

OPC POSITION STATEMENT 8:

ONE PLANET DEVELOPMENT

AND BUILDING REGULATIONS



VERSION 1.0, 18/03/2026

One Planet Development (OPD) is a Welsh Government planning policy intended to enable low-impact homes that support land-based livelihoods while meeting high environmental standards. OPD dwellings are permanent homes and must meet appropriate standards of health, safety and welfare. They are typically small-scale, site-specific and designed around low-impact systems that differ from those assumed for conventional housing.

The One Planet Council recognises the essential role of Building Control in safeguarding occupants and the wider public. We also note that the Building Regulations are legally performance-based, with Approved Documents providing example solutions rather than mandatory prescriptions. Difficulties arise where assessment relies on prescriptive assumptions aligned with standardised, grid-connected services and majority use of mass produced regularised materials; which does not reflect the constraints and objectives of OPD policy. OPD permissions require developments to be zero carbon in both construction and use, with energy, water and waste assimilation needs met on site. These are not discretionary lifestyle choices but fundamental aspects of the policy under which consent is granted. In this context, strict reliance on conventional solutions described in Approved Documents can undermine both the environmental objectives of OPD and the viability of the development without delivering improved safety outcomes.

The One Planet Council's position is that assessment of OPD dwellings should focus on whether the functional requirements of the Building Regulations are met, rather than whether standard templates have been followed. In practice, difficulties can arise where assessment methods assume factory-certified products or standardised construction systems, for example where precise U-values cannot be provided for reused or reclaimed materials.

Such issues are inherent to low-impact construction and should be addressed through proportionate, outcome-focused assessment rather than treated as grounds for non-compliance. This position does not imply reduced standards or acceptance of unsafe or unhealthy living conditions. On the contrary, a clear, proportionate and outcome-focused approach to Building Control is essential to ensure that OPD homes are safe, durable and fit for long-term habitation.

The One Planet Council also notes that in off-grid OPD dwellings, compliance with requirements for mains-pressure sprinkler systems is impracticable without pumping, storage and energy systems that significantly increase embodied impact and operational demand. With the requirement for grid connected alarms, the requirement itself conflicts with the objectives of OPD policy. We note that sprinkler systems are not required for comparable dwellings in England, and that fire safety objectives for OPDs can be met through design, detection, construction detailing and means of escape.

Current assessment tools and compliance pathways can also disadvantage OPD homes by embedding assumptions that do not reflect closed-loop, land-based systems. This includes the penalisation of on-site wood fuel within SAP calculations where fuel is grown, processed and used on site, and the disproportionate requirement for bespoke professional evidence and consultancy when non-conventional or natural materials are used. In some cases, the cost and complexity of this evidence can exceed the value of the dwelling itself.

The One Planet Council is concerned that uncertainty and inconsistency in the application of Building Regulations to OPD dwellings has, in some cases, encouraged applicants to pursue accommodation routes outside the Building Regulations, such as Caravan Act dwellings. While lawful, this outcome is unhelpful. It is in the public interest for OPD residents to construct permanent dwellings that fall within a clear and considered Building Regulations framework, rather than to avoid it due to the absence of workable compliance pathways. Finally, situations in which OPD planning conditions and Building Control requirements are treated in isolation risk placing applicants in an impossible position.

Greater recognition of OPD policy within Building Control practice, and constructive engagement between planning and building control functions, would support consistent, coherent and effective regulation. The One Planet Council supports the application of the Building Regulations to OPDs in a manner that safeguards health and safety, reflects national policy objectives, and enables genuinely sustainable homes to be delivered as intended.



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.