

GUIDANCE NOTE: DEALING WITH SURFACE WATER

1. Requirements of PPS25 regarding surface water management

Urban developments can have a big effect on the quantity and speed of surface water runoff. By replacing vegetated ground with buildings and paved areas the amount of water being absorbed into the ground is severely reduced, therefore increasing the amount of surface water present. This additional surface water increases the demand on drainage systems in built up areas. Traditional drainage systems are designed to get rid of the water as quickly as possible to prevent flooding in the built up area. This can cause problems, particularly downstream, by altering the natural flow patterns of the catchment. In addition, water quality can be affected due to pollutants from the built up areas being washed into the watercourse due to the lack of treatment of the water. One technique which can reduce this problem is the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).

2. What are SUDS?

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) are techniques designed to control surface water runoff before it enters the watercourse. They are designed to mimic natural drainage processes, along with treating the water to reduce the amount of pollutants getting into the watercourse. They can be located as close as possible to where the rainwater falls and provide varying degrees of treatment for the surface water, using the natural processes of sedimentation, filtration, adsorption and biological degradation.

3. The Purpose of SUDS

SUDS are more sustainable than traditional methods because they can:

- Manage the speed of the runoff
- Protect or enhance the water quality
- Reduce the environmental impact of developments
- Provide a habitat for wildlife
- Encourage natural groundwater recharge.

In addition, they can be used to create more imaginative and attractive developments and are designed so that less damage is done, than conventional systems, if their capacity is exceeded.

4. Places where are SUDS appropriate

Surface water management using SUDS can be implemented at all scales and in most urban settings, ranging from hard-surfaced areas to soft landscaped features, even if there is limited space. Most techniques use infiltration but even if the area has little or no infiltration SUDS can still be used in the form of green roofs, permeable surfaces, swales and ponds.

5. The different types of measures

SUDS are made up of one or more structures built to manage surface water runoff, and used in conjunction with good site management. There are five general methods:

- i. **Prevention** – this can involve minimizing paved areas, replacing tarmac with gravel, rainwater recycling, cleaning and sweeping, careful disposal of pollutants, and general maintenance.
- ii. **Filter strips and swales** – these are vegetated surface features that drain water evenly off impermeable areas. Swales (figure 1) are long shallow channels whilst filter strips (figure 2) are gently sloping areas of ground. Both of these mimic natural drainage by allowing rainwater to run in sheets through vegetation, slowing and filtering the flow.

Figure 1 - Cross-section of a Swale

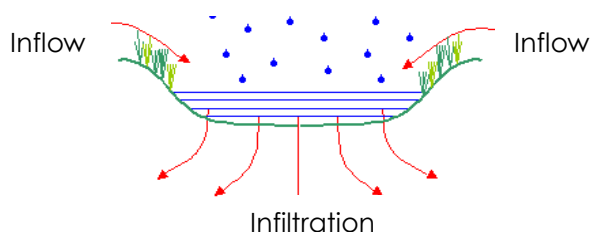
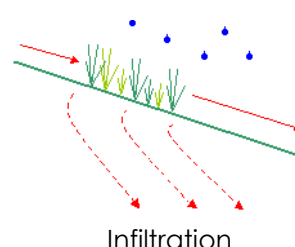


Figure 2 - Cross-section of a Filter Strip



- iii. **Permeable surfaces and filter drains** – these are devices that have a volume of permeable material below ground to store surface water. Runoff flows to this storage area via a permeable surface.
- iv. **Infiltration devices** – these enhance the natural capacity of the ground to store and drain water. They include soakaways, infiltration trenches and infiltration basins. See figure 3.
- v. **Basins and ponds** – these are areas for storage of surface runoff e.g. floodplains, wetlands, and flood storage reservoirs. They can be designed to control flows by storing water then releasing it slowly once the risk of flooding has passed. See figure 4.

Figure 3 Cross-section through an Infiltration Basin

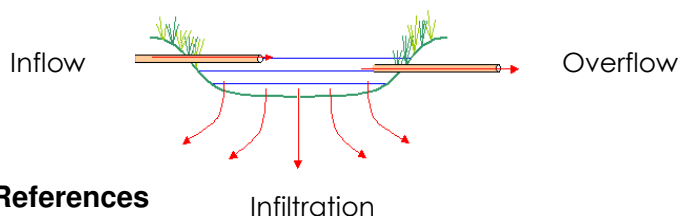
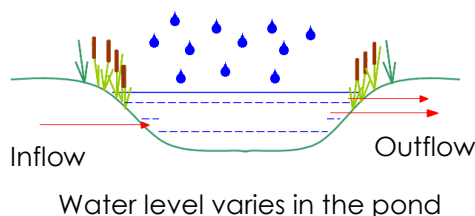


Figure 4 - Cross-section of a Pond



6. References

Information taken from:

- *Planning Policy Statement 25 – Development and Flood Risk*, December 2006
- www.ciria.org/suds