

**PLANNING AND BUILDING WARRANT APPLICATIONS  
SEPTIC TANK SOAKAWAY SYSTEMS - GUIDANCE NOTES**

If your proposals involve a septic tank discharging to land, Percolation Tests must first be undertaken. These tests will indicate if the sub-soil conditions are suitable for hygienic disposal of the effluent. The following factors must be taken into account:

- a. The number and density of existing septic tanks in the proximity of the site,
- b. the relative ground levels within and around the application site,
- c. whether there is adequate available space within the development site for the initial soakaway and for any renewal or extension of the soakaway system, which may be required within the life of the building,
- d. whether any existing private water supplies will be affected,
- e. the proximity of nearby ditches, burns, rivers, field drains etc., and
- f. the winter water table level.

A positive response can only be given where no difficulties are anticipated in any of the above criteria.

**HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SITE INSPECTION**

**SITE LAYOUT**

The Council requires percolation tests to be carried out in accordance with Part M of the Technical Standards 6th Amendment 2001 for compliance with the Building Standards Scotland Regulations 1990.

**STEP 1**

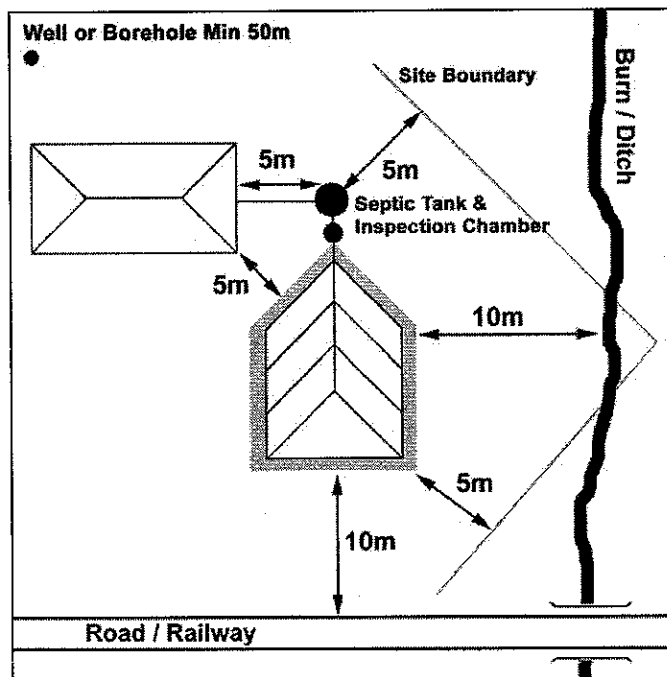
Decide the position of your septic tank and soakaway system, remembering:

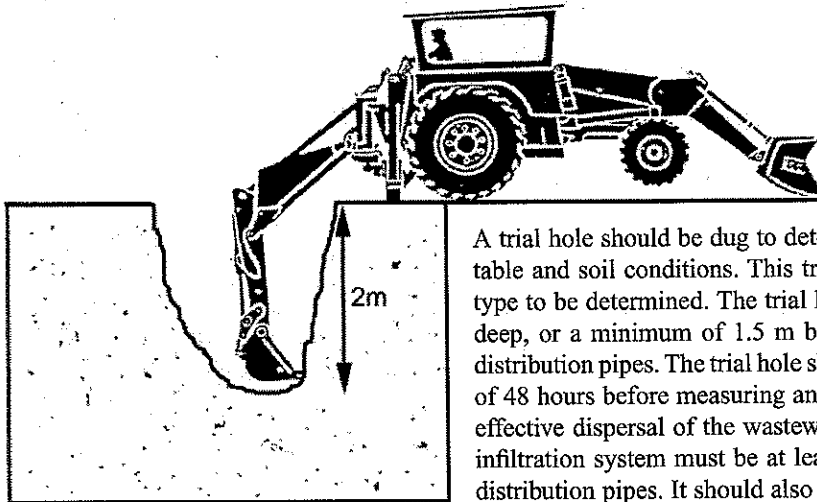
Tanks and Soakaways must be located at least 5 metres from a dwelling, or site boundary.

At least 50 m from any spring, well or borehole used as a drinking water supply.

At least 10 m horizontally from any water-course (including any inland or coastal waters), permeable drain, road or railway.

(See Diagram)

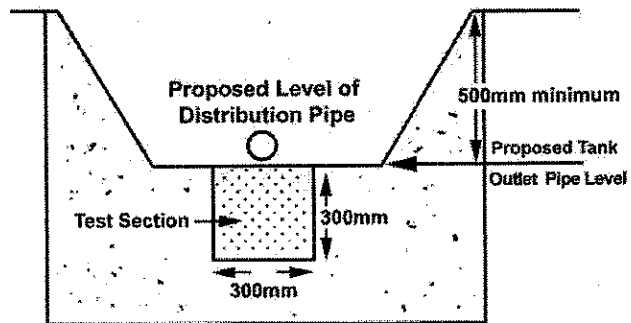


**STEP 2****WATER TABLE TRIAL HOLE**

A trial hole should be dug to determine the position of the water table and soil conditions. This trial hole will enable the sub-soil type to be determined. The trial hole shall be a minimum of 2 m deep, or a minimum of 1.5 m below the invert of the proposed distribution pipes. The trial hole should be left covered for a period of 48 hours before measuring any water table level. For safe and effective dispersal of the wastewater, the groundwater below the infiltration system must be at least 1 m below the bottom of the distribution pipes. It should also be noted that it is the seasonally highest level of the water table that should be determined for the infiltration area.

**STEP 3****PERCOLATION TEST HOLES**

Excavation of a percolation hole 300 mm square to a depth 300 mm below the proposed invert level of the effluent distribution pipe. Where deep drains are necessary, the hole should conform to this shape at the bottom but may be enlarged above the 300 mm level to enable safe excavation to be carried out. Fill the 300 mm square section of the hole to a depth of at least 300 mm with water and allow it to seep away overnight. It is important to saturate the soil surrounding the test hole to simulate day to day conditions in an operational drainage field. Next day, refill the test section with water to a depth of at least 300 mm and observe the time in seconds, for the water to seep away from 75% to 25% full level.



**For safety reasons, holes deeper than 1.2 metres must be shored for safe access.**

Divide this time by 150 mm. The answer gives the average time in seconds required for the water to drop 1 mm. Take care when making the test to avoid unusual conditions such as heavy rain, severe frost or drought. Carry out the test at least 3 times and take the average figure. At least 2 percolation holes, not less than 5 m apart, should be dug and tested 3 times each to obtain consistent results.

**STEP 4**

The test pits must be clearly labelled, both on site and on the site plan. Sufficient water, at least 70 litres, in clean containers should be provided immediately adjacent to the test holes in order that the third test can be carried out by an approved certifier from the council list.

**STEP 5**

The results and design details should be submitted to the local Planning and Building Control office in support of your planning or building warrant application.

