



Electronic Survey of Empty Homes

Vacant Dwellings and Second Homes Survey 2007

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CSV Data specification

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Please take the time to read the following specification and apply it rigorously when extracting data for the survey from your system. We anticipate that the majority of local authorities will submit raw data this year. We must be able to automate the process of loading the data into a SQL data warehouse as manual cleaning and loading for this volume of data would not be feasible. For this reason the data must be consistent from one authority to another. Irregularities will render the data suspect and potentially unusable. By adhering to the specification you will ensure that your data is useable and will help us to analyse it quickly and accurately.
- 1.2. If you have further questions then please contact us at:
vacant.dwellings@communities.gsi.gov.uk

2. The CSV Data Specification

- 2.1. **Summary:** A list of all properties on your council tax register as at 1st April 2007, with exemptions and discounts indicated as applicable. The list of properties should be the same as used for your annual CTB1 return.
- 2.2. **Filename:** Please call your file “your_authority_name_2007.txt”. Thus if you are “Central London Council”, then call the file “Central_London_Council_2007.txt”.
- 2.3. **Format:** Comma Separated Values text file. Column delimiters other than commas will not be expected and so should not be used. The file should contain data only, do not include the column headings.
- 2.4. **Fields:** For each property, we need each of the following columns. They must be provided in the order shown.

Column Number	Column Title	Data Definition	Data Type	Priority
1	Billing Authority Reference Number	The unique reference used to identify this property to the VOA.	Alpha numeric	Mandatory
2	LLPG UPRN	The Local Land and Property Gazetteer Unique Property Reference Number. Leave blank if unavailable.	Numeric. Integer between 1 and 999999999999.	If available
3	Postcode	The postcode is essential for referencing, and should be given here separate from the address.	Alpha numeric	Mandatory
4	Exemption Class	A single letter to describe the exemption class, as defined in the Council Tax Exempt Dwellings Order 1992, if one applies. Otherwise leave blank.	Single letter only.	If applicable
5	Prescribed Class	If the property is in a prescribed class as described by Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 3011, then a single letter A, B, or C. Otherwise leave blank.	Single letter only. Either A, B or C.	If applicable
6	Discount Percentage	If a discount applies to the dwelling then a number from 0 to 50 signifying the actual percentage discount rate. Do not include a % sign or any text. Leave blank if there is no discount on the dwelling.	Numeric, between 0 and 50.	If applicable
7	Discount Description	The description of the discount applicable to the property. Text. Blank if no discount.	Text.	If applicable
8	Address	The postal address of the property as stored in your system. This may be given as a single block of text, or broken up into sections by commas or any other delimiter. It may include postcode, but if it does the postcode should still be given separately in field 3.	Text. May include column delimiters (commas) if this is how the address is stored.	Mandatory

3. Further Advice

- 3.1. Supply only the columns requested and make sure they are in the correct order. Extra, missing, or mis-ordered columns will invalidate your upload.
- 3.2. Take a look at the sample file. Note that where there is no value for a given column, for instance if there is no exemption, then it must be shown as a blank space separated from the previous and following entries by commas.
- 3.3. Avoid using Excel to view the data. Although Excel supports CSV files it may apply unwanted formatting to the data. For example, a common error when we have collected CSV files in the past is for a UPRN such as “123456789012” to be changed and saved as “1.23457E+11”.
- 3.4. The postcode is an important reference. In principle we can separate it out from the complete address, but experience has shown that with data from hundreds of different suppliers this becomes a lengthy, iterative and error prone process. Since you know your own data better than we do, we will get better results by having you supply the postcode in this separate field.
- 3.5. Ensure that Exemption Class and Prescribed Class are given as single letter codes. Different systems may store them differently and subdivide the categories, but consistency is important. For instance if you have “Exempt D1” in your system, we need you to supply “D” in the Exemption field.
- 3.6. We are collecting actual discounts in addition to prescribed classes primarily to validate the vacant dwellings and second homes data. In the field “discount description” we will accept data in any form, as it is stored on your system.
- 3.7. Note that prescribed classes A, B and C relate to the second home and long term vacant categories that we have previously asked for in the vacant dwellings study.
- 3.8. The Billing Authority Reference should be the same as the reference number that you use in exchanging information about the dwelling with the VOA. We will use this to validate our data against the VOA’s records.
- 3.9. The address is placed at the end of the row deliberately, although it would seem more intuitive to have it next to the postcode. This is because addresses often contain commas (as in “Flat A, 12 Sample Street”) and this disrupts the column structure in a CSV file. This is balanced against our desire to use CSV because it is simple and familiar to most people. With the address at the end we will be sure that anything that occurs after “Discount Description” is part of the address and can treat it accordingly regardless of whether it contains commas or not. Look at the sample file, and you will see that any variation on the address format will be accepted, providing all the other preceding columns are correct.

CSV Data Sample

Please find below an example of what your CSV data will look like.

XYZ12345,123456789012,SW1 0AA, , , , ,21 Sample Street Victoria London
XYZ12346,123456789013,SW1 1BB,F, , , ,Flat B, 42 Example Road
XYZ12347, ,SW1 2CC, ,B,10,2nd Home No Restriction,First Floor, Eland House, Bressenden Place, Victoria, London
XYZ12348,123456789014,SW1 3DD, , , , ,63 Station Way Pimlico London
XYZ12349,123456789015,SW1 4EE,D, , , ,Rear Flat Top Floor 84 Long Road Belgravia London
XYZ12350,123456789016,SW1 5FF, , , ,25,Single Disregard,Vicar's Cottage, 105 Vauxhall Grove Vauxhall London