

Essex County Council

Part-night lighting

About part night lighting (PNL)

Over 70% of the over 128,000 council-owned streetlights are operating part night lighting, with certain exceptions that meet the key criteria outlined below. Part night street lights are switched off between 1am and 5am, Tuesday to Sunday (midnight until 5am on Monday mornings).

To see which lights we switch off, please view the map below which shows all street lights owned and operated by us and our illuminated signs / bollards.

Exception criteria

Certain locations meeting the exception criteria will continue to be lit through the night, such as:

- Sites where there are a large number of conflicting traffic movements (eg roundabouts) which are on significant routes (generally those lit by columns greater than 6m high)
- Sites where street lights are installed as a result of accident remedial measures
- Town Centre areas where there is one or more of the following features:
 - Publicly maintained CCTV
 - High proportion of high security premises (eg. banks, jewellers)
 - Areas of high crime risk
 - High concentration of people at night such as transport interchanges, nightclubs etc.

- Main approaches to town centre areas where there is a mix of development between residential and commercial/industrial (eg. not exclusively residential)
- Sites where the police can demonstrate that there is likely to be an increase in crime if the lights are switched off during part of the night (or that there will be a decrease in crime if the lights are switched back on)
- Remote footpaths and alleys linking residential streets
- Where there is a statutory requirement to provide lighting.

Lighting for road signs, traffic bollards etc., are not be affected.

Local agreements

We have a local agreement with Harlow council to maintain all night lights.

Epping

Street lights in parts of Epping operate part night lighting between 1am and 5am all week.

Questions and answers

Can Essex County Council legally turn off lights?

Yes, Essex County Council is empowered as a lighting authority to light roads which in their opinion should be lit. The Council is not duty bound to provide street lighting.

Why not replace the lighting with new technologies?

Essex County Council will continue to monitor and trial the development of new technology that is carbon and cost effective.

Can I pay to keep the street light outside my house on?

No, part night lighting is to help reduce Essex County Council's energy consumption and light pollution.

Why my street?

All Essex County Council owned street lights have now been programmed to part night operation unless covered by the exception criteria. Some street lights are owned by district councils or parish councils who are responsible for paying the costs of those lights and deciding whether or not part night lighting is appropriate.

What happens if there is an increase in crime/accident levels where part night lighting is in operation?

The experience to date is that there has been no increase in crime or accident levels which could be attributed to the introduction of part night lighting. Essex Police can ask for lights to be turned back on if they consider that there has been a significant increase in crime due to the introduction of part night lighting. Individual/public requests will not be considered. Crime statistics recorded during the trial showed no significant change due to the installation of part night lighting in the two districts. The number of offences occurring between 11.30pm and 5.30am actually dropped by 14% in Maldon and by 12.6% in Uttlesford. Since the pilot scheme began there has also been no increase in crime statistics or road collisions during the hours of switch off.

When will the part night lighting start in my area?

Part night lighting is now in effect across Essex.

What about the increase of road accidents during the period that the lights are switched off?

There are less traffic movements between these hours and road accidents during this timeframe are considered low. However, the exception criteria require lights to be lit where this is a recommendation of road safety engineers or where lights were originally installed as an accident prevention measure.

What about the fear of crime?

People may fear that they are at an increased risk of crime although there is no evidence that there is an increased risk.

This is important because fear of crime can influence people's behavior – for example by deterring them from going out after dark.

People may also feel less safe at home. Since 2006 the Council has undertaken regular surveys of public attitudes. The survey questions were originally prescribed by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Council was required to carry out a postal survey of a balanced sample of residents (although each resident is randomly selected). One of the questions in the survey asks people if they feel safe in their own area outside after dark. Results of the study show that between 2006 and 2013 Uttlesford and Maldon districts both experienced a significant increase in people who say they feel safe after dark. Unfortunately, this survey was not conducted before 2006. The results clearly show that the introduction of part night lighting has had no long term impact on fear of crime. Indeed the increase in the percentage of people feeling safe outside after dark has increased in Maldon and Uttlesford more than in other areas. As previously explained above regarding public safety – consultation with the Emergency Services has been conducted and in addition, an Equality Impact Assessment has also been conducted in line with Essex County Council's change processes, this considers the risks to protected groups.

What about crime?

An important consideration in the decision on implementation of part night lighting is the impact on crime. Under the Crime and Disorder Act the Council is under duty to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect on crime and disorder in its area. This is not a duty to reduce crime but a duty to take the need into account when making decisions. The experience in the Districts of Maldon and Uttlesford provide evidence that the introduction of part night lighting has not had any impact on crime. In fact crime in both districts has fallen since 2005 (the year before part night lighting was introduced). If part night lighting was responsible for an increase in crime then one would expect to see overall crime trends to be higher in districts which introduced part night lighting.