

Suffolk Design

Briefing Note

Updated National SuDS Standards – What Developers and Design Teams Need to Know Issued: July 2025

[View the national standards here](#)

Overview

In June 2025, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) published **updated National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)**. These replace the previous 2015 standards and set out modern expectations for how surface water should be managed in new development and regeneration schemes.

While the standards are **non-statutory**, they are strongly supported by government and regulators, and are likely to be a material consideration in the planning process. Local authorities across Suffolk, including Suffolk County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), are aligning their advice, validation requirements and design expectations accordingly.

This briefing outlines what these updates mean for applicants, developers, and consultants working in Suffolk.

What's Changed?

The updated standards take a more integrated and place-based approach to drainage. SuDS are no longer just about managing water—they're about delivering wider benefits to people, places, and the environment.

Key expectations include:

- Managing surface water by mimicking natural drainage
- Using SuDS to enhance biodiversity and green infrastructure
- Designing drainage features as part of open space and streetscapes
- Tackling pollution and improving water quality
- Planning for long-term maintenance and stewardship from the outset
- Updated technical expectations
- A focus on source control over ‘pipe to pond’ design philosophy

These priorities support national policy on climate resilience, Biodiversity Net Gain, and better design outcomes.

What This Means for You

1. SuDS Should Shape, Not Follow, Site Layouts

Drainage must now be considered from the start of the design process. SuDS should be integrated into layouts, not squeezed in afterwards. This will help:

- Avoid delays later in the planning process
- Create more attractive, multifunctional spaces
- Reduce the risk of technical objections from consultees
- Minimise ‘pipe to pond’ design approaches with multiple attenuation features

2. Early Engagement with the LLFA is Strongly Advised

Suffolk County Council, as the LLFA, plays a key role in assessing drainage proposals. Engaging with the LLFA early—especially for major or complex sites—can identify solutions before submission and reduce the need for post-submission revisions.

Their guidance sets clear expectations around:

- Use of the SuDS hierarchy (e.g. infiltration before pipes)
- Greenfield run-off rates
- Open systems preferred over underground tanks
- Robust management and maintenance plans

 [Read the Suffolk SuDS Guidance – Appendix A2 \(2023\)](#)

The LLFA are in the process of updating Appendix A, with a view to publish in early 2026, incorporating the new standards amongst other improvements.

3. Long-Term Maintenance Must Be Built In

SuDS adoption by the LLFA is **not currently available**. Responsibility for future maintenance must be secured—usually through private management companies, utilities companies (AW), or site-wide stewardship models. This needs to be clearly set out in planning submissions and legally secured through conditions or obligations.

Opportunities for Better Outcomes

The updated standards also open the door to:

- Enhancing site character through landscape-led drainage
- Meeting BNG and health/wellbeing goals with fewer siloes
- Reducing infrastructure costs through multifunctional design
- Supporting stronger community and regulatory support

SuDS done well can improve market appeal, reduce objections, and create more liveable places.

Recommended Actions

If you're working on a site in Suffolk:

- Review the [updated national SuDS standards](#) and the [Suffolk LLFA guidance](#)
 - Engage drainage and landscape designers early to shape site layouts
 - Allow space for open SuDS in design concepts and viability assessments, this includes conveyance and small-scale attenuation features.
 - Ensure your drainage strategy clearly sets out how systems will be maintained over the long term
 - Discuss your approach with the LLFA or planning authority during pre-app, before site layouts have been developed.
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Rainwater harvesting

Rainwater harvesting is to be considered in all circumstances and levels of technical implementation. Suffolk meets the 3 criteria set out in the new standards and thus all development, particularly commercial will be required to consider a form of harvesting at the earliest stages of development.