

**Thornville Street Raingarden (St John’s Society Greening Project)  
Submitted by St John Society**

**Awards category  
Community SuDS**



Lead or collaborating organisation(s)	St John’s Society, London Borough of Lewisham & Thames Water
Location of SuDS	Thornville Street, Lewisham, SE8 4DY Easting: 537158 Northing: 176503

## 1. SuDS overview

SuDS components used	Raingarden
Size of the scheme and its local context	Raingarden Size - 37.4m <sup>2</sup>
Approximate age of scheme	Project completed - 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 (5 months old)
Benefits of the scheme	<p>The benefits of the raingarden include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contribute to flood risk mitigation in the local area.</li><li>• Reduced surface water pollution to receiving water bodies.</li><li>• More aesthetically pleasing public highway with increased biodiversity.</li><li>• Promotion of community cohesion through community engagement activities.</li><li>• 'Calms' the combined sewer network by reducing peak storm flows entering the combined sewer.</li></ul>

<p>Briefly describe the scheme</p>	<p>The St. John's Society is an association formed by residents of Lewisham, with a diversity of occupations and with all manner of outside interests. Since 1998 they are committed to improving surrounding environment and believe that 'their corner of south-east London is a very fine place to live.'</p> <p>Taking inspiration from the Grey to Green scheme in Sheffield, the St John's Society decided to implement several green infrastructure interventions that recognise the beauty and value of nature but also increase resilience in the community.</p> <p>As the pilot site, area at junction between Thornville Street and Friendly Street was chosen due to relatively light road traffic, presence of the existing drainage that could act as an overflow. The aim of the project was to transform a grey, dead tarmacked area into a functioning green space, increasing local biodiversity and helping to reduce the urban heat island effect and slowing down flows into local combined sewer network.</p> <p>Project was fully developed/designed by members of the St Johns Society, supported by Lewisham Council who helped to navigate complex world of risk assessments, highway safety check, necessary statutory permissions. Successful application to the Thames Water Surface Water Management Programme facilitated engagement between partners and supported project with funding.</p>
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## 2. SuDS details

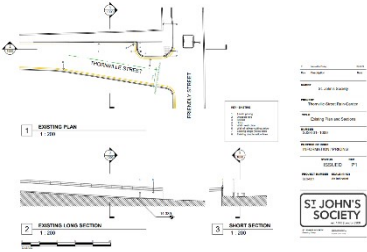
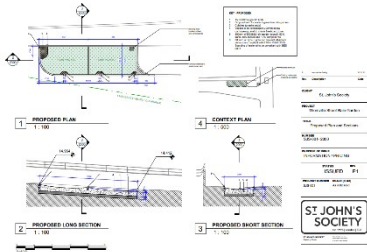
No.	Question	Answer
1	What difference has this scheme made to the local community or area?	<p>The Thornville Street raingarden is intended to be the first of many in the area and the St Johns Society is looking to develop a masterplan for further greening projects. The Society aims to publish some 'lessons learned' on their experience on the project and share this with other groups looking to implement similar schemes.</p> <p>On the local level it provides an improved environment, a small green corridor for parents and their children walking to Lucas Vale Primary School.</p>
2	What is exceptional about this scheme beyond a standard approach?	<p>This is a truly grass-root project. Conceived and delivered by the local community group who has driven its delivery throughout. Through their passion for the project, they convinced bigger organisation about their vision, formed alliances and partnerships to obtain funding and then attract even more funding.</p> <p>The project shows that transformational and inspirational projects do not need to be big and flashy/impressive. With a vision, enthusiasm and commitment, and the right support everyone can do something to change and improve their surroundings.</p>
3	How much work went into getting this scheme realised?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conceive project</li> <li>- Apply for SWMP funding</li> <li>- Attract other partners</li> <li>- Community consultations</li> <li>- Surveys to undertake design</li> <li>- Design undertaken in-house</li> <li>- Liaison with highway team, Network Rail</li> <li>- Civil construction</li> <li>- Planting</li> <li>- Maintenance (Integrated partnership with community and Council)</li> </ul>






4	Is this scheme part of a masterplan or integrated into other initiatives?	<p>A masterplan is currently in development by St John's Society to undertake further greening projects across the borough. However, this will be undertaken once a full community engagement plan has been communicated to ensure everyone is involved in their local area greening objectives.</p> <p>Part of <a href="#">Thames Water's Surface Water Management Programme</a> call for projects (2020-25), providing up to £3M for projects across the Thames region. The Thames Water region has a significant number of stakeholders compared to other water company regions in the UK, consisting of 54 LLFA's, 27 Catchment Partnerships, 13 RFCC sub-committee areas, together with over 15 million customers. The SWMP intent is therefore not only to deliver good, multi-beneficial SuDS that help to reduce the demand on the sewer network and create public value, but equally to help build capacity and establish working relationships with stakeholders to deliver SuDS.</p>
5	What value does this scheme provide to the local area and beyond?	<p>This project was developed as a toolkit for other community groups to replicate the process of funding, cost, design and construction that would be simple to follow.</p> <p>The project also enables other small neighbourhood groups to develop their own resilience and greening plans.</p> <p>This project has expanded the discussion on greening across our community and as such has increased our network within the area.</p>
6	What challenges/problems needed to be addressed to realise this scheme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finding partners</li> <li>- Obtaining funds</li> <li>- Design/survey</li> <li>- Availability of easy and clear design guidelines</li> <li>- Permits for example National rail</li> </ul>

7	How does the scheme address related issues such as water scarcity, nutrient neutrality, or biodiversity net gain?	<p>Project transformed previously underused, tarmacked, grey area into a new living space.</p> <p>The single raingarden is not singlehandedly resolving climate change issues, it is not stopping flooding or fixing the air quality issues.</p> <p>But, it is an important, albeit small, contribution to help to solve these issues. it shows, it can be done. It empowers people and raises awareness.</p> <p>It shows the community what is possible when working together.</p>
8	Is learning from the scheme continually captured and communicated? Please give examples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Erosion on inlets was managed by supply rocks and pebbles to reduce the water flow onto the soil. This worked well and will be considered for future projects.</li> <li>- Monitoring of invasive plants occurs so that they do not grow in the raingarden.</li> <li>- Whatsapp group ensures continuous communication and sharing of visuals.</li> <li>- Information is constantly fed back to Lewisham Council to ensure lessons are learnt and improvements in the next rain garden plan can be included.</li> </ul>
9	What approaches/measures are taken to ensure the scheme is properly managed and maintained?	<p>Planting was undertaken by St John Society and community members and Plants were offered by Sarah Raven who believed in us which also helped create a sense of ownership.</p> <p>Maintenance will be undertaken by volunteers from the Society in conjunction with the council through an integrated relationship.</p> <p>First weeding took place in December 23 with frequent site visits conducted by 'The SJ's Rain Garden Team'. Monthly weeding and inspection is undertaken by the members.</p>

10	<p>Have you collected any feedback on your scheme? What do people say about it? Can you provide any quotes?</p>	<p>Quote from a St Johns community member: 'I was surprised when the Thornville Road rain garden was installed as it's unusual to see money spent on public works in inconspicuous and unglamorous places. But times are changing and we all need to think more deeply about the actual purpose of vegetation. Unfortunately, the climate emergency will make us see the purpose of plants, rather than just their beauty. The need for flood mitigation will make us see the true value of trees and rain gardens. However, as this project mixes beauty with purpose it looks like we have a win-win situation.'</p>
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### 3. Supporting materials

Image (low resolution)	Caption	Image credit
	Figure 1 – Existing Plan and Sections	
	Figure 2 – Proposed Plan and Sections	

	<p>Figure 3 – Proposed Visualisation</p>	
	<p>Figure 5 – Community planting day</p>	
	<p>Figure 6 – Community planting day 2</p>	
	<p>Figure 7 – Raingarden completion</p>	
<p>Thornville Street Raingarden</p> <p>St John's Society Greening Project</p>  <p>Pictures courtesy of St John's Society</p>	<p>Comparison</p>	



