

Open Data Standards Community Group: Planning Data Specifications

Session date: 22 July 2026

Key Points

- The specifications are ready for the consultation: stable, usable and implementable. They will continue to evolve, with any future changes made through a change control process.
- From a technical perspective the programme is ready for the consultation to happen. Internal departmental sign-offs are awaited before the formal step can occur, and there is not yet a firm date for the consultation going out.
- A proposed approach to addresses was presented: a single address-text value with a postcode, with UPRNs and USRNs provided where they exist and make sense, and the site boundary treated as the authoritative location for a site.
- The planning register national public view was presented as the data that must be published as open data, always a subset of the full statutory register. The department proposes to initially assess compliance with the standard by evaluating the conformance of national public view data collected by the Planning Data Platform.
- Work through the development management software funding (DMSF) programme is under way with paired local planning authorities and suppliers to map existing registers against the national public view, with findings to be presented at the next session on 19 August.

Session Overview

Specification status update (Slides 7-18)

The team reported that the specifications are ready for the consultation, meaning they are stable, usable and implementable. That is not to say they will not change: they will continue to improve and grow, but future changes will be made through a change control process.

Colm explained he has continued to work through the three buckets of feedback since his last update two months ago. These were previously described (fix now, clarify and align, and future work). Where issues could be resolved they have been resolved; where there were long-running discussions, a working position has been taken based on what there is enough evidence and confidence to model now, with unclear parts moved into the future work bucket.

The emphasis has been on tightening and removing ambiguity rather than structural change.

On submissions, the specification has been stable for some time. Changes have been limited to small fixes surfaced by supplier testing and the example implementation work, the addition of further prior approval application types (two or three were brought in, prioritised by application volume, with an example given of [Agricultural or forestry building development](#), and others to follow over time), and, most significantly, a mechanism to handle combined applications, for example where both householder planning permission and listed building consent are needed.

What is allowed as a combined application is controlled: only those combinations that development management colleagues have previously said make sense and are already covered by existing forms. Each new prior approval type has its own eligibility module, but the combined application mechanism itself required no new modules.

On the data expected to be recorded and maintained through the planning permission process, the team has continued working through user needs. About 125 needs have been identified so far, and the current specification partially or fully satisfies 82 of them, including the vast majority of the application and decision related requirements in the PS1 and PS2 returns (not the enforcement elements). This is the part of the specification expected to evolve most.

The team has also defined [what data is expected to be published as open data](#): a subset of what is recorded, reflecting that authorities make judgements about what should be public, redacted or withheld, and that this judgement should continue. This subset is now defined, with its own schema, and is inspectable and testable.

On the enabling environment, work has focused on making the rules clearer, particularly the conditional rules in application forms (if X applies, then this question is asked or required).

These have been made consistent and the patterns documented, with the aim that anyone reading the specifications interprets them the same way. Testing work regenerating digital and PDF versions of application forms directly from the specifications has exposed small gaps and awkward edges, which have been fixed as they arose.

[Real-world data examples](#) have been added, taken from local authority applications, and more robust complete examples for integration testing are in progress.

The specification viewer has also been improved so that the submission data, recorded data and open data subset can each be explored, along with where individual fields, modules, datasets and codelists are used and the relationships between them.

Addresses (Slides 19-28)

Paul Downey, Service Owner for the programme presented work on users and needs for addresses, captured [in the GitHub issue](#), framed as identifying the minimal possible approach that leads to better outcomes. Two broad user needs were described.

The first is the contact address: an address used to correspond with a user. Existing GOV.UK design guidance sets out three patterns for asking users for an address (an address lookup, multiple text inputs, or a single text area), with edge cases including PO boxes and international addresses.

The proposed approach is to provide a single address-text value formatted for correspondence as set out by Royal Mail, with the postcode provided where possible and a UPRN provided where it exists and makes sense, since the UPRN gives a much stronger lookup into address data.

The second is the address as a description for a site location, covering existing buildings with an address, plots of land on a street, and plots in the unbuilt environment. Here the site boundary is the authoritative location.

The proposed approach is to provide an address-text as a description of the site location along with a postcode, with a USRN provided particularly for undeveloped sites, and a UPRN provided where it exists, which may be used to link other data and construct the current address. It was noted that current registers typically hold addresses as a single line of text, and that structured addresses do not always help with matching in practice, where whole-address and machine learning approaches are commonly used.

Key points from the discussion that followed:

- One participant questioned the use of USRNs for undeveloped sites, suggesting street-record BLPUs with UPRNs could serve instead.
 - The presenter acknowledged the point, noting the USRN's offer is contextual (locality and administrative area information sit on the street record) but said they would not argue strongly for mandating USRNs.
- Several participants raised the need to hold multiple addresses or UPRNs against a single application. It was stated that systems in the market hold multiple UPRNs per application, and that this matters for submissions and for interoperability of published data.
 - The team acknowledged this as a direction they want to go in, noting an existing issue about identifying affected properties, and that the first step has been to replicate what is in existing forms. [A GitHub issue on affected UPRNs](#) was shared in the chat for views, concerns and opportunities so it can be prioritised.
- Related cautions were raised about subdivision of sites, where a red line boundary covers only part of a UPRN, and the maintenance burden this creates, and about gazetteer custodians needing to create land and property units earlier than they currently do.

- On licensing, a question was raised about whether publishing full addresses with UPRNs as open data conflicts with rights over address data. The response was that it always depends: under the PSGA, provision with a statutory reason is usually quite permissive, and there is a substantiality test on how much information is provided at any given time.
- A supplier perspective stressed that whatever approach is adopted must work for both public and private sector, not just local planning authorities.

The session organisers noted that the voices heard on addresses were mainly suppliers, and that a more targeted conversation on addresses may be arranged.

Consultation update (Slides 29-32)

The specifications underpinning the data standards have been stable for a while and are in the candidate stage. From a technical perspective the programme is ready for the consultation: the information needed from a technical perspective is ready to be provided, and the specification is in a position that can be turned into a standard.

However, internal sign-offs within the department for the formal step to occur, is still required, and recent events have delayed this sign off.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the consultation will be on regulations to implement the data standard, that the question of publishing the national public view will be covered in the consultation so the community can feed back, and that timescales for providing data will be set out in the formal consultation document.

The planning register and its views (Slides 33-54)

Mike walked through how the standard relates to the planning register. Data gets introduced at each stage of the planning permission process and layers together. The planning application data standard will require all new planning application data held to conform to the standard, as the minimum needed to establish a consistent, structured baseline across England and the point from which the standard will grow.

The statutory planning register was introduced as the body of data and information a local planning authority must keep about each planning application and how it has been dealt with, under section 69 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and article 40 of the Development Management Procedure Order 2015. The standard governs the data expectation within that register: submission data is checked for conformance on the way in, and validation, consultation, negotiation and determination each add further data.

Different views can be cut from the register. The local authority's own public view (what currently appears on authority websites) is defined by the authority, not centrally: the authority has the obligation to make information available for inspection and decides what it uses to do that. Other views, such as the PS1 and PS2 returns, are also cuts of the same data; this work is not defining those at this point.

The planning register national public view is proposed to be defined in the standard as the data that must be published as open data. It will always be a subset of the full statutory register, since the register contains information that cannot be published openly, and initially it will be much less than the information published or shared elsewhere.

On conformance and compliance: data is conformant when it matches the standard (the right fields, structure and values). The standard does not define what an authority needs to share for its own local planning purposes, but any data defined in the standard that an authority does share should be conformant, and conformance is a property of the data wherever it sits.

The department proposes to initially assess compliance with the mandated standard by evaluating the conformance of the national public view data collected by the Planning Data Platform.

In response to a chat question about whether only data fitting the declared standard must be publicly accessible, it was clarified that data provided from current systems should conform to the standard wherever it is looked at; the national public view and open publication is how the department will measure compliance to begin with.

On legal powers, it was confirmed in response to questions that section 84 of the LURA23 is enacted, with the software power identified as the significant related provision not yet enacted, and that local authorities will have the power, once the standard is in place, to serve notice to ensure data is provided to the standard.

National public view: the data model (Slides 55-58)

The complete picture of what is expected to be published as open data was shown. The model is deliberately small, flat and minimal: a site can have applications attached, and an application has documents, a timeline and eventually a decision notice linked to it, with relatively simple relationships between the datasets.

On documents, planning authorities are not being asked to make every document they hold available as open data, only those they have already deemed suitable to publish openly, preserving planning authority judgement.

The model is available on both the specification viewer and GitHub, which is the canonical source, and links to both, along with real-world examples, integration testing examples and a proof-of-concept validator tool, were shared in the chat. Feedback was invited through GitHub or directly.

The community was asked to suggest a better or catchier name for the National Public View.

Existing data (Slides 59-60)

The team set out the approach to data that already exists in systems, acknowledging that not all of it will match the standard yet, and framing a positive expectation that authorities will provide data at whatever level they can.

As a bare minimum, once the standard is in place, where an authority holds existing data that matches the national public view and is currently sharing it (for example via its website), that data is expected to be provided. Beyond that, the ideal is that where data exists now in back-office systems and matches the national public view, it is provided even if it is not currently being shared.

DMSF testing the national public view (Slides 61-62)

An update was given on the development management software funding work, which has been running for approximately a year with five engaged local planning authorities, five back-office suppliers, and front-end involvement with The Planning Portal..

The work is shifting focus towards implementation: analysing the difference between the national public view and what is currently recorded in registers. Currently, DMSF is undertaking a practical mapping exercise as pairings to look at those differences, drawing out common questions, gaps and opportunities that can feed back into the programme and inform future guidance and support. Findings will be presented back to the community at the next session.

Next community session

The next community session is on 19 August 2026

Asks of the community

1. Review the proposed [National Public View in the Specification Viewer](#) (or the schema) and let us know if anything is unclear, missing or could be improved.
2. Review the proposed approach to addresses and share any implementation challenges or real-world examples via GitHub:
<https://github.com/digital-land/planning-application-data-specification/issues/307>
3. Help us name it! We're looking for a better name than "National Public View". If you have ideas for a clearer or more memorable name, we'd love to hear them.