



Owen Boswarva <owen.boswarva@gmail.com>

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## Addressing FOIs

1 message

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[REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@os.uk>  
To: "owen.boswarva@gmail.com" <owen.boswarva@gmail.com>  
Cc: "support@geoplace.co.uk" <support@geoplace.co.uk>

8 May 2026 at 17:19

Dear Owen

This email is sent on behalf of both Ordnance Survey and GeoPlace. As you may be aware, Ordnance Survey and GeoPlace have contractual obligations to Royal Mail in respect of Royal Mail's intellectual property rights in address data. Royal Mail has therefore been briefed on this matter.

We note that you have not responded to our email of 22 January, save by publishing selective passages from our email, together with your comments on it, on your blog on 23 January ([Owen Boswarva's blog](#)).

### Intellectual property position

Our position on the intellectual property in Council Tax address data was set out clearly in our previous email. To summarise briefly: the overwhelming majority of local authorities' Council Tax address datasets contain the intellectual property of Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace and Royal Mail, because such datasets are created and maintained using data from LLPGs, which themselves incorporate OS/GeoPlace/Royal Mail addressing data licensed by the local authorities under the PSGA Member Licence. As we noted previously, Council Tax address datasets which do not contain intellectual property rights of Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace or Royal Mail are the exception rather than the rule.

The litigation between Ordnance Survey/GeoPlace and 77M Limited, and the more recent proceedings involving Royal Mail and Codeberry Limited, confirmed that address data of the kind at issue here attracts database right protection, and that the reproduction or re-publication of such data without the consent of the rights holders constitutes infringement. Those judgments are publicly available for review.

### Communications with local authorities

We have now contacted most of the local authorities whose Council Tax address data is or was listed on [datadaptive.com](#). Where we have not contacted such local authorities, it is because their address data was only published by you during the last few days (and note that GeoPlace will be contacting these authorities shortly).

As you know, a number of these local authorities requested that you remove the address data from [datadaptive.com](#).

Of the other authorities we have contacted, only two, namely Wigan Council and Bradford Council, have confirmed that their Council Tax address data constitutes "Authority Owned Data", i.e. created and maintained entirely independently of their LLPGs and without reference to Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace or Royal Mail intellectual property. As you know, we have already discussed the position of Leeds City Council.

We have informed the other local authorities of our assumption regarding the intellectual property position with respect to their Council Tax address data, and notified them that we would be contacting you to inform you of OS/GeoPlace copyright and database rights in the data, unless the relevant local authority contact us by a given date to confirm that it is confident that the disclosed addressing data is Authority Owned Data, providing details as to how it has assured itself of this. Since this date has now passed, we are contacting you directly.

This means that, except for Leeds City, Wigan and Bradford Councils, the address data published on [datadaptive.com](https://www.datadaptive.com) should be considered as containing the intellectual property of Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace and Royal Mail, and its continued publication constitutes infringement of our respective rights. If, further to communications with other local authorities, we become aware of any additional Council Tax address datasets that are entirely "Authority Owned Data", we will inform you of this.

## Response to your published comments

We have read your comments published on [datadaptive.com](https://www.datadaptive.com) in response to our 22 January email carefully, and feel it is important to correct two points.

First, you state that it is "*not clear*" how Ordnance Survey and GeoPlace formed their working assumption regarding intellectual property in Council Tax datasets. On the contrary, the basis for our position was explained at length in both our 22 January email and the K-Hub guidance. Our position arises from the fact that LLPGs, from which the overwhelming majority of Council Tax address datasets are derived, are created and maintained using data licensed under the PSGA Member Licence, and contain the intellectual property (namely database rights and copyright) of Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace, Royal Mail and the relevant local authority. Your suggestion that local authorities "*quite commonly*" maintain their Council Tax property lists separately from their LLPGs is inaccurate; we know this as GeoPlace monitors the process of local government address systems integration.

Second, you characterise the guidance issued to local authorities as "*very one-sided in favour of the commercial interests of Ordnance Survey and GeoPlace.*" The guidance was produced to assist local authorities in understanding their legal obligations in relation to third-party intellectual property rights. Far from being one-sided, the guidance expressly acknowledged that some local authorities may hold Authority Owned Data and that, in those cases, they are free to disclose it. It is the responsibility of any organisation or individual (public or private) to respect the intellectual property rights of others, and Ordnance Survey and GeoPlace assisting local authorities to do so is entirely proper.

We would add that, given your evidently sophisticated understanding of the addressing landscape and intellectual property framework, we consider that you have been well aware for a considerable time that the address data disclosed by local authorities is very likely to contain third-party intellectual property. We would ask that your future communications to local authorities on this point reflect your sophisticated understanding. It is possible that some of your previous communications on this subject may be looked upon as your inducing or procuring local authorities to infringe OS/GeoPlace and Royal Mail intellectual property rights, e.g. statements such as "*I understand from correspondence that ..... Leeds consulted Ordnance Survey and established that there were no third-party licensing barriers to OGL licensing of the addresses and UPRNs*", which might be read as implying that there is no third party concern with the licensing of Council Tax address.

We would like to be clear that copyright and database rights continue to exist after disclosure. Any person who receives information/data under a Freedom of Information request is still obliged to respect the rights of a rightsholder (for example, with database rights, making the contents of a database available to the public requires a licence from the owner(s) of the relevant intellectual property rights (here, Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace and/or Royal Mail)). As the National Archives' guidance on access and re-use makes clear: "*provision of information under this access legislation does not mean that the recipient has an automatic right to re-use it, for example to publish it, or adapt it in some way. Most information supplied in response to an access request will be protected by copyright and permission to re-use it will be required.*"

## Our requests

In our 22 January email, we requested that where you are notified by a local authority/us that a local authority had disclosed the addresses in error, you remove the same from your website. Further to our communications since that date with local authorities as referenced above, we set out below our updated requests:

1. Remove from [datadaptive.com](https://datadaptive.com) all Council Tax address data other than that provided by the three local authorities identified above.
2. Cease any further reproduction, re-use, distribution, or publication of the address data that has been removed.
3. Include a notice on [datadaptive.com](https://datadaptive.com), in a prominent position where it would be seen by anyone looking for Council Tax address datasets, making it clear that you had published, purportedly under the terms of the OGL, Council Tax address data from various local authorities, which data you are now informed contains the intellectual property rights of Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace and Royal Mail. Therefore, to the extent that anyone has downloaded or otherwise used such data, they should note that it is subject to such third party intellectual property rights, and cannot be used without express consent from Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace and Royal Mail.
4. Contact, to the extent you have relevant contact details, any organisations or individuals who have downloaded the data from [datadaptive.com](https://datadaptive.com) and inform them that the data contains third-party intellectual property and may not be further reproduced, re-used, distributed or published without the express permission of Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace and Royal Mail.
5. Preserve any records evidencing where the address datasets have been downloaded from [datadaptive.com](https://datadaptive.com), including the names of individuals or organisations and IP addresses, as we may need to investigate potential downstream infringements.

We ask that you take steps 1, 2 and 3 above within 2 working days of the date of this email, and step 4 within 10 working days.

As before, we remain happy for you to otherwise retain the data subject to the database rights and copyright of Ordnance Survey, GeoPlace and Royal Mail (and you can also continue to make reasonable use of the same for your own non-commercial research purposes, private study, or any other uses permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988).

### **Invitation to engage**

It is clear from your work that you care about the accessibility and quality of address data in the UK. We share many of the same objectives (including better data for the public benefit). As outlined above, whilst Ordnance Survey is commercially funded through its licensing system, it is publicly owned and therefore any "commercial" gain is retained within the public sector (either through reinvestment into national geospatial infrastructure or returned to government).

As we proposed in our 22 January email, we are very willing to arrange a call or meeting in person to discuss this matter directly, to help each of us better understand the other's position and have a face to face discussion on the general issues related to this subject. If you are open to this, please let me know and I will make the arrangements.

### **What happens if you choose not to engage with this email?**

We have no desire to engage in adversarial proceedings where a sensible resolution can be reached, and wish to emphasise that litigation is not our preferred outcome.

However, if you do not comply with the above requests, Ordnance Survey and GeoPlace will have no alternative but to consider our other options, which will include formal legal proceedings to protect our intellectual property rights.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards



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Thank you for your cooperation.

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