

Frequently Asked Questions: Street lighting

Is street lighting just lampposts?

No – it includes all illuminated items on the road network such as road signs, pelican crossing beacons, bollards and the lampposts (columns).

The light outside my house is too bright – what can you do to fix it?

If you report this to us with the lamppost reference number we can check the light for you. If the brightness of the new light is causing an issue we can investigate it for you and look at options such as a guard on the side that shines into a property.

At first you may notice that the newly fitted LED is much brighter than the older orange lights. This is because LEDs give a white light that is brighter and picks out the colours of everything better. Visibility is improved for motorists and pedestrians and also on footage for security and CCTV cameras.

I've noticed a street light is out – how do I get it fixed?

Use the Report It option on the MK Council website homepage to report any issue to us. You can also call 01908 252353.

Remember to include the reference number from the lamppost so we can find it easily to inspect it.

Also include a description of the fault such as light flickering, light on during the day, damaged street light column, wires exposed, column door missing or damaged. It helps our inspectors to find and log the repairs.

The new LEDs are too bright – can we keep the orange ones?

The old orange lights are not energy efficient, create light pollution and contain harmful elements like sodium and mercury.

They are no longer fit for purpose and cost a lot to maintain and to light. The orange glow spreads light in all directions, including upwards which causes light pollution and intrudes into people's properties.

LED lighting is cleaner, crisper and more energy efficient.

What is an LED?

LED (Light Emitting Diode) is a more energy efficient type of light that we are rolling out across MK. The light is a more efficient, white light compared to the older orange glow lights.

We can target the light where it is needed unlike the older lights which illuminate the whole area causing light pollution and energy wastage.

LEDs last for much longer than the traditional lanterns (bulbs), give off virtually no heat and contain no hazardous substances so they are environmentally friendly too!

Are LEDs safe?

LEDs contain no hazardous chemicals unlike many of the older street lighting that is still in place in some areas. The LED luminaires that we use are RoHS (Restricted of Hazardous Substances) compliant too.

Older street lights burn sodium which gives the orange or yellow glow. The LEDs don't contain any of these harmful elements like mercury or sodium.

Are LEDs harmful to your eyes?

LEDs do not pose any health risk to the retina for short exposure times. You would need to be looking directly at an LED for a long time regularly to cause health issues.

In fact the brightness of our LEDs is less or equivalent to the brightness of moonlight.

Do LED lights disrupt sleep by the production of blue light?

LED street lights are normally at lower levels than the ones found in your home. Handheld devices have a greater impact on melatonin* levels than street lights e.g. mobile phones, laptops or tablets.

LEDs can be made either as cool white or warm white light. Cool white has the blue element to it with warm white light having red elements. Studies show that to impact on your melatonin levels the exposure to light would need to be over 30 lux** and would need to be continuous for at least one hour. Even this level of exposure would not be enough to disrupt sleep patterns.

*Melatonin is the hormone that regulates our sleep patterns (body clock).

**Lux is a measurement of brightness

Why are you switching to LEDs?

We have over 56,000 street lights across Milton Keynes. This is a very high number and we need to reduce our energy bill to save money but also to be more energy efficient. All councils need to be looking at becoming carbon neutral.

LEDs need less energy than the older orange lights and we can target the light exactly where it is needed towards the road or pavement so they also reduce light pollution.

The LED lights don't need as much maintenance so we are reducing future costs on this too. The older street lights can take up to ten minutes to reach full brilliance but the LEDs are on full brightness straight away.

Once the LED roll out is complete we'll be able to save between 50-70% of energy. Good news for us and the environment!

How much energy have you saved so far converting to LEDs?

We've converted around 45% of street lights to LED so far as part of our ongoing programme. This includes all the grid roads and many estates. We've reduced our carbon footprint by 6,400 tonnes through energy savings.

4.4 million kilowatt hours have been saved which is the equivalent energy used by 1,000 medium households in one year!

I live in a conservation area – will you put modern LEDs here?

No – in conservation areas we will install lights that are specially designed to reflect the historical buildings around it. We work with a local company who've been designing street lights for MK since the late 1960's.

Will you be turning off any street lights?

No – we may dim some lights if there is reduced traffic activity and the full light is not needed.

Will every street light be upgraded to LED?

Our upgrade programme has already begun and we've covered a lot of estates already and all the grid roads.

We aim to roll out the LED lights to all council-owned and maintained street lights as quickly as possible but we only have a limited resource to do this so it may take longer to achieve.

Will there be any disruption?

Usually an upgrade will take on 15-20 minutes to complete using a cherry picker vehicle that can take the engineer right up to the light so there won't be any digging and any traffic management will be minor.

The work will take place during the day so there will be no impact to lighting after dark.

Will I be able to access my drive or park on the street whilst the upgrade works are going on?

There may be some minor disruption whilst the lanterns on the street lights are being upgraded however it only takes 15-20 minutes to complete.

What happens to the old lights when you remove them?

The orange lights are properly disposed of under the WEEE Directive* set in place by the government. If we do need to remove a column (lamppost) we recycle all of the materials associated with this.

*The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE Directive) is the European Community Directive 2012/19/EU on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). It sets out standards and guidelines for collection, recycling and recovery of all types of electrical goods.

