



Swn-y-Coed, Rhiw Las, Whitland, Carmarthenshire

OPC Position Statement 5: **One Planet Developments** yearly monitoring reports

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The One Planet Council consider the monitoring process to be an essential part of One Planet Development, both for:

- *ensuring commitment to the principles of OPD including the Ecological Footprint*
- *research value in demonstrating the value and contribution (ecological, economic and other) of OPD to their local area, Wales and the planet*

The requirement placed on each OPD by the Practice Guidance, and in general by the conditions attached to their planning permission, is to submit an annual report. To clarify, this is a **self-assessed yearly update on progress**, the format of which will usually follow a template provided in the management plan.

The usual wording of the condition specifically relating to ongoing monitoring does not reserve any details for approval (as conditions of that type do for materials or further details of drainage and other aspects of the approved development), nor do we expect the condition to be discharged. Therefore, rather than an application for the approval of details reserved by condition, **the correct procedure is for the annual monitoring report to simply be submitted to the LPA in order to comply with the condition.**

It is not feasible for planning departments to check in detail the information reported each year. However, we expect that upon receipt of annual progress reports, they are checked to establish that they conform to the format agreed upon granting planning permission and then an acknowledgement is given by email to the OPD. If concerns are raised about the performance of the OPD at any stage, then the submitted reports would form a basis for a more in depth audit.

The One Planet Council offers support and assistance to any OPD practitioner finding any difficulty in compiling an annual report. Reports do not need to be long and complex. When planning permission is granted, the conditions should include a clear statement of the form and timing of all reporting requirements.

We also offer support for planning departments, who have indicated some concern at the potential burden of reporting requirements. As above, we consider the role of the planning department only to receive and store reports for future reference, unless there is an active investigation into the site. It is not standard practice for either planning or enforcement officers to be required annually to check detailed ongoing compliance with every condition imposed on a development, and we see no reason for One Planet Development to be treated differently or to present an additional burden. If external consultants are paid to audit annual reports, they perhaps have an incentive to justify their fee by writing more than is necessary.

Over-reach of monitoring activity beyond this remit is not only a waste of public money and a waste of time for all concerned, it also borders on harassment to individuals given the stress caused in resolving such situations.

We emphasise that the function of the reporting requirement is to identify progress towards the essential criteria of OPD and the implementation of the Management Plan. Residents are responsible for reporting on their progress towards the requirements. It is not expected that every element will progress at the same rate during the initial 5-year period: the phasing plan lays out the order in which the requirements will be met.

In addition, there should be allowances made for circumstances beyond a person's control, e.g., the effects of climate change, crop failure, Covid-19, family health, which may impact on the delivery of the plan. Minor changes to the plans, which do not affect the overall achievement of the OPD requirements, are also to be expected: for instance, a change in the emphasis of the business, a non-material change to the construction details of the dwelling (if it remains zero carbon), or production of different types of food. Major changes are only "**those that threaten achievement of the essential criteria for One Planet Developments**" and, where identified, these would require "**clear and effective measures to address the identified problems**" The Practice Guidance suggests a framework of red and yellow cards for this assessment.

The One Planet Council are exploring the possibility of maintaining a database of reports for use in research, to support other OPD applications, to demonstrate the success of OPD against national aims, and to enable a more consistent interpretation of the reporting requirements. The One Planet Council consider that the quantitative data contained in these reports is of great research value and we encourage practitioners to submit brief details (Ecological Footprint, land-based income, number of people, etc) to the OPC for publication in an anonymised/aggregated fashion. We invite research students or interested collaborators to make use of this information.

It is important to note that a considerable amount of personal and business data is contained in annual reports. Anyone holding this data in a non-anonymised way must comply with the legal requirements for privacy of personal information relating to individuals, and treat these documents as confidential.

The **One Planet Council** is an independent voluntary body which enables and promotes One Planet Development. This forward-thinking planning policy provides a genuinely affordable and sustainable way for people to live and work on their own land, bringing social, economic and environmental benefits. It was adopted by the Welsh Government in 2011 as part of its One Wales: One Planet scheme.

The **One Planet Council** provides a bridge between applicants and local planning authorities, with guidance and tools to support practitioners and professionals. The aim of the **One Planet Council** is to enable a broad range of exemplar One Planet Development projects throughout Wales, comprised of people from all walks of life. And to see these sites serve as an inspiration to the people of Wales and beyond.