

The Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) Strategy

Wokingham Borough Council has adopted a new strategy to ensure new developments have appropriate sustainable drainage systems to manage the risk of flooding, improve water quality, and biodiversity. Please find below their press release:

Suds now part of major builds

Wokingham Borough Council has adopted a new strategy to ensure new developments have appropriate sustainable drainage systems to manage the risk of flooding, improve water quality, and biodiversity.

The Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) Strategy, approved by the borough council's decision-making executive, is a blueprint based on national standards for developers and civic planning officers when designing developments ranging in size from minor schemes up to the scale of Strategic Development Locations.

SuDS mimic nature, dealing with rainfall where it falls; allowing it to evaporate or soak into the ground. Any remaining water is then drained to the nearest traditional watercourse or sewer at the same rate and volume that would have happened naturally before the new development was built.

"A healthy and safe water environment is fundamental," said Cllr Angus Ross, executive member for environment.

"There are areas in our borough with increased risk of flooding, and some of our watercourses have poor water quality. This strategy shows how SuDS address these. SuDS use cost effective solutions with low environmental impact. They're designed to be easy to manage, resilient, needing in some cases only sunlight to work, and are aesthetically attractive."

SuDS are increasingly being used to counter the problems of flooding caused by urbanization where natural surfaces and vegetation are replaced by concrete, asphalt, or roofed structures. Where this happens heavy rainfall cannot easily be absorbed back into the environment without overloading more conventional drainage systems, creating flooding, contaminating drinking water sources, and harming wildlife and the environment.

Examples of SuDS include basins (shallow landscape depressions that are dry most of the time when it's not raining), rain-gardens (shallow landscape depressions with shrub or herbaceous plants), swales (shallow normally-dry,

wide-based ditches), filter drains (gravel-filled trenches), bio retention basins (shallow depressions with gravel and/or sand layers), reed beds and other wetland habitats that collect, store, and filter dirty water along with providing a habitat for wildlife.

A consultation last summer into the borough's SuDS Strategy was carried out, and the majority of those taking part were very supportive of it. Now that the new SuDS strategy has been adopted by Wokingham Borough Council, planning applications for developments will need to meet the requirements of the local standards set out in it. Planning application approval, if granted, will then need to include clear instructions on how the SuDS for that development will be maintained.

Further information: More from Cllr Angus Ross, executive member for environment at email: angus.ross@wokingham.gov.uk

Barbara Keeley responds to Panorama programme on Mental Health services in the Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Trusts

Commenting

on the BBC Panorama programme on issues in Mental Health services in the Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Trusts, **Labour's Shadow Cabinet Member for Mental Health, Barbara Keeley MP said:**

"Despite years of Tory Government promises, funding for NHS Mental Health services has not increased but has actually fallen by £150 million.

"At the Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Trust, funding cuts led to frontline community teams being disbanded, loss of experienced staff and the cutting of 136 inpatient psychiatric beds. The Panorama programme showed what can go wrong when patients in crisis cannot be admitted to an inpatient bed.

"It is disturbing that while the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary talk about transforming mental health services, what families actually saw in Norfolk and Suffolk is an absence of support and no beds available during a crisis. It is time for action from Tory Ministers, not warm words which fail patients and

their families.”

[Green Party: Housing Minister's plans a slap in the face for people who can't afford a home](#)



Green Party

7 February 2017

***Jonathan Bartley, co-leader: ‘We must end our narrow obsession with home ownership and meet people where they are – by investing in social housing and improving the private rented sector’**

The Green Party has branded the Housing Minister’s new housing strategy [1] a “slap in the face” for people struggling to afford the cost of their homes.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said the Government should instead focus on:

- Setting up a Living Rent Commission to bring down rents
- Introducing a Land Value Tax to reduce property speculation
- Expand the use of community land trusts and co-operative home ownership
- End tax breaks for buy-to-let investors and use the money for social housing

Bartley said:

“The Housing Minister’s plans are a slap in the face for the millions of people in this country desperate for bold plans to reduce rents and make their housing affordable.

“People are living in desperate insecurity and we need to end our narrow obsession with home ownership and meet people where they are – by investing in social housing and improving the private rented sector. Any plan to help renters which doesn’t have at its heart a clear intention to reduce the amount tenants are paying is doomed to failure.

“It is scandalous that many people are paying up to two-thirds of their

income on rent, and often living in sub-standard accommodation. The Government should immediately set up a Living Rent Commission to work out what rent is truly affordable and take action to bring down costs for tenants.

“With Britain suffering such an acute housing crisis – and with property developers earning such huge sums for simply holding onto land – it’s also clear that idea such as a Land Value Tax should be explored. Such a tax could reduce property speculation, revitalise inner city areas and raise revenue – there’s no excuse for failing to investigate it as an option.

“We need to start talking seriously about expanding the use of community land trusts and co-operative home ownership. If the Government wants to take the heat out of the housing market it must end tax breaks for buy-to-let investors, and use the money to create a new generation of social housing.

“Housing should not be a speculative commodity and we must move beyond piecemeal tinkering with a broken market to ensure that everyone has a place they can call home.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38884601>

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[Seabraes Bridge – lift](#)



Residents pointed out to me that there is still no signage at the Seabraes Bridge to let people know who to call if the bridge is out of order.

I contacted the engineer responsible for the bridge maintenance and he has updated me as follows :

“At present there is no signage on the bridge to advise users of the phone number to call in order to report a fault with the lift.

I have been advised that the call out telephone number is likely to change at the end of February, therefore I will arrange for a temporary sign with the current number to be displayed at the bridge by the end of this week.

Once the new number is confirmed late February, I will arrange for a more permanent sign to be installed.”

[Vertical forest building to improve air quality in China](#)



An artistic rendering of the vertical forest towers planned for Nanjing. [Photo from the official website of designer Stefano Boeri Architetti]

Nanjing of East China's Jiangsu province will become the third city in the world where Italian architect Stefano Boeri will build Vertical Forest buildings, which could possibly improve the city's air quality, according to CNET, an American media outlet on technology.

In architect Boeri's design, a set of two towers will be stylized with around 1,100 trees and a combination of over 2,500 shrubs and plants, which is believed to make 60 kilograms of oxygen every day by absorbing carbon dioxide.

The two towers are expected to be completed by next year and will stand at 107m and 199m tall respectively. The shorter building will house a Hyatt hotel, while the taller one will be home to a museum, offices and an architecture school.

Two previous vertical forest buildings were built in Milan, Italy, and Lausanne, Switzerland.

Boeri's plan in China is much more ambitious as similar structures are also planned for Shanghai, southwestern Chongqing, northern Shijiazhuang and southern Liuzhou.