

ODSC Community Session — Session Summary

31 March 2026 | Open Data Standards Community

Key Points

- Planning complexity requires explicit relinking mechanisms. Post-determination amendments, cross-boundary applications and related submissions must be tracked together. A single outline application can generate 28+ related applications.
- Specification readiness is advancing. Submission specification covers 93.6% of 2024 volumes. Decision specification is at or near full coverage of published baseline data. The next phase focuses on implementation support and ecosystem integration.
- Software supplier compliance is critical for implementation. DMSF data shows 70 to 80% initial readiness across suppliers covering 99% of the market. Effort scoping is underway to understand real implementation timelines.
- Ecosystem integration is a critical gap. Statutory consultee engagement, cross-boundary applications and data exchange patterns remain unaddressed. Cross-government conversations have started but require dedicated sessions and senior sponsorship.
- Building Safety Levy is a vehicle for housing delivery pipeline tracking. Individual unit-level standardisation through planning and building control creates opportunities for national reporting and strategic evidence gathering.

Session Overview

Planning Application Process Complexity

We discussed detailed mapping of the planning application process. The work outlined seven high-level stages: pre-application, submission, validation, consultation, evaluation, determination and post-determination.

Key findings:

- The process is non-linear. Consultation and evaluation stages involve significant back-and-forth before determination.
- Data changes substantially during these stages. Statutory consultee responses and applicant amendments alter scope, scale and proposal nature.
- Post-determination is complex and poorly documented. One 350-home outline application generated 28 subsequent applications. Linking these together is essential for tracking actual delivery.
- Cross-boundary applications add further complexity. Neighbouring councils register applications separately. No automatic linkage mechanism exists.

The community raised important data gaps. Validation reasons, decision timings and the distinction between proposed and implemented work are missing. The team confirmed full process flow mapping is underway.

Specification Development Status

The team provided an update on specification readiness. Work is shifting from core design into implementation support, ecosystem integration and more deliberate evolution of the specifications.

Submission Specification

- Coverage is 93.6% of 2024 application volumes. Remaining gaps sit in a long tail of prior approval applications.

Decision Specification

- Baseline readiness is at or near full coverage of what is currently published on public registers. This is a sensible stability baseline. It is not the limit of valuable data.
- A second layer of valuable additions is underway. Examples include document versioning, officer reports, permission time limits and appeals linkage.
- Document versioning will record the original as one record, with subsequent versions as additional records.

Development Management Software Funded Project

The team provided an update on the Development Management Software Funded project. The work involves five LPAs and five back office suppliers covering 99% of the market.

Project Structure and Progress

- Three pillars guide the work. These are working with the market, defining what good looks like, and turning insights into action.
- Phase 1 is complete. Systems mapping was undertaken. Back office suppliers analysed how standards will land in their systems.
- Phase 2 is ongoing and ends April 2026. Understanding and effort scoping are the focus. Initial view is 70 to 80% of submission data flagged as green. Work is now on Reds and Ambers. Suppliers are providing effort estimates.
- Phase 3 is planned post-April for approximately three months. It focuses on scaling solutions. The question is how to bring compliance from suppliers through to their 30+ client LPAs.

Critical Themes

- Implementation timelines are critical input to consultation design. Effort estimates from this group will directly inform government decisions on mandation timelines.
- LPA engagement is essential. Governance sits with LPAs. They hold responsibility and must be supported in supplier conversations. This is particularly important where contracts are long-term.
- Core principle: do not break the planning system. The project works within the existing ecosystem. The aim is to improve processes, not create manual workarounds.

Ecosystem Integration and Cross-Government Engagement

A new cross-government conversation has been launched. Participants include Historic England, DEFRA (including the Environment Agency) and MHCLG. This was initiated following a request flagged in published session notes.

Themes Identified

- Standardising how development sites and designations are described across organisations.
- Codifying triggers for statutory consultation so they work more effectively. Currently many consultations are generated unnecessarily.
- Understanding what data a statutory consultee needs from an application to perform their role.
- Mapping handoff patterns between local authorities and statutory bodies. This reveals the real process flow.
- Reducing duplicate data requests. Where information exists in government databases (flood zones, protected buildings lists), applicants should not be asked to provide it again.

Next Steps

- Dedicated stream sessions will be established on specific topics. These will not be full group meetings. They will focus on statutory consultee data, process flow mapping and ecosystem integration.
- Sessions will be open for anyone to join. The aim is focused discussion on specific areas.
- The team will work to bridge the gap between data specialists and planners. This has been recognised as a key challenge. Recent mapping work has articulated complexity.
- The team is exploring how to position MHCLG as a standards authority across all related datasets. This requires senior sponsorship and cross-departmental coordination.

Building Safety Levy and Housing Delivery Pipeline

We heard about how standardised planning data, linked to building control data, can create a transparent housing delivery pipeline.

Background and Problem Statement

- Planning authorities struggle to answer simple questions about delivery. How many affordable homes exist? Where are they? Which planning application did they come from?
- Tracking is complicated by multiple naming conventions and different reference identifiers. No thread links the planning world to delivery outcomes.

Building Safety Levy as a Vehicle

- The Building Safety Levy requires itemisation by individual home within a planning application. It brings planning and building control information together.
- This creates an opportunity. Standardised data on individual units can be tracked. Data includes tenure, type, location and decision status. There is an opportunity to link everything in the housing delivery pipeline by attaching UPRNs earlier in the process.
- Subsequent amendments are tracked through variations and new applications. Adding starts and completions data creates a pipeline. This tracks homes through planning, decision, amendments, starts and completion.

Strategic Value

- National reporting relies on housing delivery data. This includes PS1/PS2 returns, housing flow reconciliations and five-year housing land supply calculations.
- Local plan examinations need robust housing delivery data. Current fragmented databases weaken local plan evidence bases.
- Early risk identification is possible. Stalled sites and developments can be flagged with early visibility across the planning and delivery pipeline.

Next Steps

Next community session: Wednesday 27 May 2026 (pending confirmation).

April hiatus: no full community session in April. Dedicated stream sessions on specific topics will be scheduled between now and May.

Deep-dive sessions planned:

- Statutory consultee data and ecosystem integration. Statutory consultees will be invited to participate.

- Full planning process flow mapping. Coverage will include validation, consultation, amendments and case management.
- Broader stakeholder engagement. We will follow up digital planning taskforce on round table offer.

Specification Viewer

- A new viewer has been launched to enable navigation without raw GitHub access. Users can follow connected paths from application types through to field level.
- Users can also follow paths from user needs through to data model and rationale. GitHub remains the canonical source. The viewer is the access layer.

Session notes and links will be published on the project website. The project GitHub board is actively updated with tasks. Tasks are tagged by implementation, integration, improvement and innovation focus.