

Open Data Standards Community Group: Planning Data Specifications

Session date: 19 August 2026

Key Points

- The consultation position is unchanged from July. The specifications are at candidate stage and the programme is technically ready. Internal sign-offs are still awaited and no dates were given. The takeaway is that the specification is: stable, usable, implementable.
- Compliance will initially be assessed by evaluating the conformance of **national public view data** collected by the Planning Data Platform. "Initially" was emphasised: the expectation is that the whole system conforms, but measurement begins with one view.
- Analysis of publicly visible data from 21 real applications produced over 2,000 records across the eight national public view datasets, and 16 submission payloads, two of which have been turned into payloads that pass the validator.
- Four DMSF pairings (Leeds, Salford, Redbridge and Dorset) mapped their current position against the proposed national public view. The sector is not starting from zero, and the gaps are concentrated rather than evenly spread.
- Not every gap is a supplier development ticket. Some are authority configuration or publication changes, some are genuine product development, and a third category cannot be given to anyone until the requirement itself is clarified.

Session Overview

Consultation update

The specifications have had all major work completed and sit at candidate stage. They will become approved data standards at the point they are mandated using the powers under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.

From a technical perspective the programme is ready for the consultation to happen. What remains outstanding is the requisite internal sign-off for the formal consultation step. Work is going on in the background to expedite this, but timing is outside the project's control, so no dates were given. The specifications can be explored and used now via the [specification viewer](#).

The team confirmed that work is underway internally on communications and engagement support, and that a series of activities will run alongside the

consultation itself.

Mandating a data standard is the end of the beginning, not the beginning of the end.

Existing data and the national public view

The national public view defines what planning application data should be published as open data. It is a subset of the information recorded through the planning permission process, rather than a subset of the application, and it does not replace a planning authority's local register for inspection or its decisions about redaction.

Two levels of expectation were restated. As a bare minimum, data matching the national public view that an authority already shares should be made available for collection as open data. Beyond that, the ideal is that data which exists now in back office systems and matches the national public view is provided as open data.

On records that already exist, the position was drawn deliberately: this is not a programme to digitise old material. Where information is already held digitally, the expectation is that it is made available. Where it is not, coverage will be gappy at first, and options for filling those gaps over time are being explored, including running documents through the Extract tool and possible funded projects. Step one is to publish what is currently available.

The reasons this matters were set out as a national overview of the planning system, better understanding of the development pipeline, more accessible data and therefore less scraping of authority sites, reduced reporting and data collection burden, better evidence for decision making, the start of defining data using the standard, and the ability to check compliance.

Extracting data from real applications

An analysis of what is publicly visible on authority websites has been carried out across 21 applications spanning 11 application types, from 6 planning authorities. It yielded over 2,000 records across the eight datasets: 21 planning applications, 1,288 documents, 20 decision notices, 21 sites, 55 timeline records, 294 planning conditions, 294 decision conditions and 6 section 106 records.

Three observations followed. The timeline count is lower than expected given the number of dated events in a planning process. Only 16 submission payloads were produced from 21 applications, because in five cases the application form was not published at all, and where forms were available they were often the redacted version, so the payloads have gaps. Site records were captured, but site boundaries remain inside site plan and location documents and have not yet been extracted.

Work is underway to turn some of these into complete payload samples, and two payloads currently pass the validator.

DMSF: testing the national public view in practice

The Development Management Software Funding group brings together five local planning authorities, five back office suppliers and the Planning Portal. The question put to the pairings was deliberately practical: what will it actually take for authorities and their suppliers to publish the national public view consistently?

Four returns came back, from Leeds, Salford, Redbridge and Dorset. NEC and Hounslow were unable to contribute in this round and their analysis will follow. The purpose was explicitly not to judge individual products or to produce a compliance score.

The four took different approaches, which proved useful:

- Leeds looked at what it holds and what it surfaces publicly,
- Salford mapped specification fields directly to back office fields with support from Arcus,
- Redbridge provided a more operational assessment, and
- Dorset took a quantitative approach based on volumes. In response to a question it was clarified that "surfaced" means visible on the public register.

The pairings were not asked to look at APIs, and the distinction between a public register view and an API that data can be extracted from was acknowledged as important.

Core planning application and site information generally maps reasonably well. The recurring difficulties cluster around decision notices, conditions, decision conditions, section 106, linked applications and the planning permission timeline.

Across those datasets the same causes came up repeatedly: identifiers that do not match current system practice, information held in PDFs rather than structured fields, direct document links that are difficult to produce, information held in other systems, and concepts that authorities interpret differently.

Three categories of gap were described. Some can be closed by the authority through a query, a configuration change or a change to how existing data is published. Some require supplier-led product development, for example exposing PDF-held information as structured data or producing usable document URLs.

And some cannot be built yet because the intended requirement needs clarifying first. That third category sits back with the department, and includes potentially providing further supporting guidance on what a site reference is, whether decision notices and conditions need their own identifiers, what "organisation" means, who the "decision maker" is, what "reason" means for a condition, what counts as a "directly linked" application, what a planning permission "event" is, and how local application and decision types map to national codelists.

Linked applications were used to show why definitions matter. Using the Dorset mappings, 58,144 links were found across 3,576 applications, with a single application producing 210 linked records reaching back to 1974. The systems can produce links;

the question is which links are wanted.

Three conclusions were drawn:

- Held as data is not the same as publishable as data: finding a field is only the beginning, and it still needs to be reliable, structured and capable of being published.
- Different systems are converging on the same problem areas, which gives confidence these are genuine implementation challenges rather than local quirks.
- And mapping in spreadsheets is reaching its limit, so the next step is testing extraction and publication end to end.

What can be said is that the same issues recur across different systems and that common implementation challenges are being identified. What cannot yet be said is how close the whole market is to conformance, or any national readiness percentage.

A live area for DMSF is asking suppliers not only when they can make a change, but how it reaches their customers, when, and what authorities will need to do. Suppliers are waiting on the mandation document because they need a date to work back from.

The four returns are being written up, with a broad response to the feedback to be shared openly with the community before any further individual conversations. Some questions may lead to specification tweaks and some may be resolved by iterating the guidance that points at the fields.

Digital planning register

This section was about the digital planning register project being run by Camden, that sits adjacent to the standards work.

The starting point is that the statutory planning register is not a single technical thing, it is a legal construct. It applies to anything relating to how an application has been **dealt with**: the application and its documents, but also working records, correspondence and officer reports. The law has made the bucket deliberately broad, so many technical solutions may sit inside it.

Reference data such as flood zones, SSSIs and historic buildings is relevant but maintained separately.

Information enters through a submission layer, which is not tied to any particular approach, and comes out through a range of views: PS1 and PS2 reporting, the national public open data view, local authority public views, internal extracts, and provision to bodies such as the Planning Inspectorate, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Between the register and those outputs sits an interface layer that is not well understood nationally. It might be a back office system, and it might be someone assembling emails by hand when a request comes in. That layer is not necessarily a

technology, and it is the grey IT the project is interested in.

The first phase looked at how one particular view, an authority's public view, reached back into the register to pull out the right information. The second phase begins with a discovery covering the whole interface layer, so that user needs can feed back into iterations of the data standard rather than being fixed in at the end. You can take part in the [discovery](#) for this work.

Asked about overlap with the augmented planning decision alpha, the answer given was that the two are coordinated: the alpha looks at a particular officer workflow, the register work lays foundations, and the alpha becomes a test bed for whatever method it produces.

Discussion themes

Four key discussion threads

Officer reports

They hold the site history, updated information and the final conclusions, where a decision notice is only a top-level summary, but they are not always reliable, not all authorities produce them, and much of their content is not yet defined in the standard. One authority described using them to find floor areas and unit numbers for PS1 and PS2 returns, and said plainly that it should not have to. The position that emerged was that data should feed the report rather than be extracted back out of it. Officer reports were not part of the publication standard the pairings commented on.

Cross-boundary sites

Where applications may appear on both authorities' registers, and in appeals one authority tends to be treated as the lead. Joint arrangements, development corporations and the layering of national park, county and district tiers all may complicate this, and local government reorganisation affects application allocation more widely, with duplicate application references cited as a known problem from a 2019 reorganisation. The response was that this needs digging into: what happens now, and how it is reflected in data.

Authoritative sources

Where an official register exists for reference data such as listed building status, SSSIs or Green Belt, the choice is between assuming it is correct, which risks acting on a disputed value, and asking the question again, which is more burdensome. This was recognised as a wider question about who the authoritative source is for each dataset and which published version applies at which date, and as raising a question for the Planning Data Platform about how it cites those sources.

Identifiers

The uniqueness of an application reference within a local authority is sufficient,

because records sharing a reference are namespaced when collected nationally, as already happens with conservation areas. A national naming convention comparable to IBAN in banking was not thought necessary, as it would stray into changing well established local processes, though guidance on creating good identifiers remains possible.

Any other business

DEFRA is running its own internal planning discovery, due to deliver by the end of September or the start of October. At that point the intention is to reconvene, potentially using this forum, to discuss that work and the next steps for the standard, and to consider kickstarting a statutory consultee open group. Several attendees volunteered to join it.

An authority described a project, around 99% complete, identifying every property in its district where permitted development rights have been removed by condition, spatially mapped, with the aim of incorporating this into PlanX and other flows. The response was that the conditions part of the specification is currently minimal and simply collects conditions, with a longstanding intention to expand it to call out the specific rights removed. A follow-up session was offered, with a view to folding the work in as a repeatable national pattern. Several other authorities asked to join that conversation, and it was noted that some councils are using Extract to help map permitted development right removal areas.

Next community session

There will be no session in September. An email update will go out towards the end of September covering the consultation position, any specification update, the DMSF work and the conversations from this session, and likely a digital planning register update as well.

The next community sessions are on 28 October 2026 and 25 November 2026

Asks of the community

Join a user research session for the digital planning register discovery. It is open to anyone who wants to use data from the statutory planning register, including planning officers, planning consultants and proptech companies. No preparation is needed. If you are interested please email Anoi.Atkinson@tpximpact.com