that all the proposed exemptions were appropriate but requested clarity on controlled crossing points and whether this would include areas such as zebra crossings where there is no control by the pedestrian.

Two additional exemptions were suggested:

- Arterial roads into/between areas of night-time economy
- Pathways shared by pedestrians and cyclists

District, town and parish councillors:

Participants agreed with the proposed exemptions and suggested two additional areas for consideration:

- Bus stops and public transport areas
- Areas with defibrillators and other emergency resources (e.g. for flooding)

Emergency services and community safety teams:

Overall, the list was considered comprehensive, but participants feedback that the perception of safety / fear of crime needs to add as an exemption to the list, ensuring that areas where people unsafe are adequately lit. The fear of crime, and perceptions of safety and of not being able to get 'out and about' can affect people, even when the crime data doesn't reflect a high level of crime.

The importance of connectivity to night time economy areas, such as local shopping areas need to be considered as an exemption, as well as the routes for journeys home at night.

Representatives of women and girl's groups:

Participants feedback that the schemes need to be considered on a street by street basis, and that the exemption list does not feel very nuanced. Also queried how crime data will be used to analyse the schemes. Need to have consideration of crime level data pre and post implementation and have the ability to stand down a scheme quickly if crime or fear of crime increases. Decisions on implementing a scheme need to be made on the basis of safety.

The late-night journey home from train stations or bus stops to residential areas needs to be considered. Younger people who are more likely to be going out later, may not be able to afford a taxi home for instance.

Gave an example of how domestic abuse happens in homes in residential areas, and woman may feel less inclined to leave the home if residential areas are unlit, but roundabouts remain lit, and that feels like bias towards car drivers. Flagged up the Government 'Safer Streets' initiative following the murder of Sarah Everad which recommends better street lighting, noting that there could be negative reputational impacts for OCC by introducing part night lighting. Noted that residents need to be assured that their concerns are listened to and schemes are not 'pushed through'.

Large employers, including of shift and night-time economy workers:

Participants agreed with the proposed exemptions and suggested four additions:

- Bus stops and the key routes leading to them
- Residential areas supporting the night time economy (i.e. where large numbers of people are likely to be coming from and returning to)
- Public areas covered by private CCTV. It was also noted that some companies and institutions will have designed their CCTV coverage to take advantage of existing lighting.

- Outside sites which employ large numbers of shift workers, such as hospitals, warehouses and transport hubs.

4.5 We are considering two 'standard' timeframes for part night lighting. Between 11:30 pm and 05:30 am in rural locations, and between midnight and 05:30 am in urban locations. This is based on when the least amount of people are using roads and paths, and when the last trains and buses run. These times could be tailored for an area's individual needs (e.g. if the last trains arrive after midnight). What do you think about these timings?

Representatives of community groups:

Participants emphasised the need for flexibility in timings to accommodate local needs. They suggested considering variations based on factors such as shift workers, night-time economy, and public transport schedules.

It was queried whether timings should vary between summer and winter, as daylight hours change.

District, town and parish councillors:

Overall participants were happy with the two 'standard' timings but emphasised the need for tailored solutions for different areas. Concerns were raised about night shift workers who travel at unusual hours and it was suggested that their needs in the timing decisions.

It was queried whether small market town would be categorised as rural or urban.

Emergency services and community safety teams:

Overall participants agreed the timings suitable but suggested the ability to adjust the time frames based on local needs, such as late-night public transport schedules, or the presence of the night time economy, to ensure safety and convenience for residents. It was noted that specific timings requirements should be considered for areas where there is a high number of people that may access accommodation later at night, such as student or nurse accommodation blocks in Oxford City. An example of the area around Brookes University was also given as an area of high footfall later at night.

It was also raised that high flood risk areas may need to be considered as a high risk areas that require lighting.

Representatives of women and girl's groups:

Concerns were expressed about the long duration of the proposed timings and the potential impact on safety, suggesting that lighting should not be turned off at all. Participants flagged up that these unsocial hours are times of high risk for women, when there are less people around and it is dark. Underlined the issue with late night journeys home, and poorly lit spaces. There might not be a change in crime rates, but there will be a change in women's behaviour, it will increase 'no go zones' for women.

Flagged up potential concerns of first responders and those working in the community. They might feel safe having to work in unlit spaces.

Large employers, including of shift and night-time economy workers:

Participants suggested that the timings should be adjusted seasonally to account for variations in daylight hours and ensure that lighting is adequate during darker winter months.

It was queried whether the system could be flexible enough to be adapted for events and festivals, such as May morning and religious festivals like Eid and Diwali. Instances such as the public unrest in the summer of 2024 were also highlighted. It was felt that lighting should be maintained to ensure public safety during increased nighttime activity.

4.6 Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is fully oppose and 5 is fully approve), to what degree do you support the introduction of part-night lighting?

Stakeholder group	Number of responses from each group					Total respondents
	1 Fully oppose	2	3	4	5 Fully approve	
Representatives of community groups	1	1	1	1	2	6
District, town and parish councillors	2	0	2	7	2	13
Emergency services and community safety teams	0	2	3	1	4	10
Representatives of women and girl's groups	3	0	0	0	0	3
Large employers, including of shift and night-time economy workers	0	3	3	0	0	6

5. Conclusion

5.1 The stakeholder engagement activities for the part-night street lighting initiative have provided valuable insights into the perspectives and concerns of various community groups. Overall, the feedback indicates a mixed response, with some stakeholders expressing support for the environmental benefits and cost savings, while others have raised significant concerns about safety and well-being.

5.2 Key themes that have emerged from the comments include:

1. **Safety Concerns:** Many participants, particularly representatives of community groups, women and girl's groups, and emergency services, highlighted the potential negative impact on safety. Concerns were raised about increased crime rates, fear of walking in unlit areas, and the safety of vulnerable groups such as women, visually impaired individuals, and shift workers.
2. **Psychological Impact:** The psychological safety provided by street lighting was a recurring theme. Participants emphasised that well-lit areas contribute to a sense of security and reduce the need for extra planning and precautions when going out.
3. **Environmental and Biodiversity Benefits:** Some stakeholders, particularly district, town, and parish councillors, valued the environmental benefits of reduced light pollution and the positive impact on biodiversity.
4. **Tailored Solutions:** There was a strong call for tailored solutions that consider the specific needs of different areas, including urban and rural contexts, public transport areas, and high footfall locations.
5. **Community Engagement:** Effective communication and engagement with residents were deemed crucial. Participants stressed the importance of local community feedback and insights in informing decision-making and implementation.

In conclusion, while it is accepted that the part-night street lighting initiative has the potential to support the council's net zero ambitions and improve the night time environment, it is essential to carefully consider the safety and well-being of all community members and stakeholder feedback indicated that tailored solutions and ongoing community engagement will be key to the successful implementation of this initiative.

Annex 1: Groups, organisations and areas represented by attendees

Representatives of community groups:

- Adult Social Care Visual Impairment Team
- Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel
- Harcourt Hill Residents Association
- Langford Village Community Association
- LGBT Oxon
- Oxford City Angels
- Oxford Pedestrians Association
- Oxford Students' Union
- Oxfordshire Liveable Streets

District, town and parish councillors:

- Abingdon Town Council
- Appleton with Eaton parish council
- Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney Parish Council
- Bampton Parish Council
- Beckley and Stowood Parish Council
- Berinsfield Parish Council
- Bicester Town Council
- Chinnor Parish Council
- Clerk, Appleton with Eaton Parish Council
- Dorchester Parish Council
- Goring Parish Council
- Weston on the Green Parish Council
- Witney Town Council

Emergency services and community safety teams:

- Oxford City Council – Community safety
- Oxfordshire County Council – Fire and rescue and community safety
- Oxfordshire County Council – Vizion Zero project
- South and Vale District Councils – Community safety
- South Central Ambulance Service
- Thames Valley Police
- West Oxfordshire District Council – Community safety

Representatives of women and girl's groups:

- Oxfordshire Youth - Young Women and Girls Project
- Survivor Space Oxfordshire
- Violence against Women and Girls consultant

Large employers, including of shift and night-time economy workers:

- Oxford Brookes University
- Oxford Bus Company
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxford University
- Oxford University Hospitals