The ProctorPave Grass system is designed to allow turf to be laid over the top of a load bearing plastic roll. According to the company, the system allows 100% grass coverage and 92% available root area. As well as car parks, the system can be used for paths and roadways.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE PARKING SPACES

By James de Havilland

It is a common problem. To attract players to a course, a club needs to offer a range of facilities that includes easy car parking. The trouble is any parking takes up space, with many clubs having partially empty car parks during slack periods with not enough room when hosting tournaments and other events. Getting the parking to demand ratio right is not easy.

There are other considerations that have to be brought into the equation. Assuming there is space to expand an existing car park, planning permission may make any desired expansion difficult. This particularly applies to clubs that are within an urban area.

There is also the issue of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, SUDS. This can either rule out hard surface parking areas or make it prohibitively expensive to expand due to the need to install a well planned drainage or water retrieval system.

For many clubs the only option is to offer temporary parking to meet peak demand. Diverting overflow traffic into a driving range, practice area or other 'spare bits of grass' during tournaments and large events is common. The problem is heavy rain can turn these temporary parking areas into a mud bath.

A potential half way house is to consider systems that will either stabilise an area of turf to allow it to be parked on in all weathers or to expand hard surface parking using a loose gravel surface that has a water holding capacity compliant with SUDS.

In the case of meeting SUDS requirements, porous paving systems are often seen as an economical alternative to hard surface parking with a suitable drainage or water holding package built in. In really simplified terms, porous paving surfaces are typically made using a course porous base material with gravel on top.

To prevent the latter simply panning down and effectively mimicking a hard surface over time, the gravel layer is contained in a load bearing plastic block or mat with open pockets to contain the gravel. The mat takes the load, preventing the gravel panning down into the porous layer below.

Turf based systems are based on much the same idea, with turf growing on or through plastic load bearing grid. These support grids are

Note how the system is designed so the turf lies over the top of the plastic load bearing support. The turf will need time to establish before the surface can take a heavy load. The weight of vehicle that can safely park over this type of surface will relate to the material under the support grid.

typically made from blocks that are positioned and interlocked over a prepared surface. The plastic pockets are filled with soil and seeded - taking the load of vehicles.

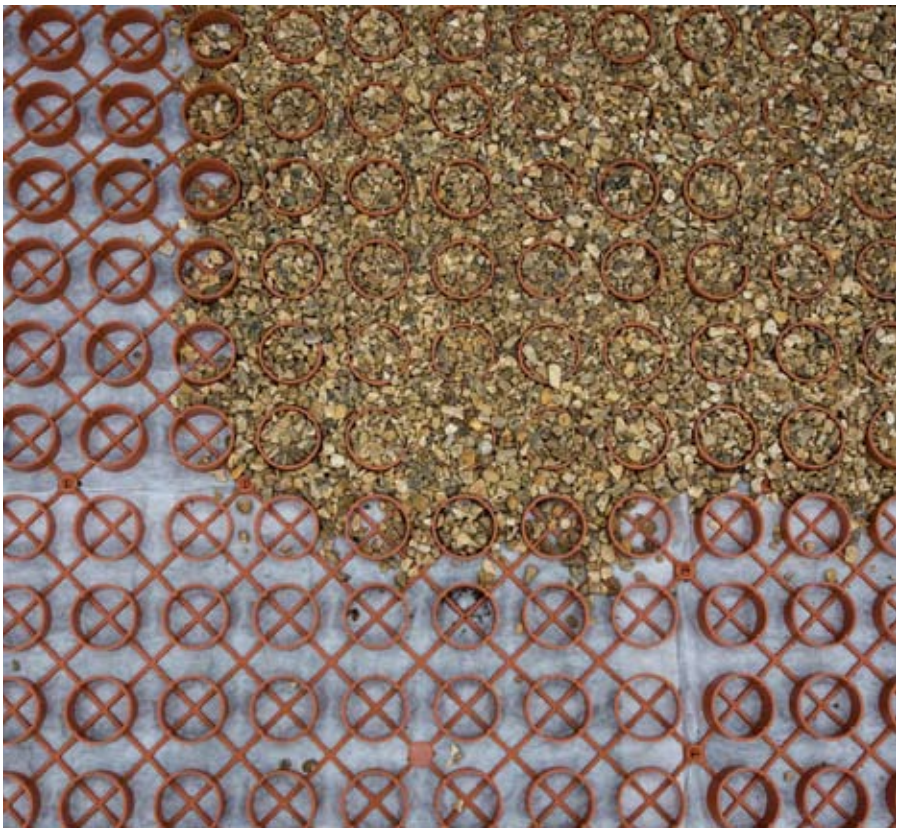
A refinement of this approach is offered by the ProctorPave system. Instead of using plastic support blocks, ProctorPave is supplied in 20m2 rolls with a flexible grid base. This allows the roll to follow the ground contours, enabling the system to be installed on surfaces that are not level. It also allows the system to be used to create a road or pathway.

Offered in ProctorPave Gravel and ProctorPave Grass versions, the system is designed to be easier to install than separate block based systems, the Grass option allowing turf to be laid over the load bearing surface. The latter is designed to support the turf and not protrude up through the surface.

If you are faced with parking problems, it can pay to consider alternatives to 'traditional' hard surface parking. Porous gravel systems may help avoid problems with surface drainage, with stabilised grass possibly allowing the area to be used for something else or avoid planning issues.

This is a general outline, the actual installation of alternatives to hard surface parking areas having to take into account a whole range of issues. The point, however, is that a new, expanded or temporary car park need not need lorry loads of tarmac or crushed stone.

(Details on the ProctorPave system from www.proctorgroup.com)



The ProctorPave Gravel system can be laid over a porous base material (MOT type 3) to increase the storage volume of rainfall. A 200mm deep cross-section is claimed to store around 50mm of rain. This is important as it could mean an area of parking could be established without the need to install a surface drainage system.