Appendix I: SuDS Review

Introduction

Traditionally, built developments have utilised piped drainage systems to manage storm water and convey surface water run-off away from developed areas as quickly as possible. Typically, these systems connect to the public sewer system for treatment and/or disposal to local watercourses. Whilst this approach rapidly transfers storm water from developed areas, the alteration of natural drainage processes can potentially impact on downstream areas by increasing flood risk, reduction in water quality, loss of water resource and detriment to wildlife. Therefore, receiving watercourses have greater sensitivity to rainfall intensity, volume and catchment land uses post development.

Current planning policy outlines that runoff rates post development must not exceed the existing (pre-development) rates. In addition, opportunities should be sought to achieve Greenfield runoff rates.

The up grading of sewer systems to accommodate increased surface water from new development is constrained by existing development and cost. Therefore, the capacity of the system becomes inadequate for the increased volumes and rates of surface water runoff. This results in an increase in flood risk from sewer sources and pollution of watercourses. In addition, the implications of climate change on rainfall intensities, leading to flashier catchment/site responses and surcharging of piped systems may increase. For these reasons, conventional drainage systems are no longer the preferred method of draining a site.

In addition, as flood risk has increased in importance within planning policy, a disparity has emerged between the design standard of conventional sewer systems (1 in 30 year) and the typical design standard flood (1 in 100 year). The 30 year design standard and increased urbanisation means that it is more difficult for existing drainage infrastructure to cater for runoff which can result in potential flood risk from surface water/combined sewer systems.

A sustainable solution to these issues is to reduce the volume and/or rate of water entering the sewer system and watercourses.

What are Sustainable Drainage Systems?

PPS25 indicates that Regional Planning Bodies and Local Authorities should promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water runoff generated by development. In addition, drainage of rainwater from roofs and paved areas around buildings should comply with the 2002 Amendment of Building Regulations Part H (3). The requirements are as follows:

1. Adequate provision shall be made for rainwater to be carried from the roof of the building.
2. Paved areas around the building shall be so constructed as to be adequately drained.
3. Rainwater from a system provided pursuant to sub-paragraphs (1) or (2) shall discharge to one of the following in order of priority:

   a) An adequate soakaway or some other adequate infiltration system; or where that is not reasonably practicable;
   b) A watercourse; or where that is not reasonably practicable
   c) A sewer.

SuDS seek to manage surface water as close to its source as possible, mimicking surface water flows arising from the site, prior to the proposed development. Typically this approach involves a move away from piped systems to softer engineering solutions inspired by natural drainage processes.

SuDS should be designed to take into account the surface run-off quantity, rates and also water quality ensuring their effective operation up to and including the 1 in 100 year design standard flood including an increase in peak rainfall up to 30% to account from climate change.

Wherever possible, a SuDS technique should seek to contribute to each of the three goals identified below with the favoured system contributing significantly to each objective. Where possible SuDS solutions for a site should seek to:

1. Reduce flood risk (to the site and neighbouring areas),
2. Reduce pollution, and,
3. Provide landscape and wildlife benefits.

These goals can be achieved by utilising a management plan incorporating a chain of techniques, (as outlined in Interim Code of Practice for Sustainable Drainage Systems 2004), where each component adds to the performance of the whole system:

Prevention	good site design and upkeep to prevent runoff and pollution (e.g. limited paved areas, regular pavement sweeping)
Source Control	runoff control at/near to source (e.g. rainwater harvesting, green roofs, pervious pavements)
Site Control	water management from a multitude of catchments (e.g. route water from roofs, impermeable paved areas to one infiltration/holding site)
Regional Control	integrate runoff management systems from a number of sites (e.g. into a detention pond)

The application of SuDS is not limited to a single technique per site. Often a successful SuDS solution will utilise a combination of techniques, providing flood risk, pollution and landscape/wildlife benefits. In addition, SuDS can be employed on a strategic scale, for example with a number of sites contributing to large scale jointly funded and managed SuDS. It should be noted, each development site must offset its own increase in runoff and attenuation cannot be “traded” between developments.

Planning

All relevant organisations should meet at an early stage to agree on the most appropriate drainage system for the particular development. These organisations may include the Local Authority, the Sewage Undertaker, Highways Authority, and the Environment Agency.

It can be difficult to ‘design in’ an integrated SUDS scheme once a site layout has already been decided on and in order to be most beneficial, SUDS should be considered from the outset.

There are, at present, no legally binding obligations relating to the provision and maintenance of SuDS. However, PPS25 states that:

'where the surface water system is provided solely to serve any particular development, the construction and ongoing maintenance costs should be fully funded by the developer.'

The most appropriate agreement is under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act. Under this agreement a SuDS maintenance procedure can be determined.

SuDS Techniques

SuDS techniques can be used to reduce the rate and volume and improve the water quality of surface water discharges from sites to the receiving environment (i.e. natural watercourse or public sewer etc). Various SuDS techniques are available and operate on two main principles:

- Infiltration
- Attenuation

All systems generally fall into one of these two categories, or a combination of the two.

The design of SuDS measures should be undertaken as part of the drainage strategy and design for a development site. A ground investigation will be required to access the suitability of using infiltration measures, with this information being used to assess the required volume of on-site storage. Hydrological analysis should be undertaken using industry approved procedures, to ensure a robust design storage volume is obtained.

During the design process, liaison should take place with the Local Planning Authority, the Environment Agency and if necessary, the Water Undertake to establish a satisfactory design methodology and permitted rate of discharge from the site.

Infiltration SuDS

This type of Sustainable Drainage System relies on discharges to ground, where suitable ground conditions are available. Therefore, infiltration SuDS are reliant on the local ground conditions (i.e. permeability of soils and geology, the groundwater table depth and the importance of underlying aquifers as a potable resource) for their successful operation.

Various infiltration SuDS techniques are available for directing the surface water run-off to ground. Development pressures and maximisation of the developable area may reduce the area available for infiltration systems but this should not be a limiting factor for the use of SuDS. Either sufficient area is required for infiltration or a combined approach with attenuation could be used to manage surface water runoff. Attenuation storage may be provided in the sub-base of a permeable surface, within the chamber of a soakaway or as a pond/water feature.

Infiltration measures include the use of permeable surfaces and other systems that are generally located below ground.

Permeable Surfaces

Permeable surfaces are designed to allow water to drain through to a sub-base at a rate greater than the predicted rainfall for a specified event. Permeable surfaces act by directly intercepting the rain where it falls and control runoff at source. Runoff during low intensity rainfall events is prevented by permeable surfaces. During intense rainfall events runoff generation may occur from permeable surfaces. The use of permeable sub-base can be used to temporarily store infiltrated run-off underneath the surface and allows the water to percolate into the underlying soils. Alternatively, stored water within the sub-base may be collected at a low point and discharged from the site at an agreed rate.

Programmes should be implemented to ensure that permeable surfaces are kept well maintained to ensure the performance of these systems is not reduced. The use of grit and salt during winter months may adversely affect the drainage potential of certain permeable surfaces.

Types of permeable surfaces include:

- Grass/landscaped areas
- Gravel
- Solid Paving with Void Spaces
- Permeable Pavements

Sub-Surface Infiltration

Where permeable surfaces are not a practical option more defined infiltration systems are available. In order to infiltrate the generated run-off to ground, a storage system is provided that allows the infiltration of the stored water into the surrounding ground through both the sides and base of the storage. These systems are constructed below ground and therefore may be advantageous with regards to the developable area of the site. Consideration needs to be given to construction methods, maintenance access and depth to the water table. The provision of large volumes of infiltration/sub-surface storage has potential cost implications. In addition, these systems should not be built within 5 m of buildings, beneath roads or in soil that may dissolve or erode.

Various methods for providing infiltration below the ground include:

- Geocellular Systems
- Filter Drain
- Soakaway (Chamber)
- Soakaway (Trench)
- Soakaway (Granular Soakaway)

Suitability of Infiltration Methods with respect to the wider aims of SuDS.

Infiltration Method	Reduce Flood Risk (Y/N)	Reduce Pollution (Y/N)	Landscape and Wildlife Benefits (Y/N)
Permeable Surface	Y	Y	N
Sub-surface Infiltration	Y	Y	N

Attenuation SuDS

If ground conditions are not suitable for infiltration techniques then management of surface water runoff prior to discharge should be undertaken using attenuation techniques. This technique attenuates discharge from a site to reduce flood risk both within and to the surrounding area. It is important to assess the volume of water required to be stored prior to discharge to ensure adequate provision is made for storage. The amount of storage required should be calculated prior to detailed design of the development to ensure that surface water flooding issues are not created within the site.

The rate of discharge from the site should be agreed with the Local Planning Authority and the Environment Agency. If surface water cannot be discharged to a local watercourse then liaison with the Sewer Undertaker should be undertaken to agree rates of discharge and the adoption of the SuDS system.

Large volumes of water may be required to be stored on site. Storage areas may be constructed above or below ground. Depending on the attenuation/storage systems implemented, appropriate maintenance procedures should be implemented to ensure continued performance of the system. On-site storage measures include basins, ponds, and other engineered forms consisting of underground storage.

Basins

Basins are areas that have been contoured (or alternatively embanked) to allow for the temporary storage of run-off from a developed site. Basins are designed to drain free of water and remain waterless in dry weather. These may form areas of public open space or recreational areas. Basins also provide areas for treatment of water by settlement of solids in ponded water and the absorption of pollutants by aquatic vegetation or biological activity. The construction of basins uses relatively simple techniques. Local varieties of vegetation should be used wherever possible and should be fully established before the basins are used. Access to the basin should be provided so that inspection and maintenance is not restricted. This may include inspections, regular cutting of grass, annual clearance of aquatic vegetation and silt removal as required.

Ponds

Ponds are designed to hold the additional surface water run-off generated by the site during rainfall events. The ponds are designed to control discharge rates by storing the collected run-off and releasing it slowly once the risk of flooding has passed. Ponds can provide wildlife habitats, water features to enhance the urban landscape and, where water quality and flooding risks are acceptable, they can be used for recreation. It may be possible to integrate ponds and wetlands into public areas to create new community ponds. Ponds and wetlands trap silt that may need to be removed periodically. Ideally, the contaminants should be removed at source to prevent silt from reaching the pond or wetland in the first place. In situations where this is not possible, consideration should be given to a small detention basin placed at the inlet to the pond in order to trap and subsequently remove the silt. Depending on the setting of a pond, health and safety issues may be important issues that need to be taken into consideration. The design of the pond can help to minimise any health and safety issues (i.e. shallower margins to the pond reduce the danger of falling in, fenced margins).

Various types of ponds are available for utilising as SuDS measures. These include:

- Balancing/Attenuating Ponds
- Flood Storage Reservoirs
- Lagoons
- Retention Ponds
- Wetlands

Suitability of Attenuation Methods towards the Three Goals of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Infiltration Method	Reduce Flood Risk (Y/N)	Reduce Pollution (Y/N)	Landscape and Wildlife Benefits (Y/N)
Basins	Y	Y	Y
Ponds	Y	Y	Y

Alternative Forms of Attenuation

Site constraints and limitations such as developable area, economic viability and contamination may require engineered solutions to be implemented. These methods predominantly require the provision of storage beneath the ground surface, which may be advantageous with regards to the developable area of the site but should be used only if methods in the previous section cannot be used. When implementing such approaches, consideration needs to be given to construction methods, maintenance access and to any development that takes place over the storage facility. The provision of large volumes of storage underground also has potential cost implications.

Methods for providing alternative attenuation include:

- Deep Shafts
- Geocellular Systems
- Oversized Pipes
- Rainwater Harvesting
- Tanks
- Green Roofs

In some situations it may be preferable to combine infiltration and attenuation systems to maximise the management of surface water runoff, developable area and green open space.

Broad-Scale Assessment of SuDS Suitability

The underlying ground conditions of a development site will often determine the type of SuDS approach to be used at development sites. This will need to be determined through ground investigations carried out on-site. A broad-scale assessment of the soils and underlying geology allow an initial assessment of SuDS techniques.

Based on a review of the following maps SuDS techniques that are likely to be compatible with the underlying strata can be suggested:

- The Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983 – 1:250,000 Soils Maps (Sheet 6), and
- The Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) 1:625,000 Series Superficial and Bedrock Edition South of England (2000)
- The Soils Map Legend and Geological Survey Memoir were also consulted as part of this assessment.

In the design of any drainage system and SuDS approach, consideration should be given to site-specific characteristics and where possible be based on primary data from site investigations. The information presented in the broad scale mapping is provided as a guide and should not be used to accept or refuse SuDS techniques.