

# Community Questions and Themes

## ODSC Session – 31 March 2026 (Lean Coffee summary)

The following themes capture the main areas raised during the session. Topics are grouped by theme, with voting used to indicate relative interest and priority. Selected participant comments have been included where they add useful context.

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### Standards, APIs and Implementation

There was strong interest in how standards will actually work in practice. In particular, participants asked how API design and integration might support real-world data sharing, and whether example payloads could be provided to help with testing and adoption.

Questions were also raised around compliance — both how it will be verified, and what happens if mandated standards are not implemented by software suppliers. There was some uncertainty about whether compliance applies only at the point of submission, or across the full lifecycle of an application.

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### Mandation Timeline and Policy

Participants are looking for more clarity on timing and scope. There was interest in whether a firm date for mandation has been set by ministers, and how far mandation will extend.

In particular, questions focused on whether requirements will apply only to back-office planning systems, or also to related tools and platforms such as engagement and consultation software.

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### Governance, Ownership and Direction

A recurring theme was the need for a clearer long-term view of ownership and direction from MHCLG.

Some participants highlighted the importance of aligning this work with other initiatives across government — for example housing data — to avoid duplication or conflicting requirements.

There was also a smaller but important discussion about being clearer on the intended outcomes of standardising planning data, to help guide design decisions.

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## **Data Coverage and Specification**

Several questions focused on how data should evolve beyond the initial application stage. For example, how to capture “as built” or end-of-permission data, where details such as floorspace may change.

There was also interest in how housing permissions will be monitored over time, and how related applications (e.g. Section 73, discharge of conditions) should be linked together in a coherent way.

One participant suggested thinking of applications more like a connected “record” or bundle of related activity, rather than isolated database entries.

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## **Spatial Data and Mapping**

Spatial data came through as a high-priority area.

There was interest in the idea of a more unified GIS approach across the country, particularly to support validation (e.g. identifying constraints automatically). Participants also emphasised that location data should be treated as primary — for example, identifying whether a site overlaps with a flood zone is often more important than postcode or UPRN.

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## **Cross-Sector Integration and Alignment**

There is clear overlap with other regimes, particularly Building Control. Participants noted that existing work in Building Control is already drawing on planning data standards, and welcomed continued collaboration.

There were also questions about linking planning data with other datasets such as council tax, and ensuring consistency across systems.

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## **Housing Development Data**

A number of topics focused specifically on housing delivery.

This included tracking start and completion dates at a more granular level (e.g. per plot), understanding affordable housing delivery, and whether future application forms might capture more detailed information on housing types (e.g. conversions, student accommodation, tenure).

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## **Developer Contributions and Transparency**

There was interest in making developer contributions (e.g. Section 106, CIL) more transparent and easier to analyse.

One participant shared practical experience of trying to derive this information from planning data, highlighting challenges around identifying triggers, dwelling numbers, tenure, and development status. There was an offer to contribute further to this area.

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## **Data Access and Transparency**

Participants raised questions about access to data held by local planning authorities, particularly constraints data, and whether it could be made consistently available at a national level.

There was also discussion about balancing structured data with the need for applicants to provide contextual or supporting information as part of an application.

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## **AI and Automation**

There was growing interest in how AI could be applied, particularly using planning data to support validation, summarisation of documents, and reporting.

This included the idea of training models on both standards and historic datasets, as well as broader opportunities for automation.

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## **Implementation and Capacity**

Concerns were raised about the practical implications of implementation.

This included the cost of managing and maintaining data, potential burdens on local authorities, and whether funding or cost recovery mechanisms will support this. There was also a concern that not all LPAs are currently aware of the work or its potential impact.

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## **Specific Application Types and Processes**

A number of more specific areas were highlighted, including:

- Data standards for permitted development rights

- The impact of local government reorganisation
- How digital planning aligns with the land use framework

It was also clarified during discussion that mandated standards apply to England only.

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## **Community and Communication**

Participants emphasised the importance of ongoing engagement with sector expertise.

There was strong support for sharing case studies to illustrate both challenges and successes, helping to bring the work to life and manage expectations around implementation.

There was also interest in using the community to explore monitoring and reporting needs, where data standards are expected to have significant impact.

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## **Topics Raised but Not Prioritised**

The following topics were suggested but did not receive votes during the session. They may still be relevant for future discussion:

- Section 257 (public rights of way diversions)
  - Planning resource and training within LPAs
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