

## How Hill Dark Sky Discovery Site

Summary:	To support the Broads Authority application to secure designation of How Hill as a Dark Sky Discovery Site
Conclusions:	This proposal complements the defined characteristics and valued features of the Settled Farmland Landscape Type as set out in the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment (2021 SPD) and accords with the relevant environment policies within the Local Plan.
Recommendations:	<b>That NNDC in principle supports the Broads Authority application to secure nomination of How Hill as a Dark Sky Discovery Site</b>

Cabinet Member(s)	Ward(s) affected
Cllr J Toye	St Benets
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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Broads Authority, BA, have approached NNDC, as the Local Authority for the area, seeking formal support for their proposed nomination application for How Hill to become a Dark Sky Discovery Site, through the UK Dark Sky Discovery Partnership.
- 1.2 Dark Sky Discovery Sites form a nationwide network of places that meet certain criteria and that can be advertised as places to go and discover the night sky. They are nominated by local groups and organisations, must have community support and be nationally recognised as places so dark, you can easily identify the Milky Way or the constellation of Orion with the naked eye.
- 1.3 Generally they are places that: are away from the worst of any local light pollution, provide good sightlines of the sky and have good, freely accessible public access, including wheelchair access and as such raise awareness and appreciation of dark skies.
- 1.4 Criteria include site size, where the site should be small enough to be defined clearly but large enough to accommodate a visiting group of up to 30 people. The site must provide visible sight lines to the seven main stars of Orion (one star site) or the Milky Way, (two star site). In order to achieve these the site must be shielded from car lights, street lights etc. The site should also provide good sightlines of the horizon in all directions. More information on Dark Sky Discovery sites can be found at <http://www.darkskydiscovery.org.uk/>

- 1.5 North Norfolk has two nationally recognised Dark Sky Discovery Sites at Wiveton Downs and Kelling Heath.

## **2. Matters to Consider**

- 2.1 The application for nomination is being brought forward by local interested parties through the BA, and in order for it to progress needs to be supported by the local authorities and the community. The Broads Authority have measured the light levels within their area and consider that How Hill meets the required criteria for a two star Dark Sky Discovery Site. Their proposed application for consideration of How Hill as a Dark Sky Discovery site is attached for reference at **Appendix A** and includes how the site meets the required criteria and a map of the area. The BA advise that Parish Council and How Hill Trust have been contacted and are included to support, but have a meeting in August where it is intended to discuss locally. The BA also advise that since the report was circulated they have further considered the proposed area and now intend to remove the viewing areas near the cottage and river from the applications, reflecting that being near to the water might cause potential issues. As such the application will now focus on the field area only.

- 2.2 The site meets the size criteria and is publicly accessible. There are already car parking facilities.

- 2.3 Compliance with the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment 2021.  
It is recommended that NNDC formally endorses this proposal for nomination. It would reinforce the Valued Features and Qualities of the Settled Farmland Landscape Type as set out in the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment (2021 SPD). This emphasises the dark night skies at night between towns and villages being a feature of the strong rural character and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

- 2.4 Compliance with Local Plan Policy EN2: Protection and Enhancement of Landscape and Settlement Character.  
This policy sets out a list of criteria that development proposals should take account of with regard to protection, conservation and enhancement of local landscape character. One of these is 'nocturnal character'. The designation of How Hill as a Dark Sky Discovery site would help to reinforce this.

- 2.5 Implications of designation.  
Should How Hill become formally designated a Dark Sky Discovery Site, consideration of future planning applications in the vicinity of the site would take this into account as a material consideration.

## **4. Conclusion / Recommendations**

That Members give in principle support to the Broads Authority in their bid to attribute a Dark Sky Discovery Site nomination to How Hill.

## **Appendix A**

### **Broads Authority Draft Assessment of How Hill against Dark Sky Discovery Site Criteria**