

Role Description

Role title¹	Senior Planning Officer (Development Management)
Directorate	Climate & Place
Reporting to	Team Leader/Principal Planning Officer – Planning
Grade	9
Evaluation ref	LGR0118
Role Purpose <p>To be responsible for the processing and determination of a varied and complex caseload of planning applications (including major development - economic, inward investment, change of use and residential schemes) across Somerset, through negotiation with developers and their agents, considering third party comments, liaising with members and drafting reports to Planning Committee and for delegated decisions.</p> <p>To provide support and guidance to planning officers and consultees dealing with the processing of planning applications, undertaking monitoring and compliance functions and other planning functions to meet agreed timescales, make robust decisions, and deliver appropriate development. To prepare appeal statements and attend hearings and public enquiries as expert witness in connection with planning and enforcement appeals, to represent the Local Planning Authority and defend its decisions.</p> <p>To respond promptly to enquiries from developers, members and the public on a range of development matters to ensure an efficient and reliable service is provided taking account of relevant legislation, case law policies and the procedures of the Council.</p>	
Key results area	Accountability
Corporate Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, organisational policy, and professional codes of conduct to uphold standards of best practise. • Deliver the aims of the council's equality, diversity and inclusion policies; health, safety and wellbeing of self and others; and Organisational values in everything you do, ensuring team members are also aware of their responsibilities and maintaining their understanding that Equality and Diversity practice covers both interaction with staff, service users and communities and includes challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.
Determination and interpretation of legislation	To work as part of the Council's wider planning service, to process applications for a wide range of development schemes including major planning applications and those of a more complex nature, undertaking negotiations with developers and their agents, whilst

Role Description

	<p>balancing material considerations, site constraints, planning policy and third party comments.</p> <p>Drafting reports to Planning Committee and for delegated decisions taking account of relevant legislation, case law, appeal decisions, policies, and the procedures of the Council.</p>
Professional support and Guidance	<p>To provide professional support and guidance to planning officers engaged in the processing of applications for planning permission, listed building consent, notifications, conservation area consent, advertisement consent and monitoring and compliance activities. This includes the carrying out of site inspections, drafting reports and recommendations, and negotiating with applicants/agents in accordance with procedures, good practice, and performance targets.</p>
Committee	<p>To attend Planning Committee meetings and present oral reports to the Committee on development management matters and take all necessary following action.</p>
Representing the Council at appeal	<p>To prepare appeal statements or proofs of evidence, and to act as expert witness for the Local Planning Authority, in connection with planning and enforcement appeals, public inquiries, informal hearings and court hearings as required. In addition, where necessary to prepare for and participate in court proceedings to secure compliance with planning legislation and/or prosecution.</p>
Determining applications	<p>To process planning applications, as appropriate, including meeting applicants and developers, undertaking site visits, and to examine, report and make recommendations on such planning applications, certificates of lawfulness, proposals, and related matters to Planning Committee or through delegated processes as appropriate.</p> <p>Assessing the planning merits and providing reports to Planning Committee and delegated decisions as directed by the Service Manager. Assessing the planning merits of potential enforcement and compliance cases and to undertake negotiation with all interested parties on compliance matters to establish actions which result in solutions or resolution with a clear emphasis on continuous improvement, performance delivery and providing the highest standards of customer service.</p>
Customer Care	<p>To provide general advice to the public, members and developers in terms of requirement for planning permission, planning and enforcement processes, negotiating with all interested parties concerning planning and enforcement caseloads and advising of required actions to support solutions or resolution.</p>

Role Description

	At all times maintaining high levels of customer service and meeting performance standards, having regard to the development plan, other planning policies and the Council's corporate priorities and objectives.
Monitoring and Compliance	To carry out Monitoring and Compliance activities including investigating and resolving complaints regarding breaches of planning control, planning conditions and legal agreements, undertaking site visits, site surveys and inspections as directed, including for the purpose of monitoring planning consents, conditions, and obligations.
Continued Professional Development	To undertake training and development as required and be committed to maintaining and developing expertise and knowledge in line with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) standards.
Other	To discharge other reasonable duties appropriate to the appointment and grading of the post.

Dimensions of role

The Senior Planning Officers deal with major and more complex minor and other applications and all associated consenting requirements such as discharge of conditions and non-material amendments.

This can range from change of use, advert consents, prior approvals, major economic, inward investment and major housing development. Applications can include EIA development and Habitats Regulation Assessments. They provide pre application advice on in principle and detailed schemes and instruct and negotiate on legal agreements to ensure development proposals meet policy requirements and deliver required mitigation in accordance with legislation.

At this level, officers present at committee and defend appeal decisions through written representations, hearings and public inquiries.

The Senior Officers offer support to the Planning Officers and Technicians in terms of judgement, legislation interpretation and knowledge of case law, appeal decisions and policies. They are responsible for their own caseloads of applications which are subject to 8 and 13 week statutory determination periods as recorded through Government Performance tables. These officers have working caseloads ranging from 35-50 reflecting the more complex nature of the applications.

Planning Horizon:

Within the next 5 years Somerset will be working jointly to provide one local adopted plan for the whole area. Planning Officers feed into policy development by testing and translating policies in terms of ease of delivery. The planning areas are continuing to operate in the 4 area teams in the short term.

Qualification/ Knowledge / skills / experience

Qualifications:

- Degree in Town Planning or related subject and equivalent experience. The postholder will require membership of (or be eligible to join) the RTPI (Essential)

Knowledge:

- Ability to provide detailed advice across a range of planning issues in a development management/planning environment, including process and procedural matters (Essential)
- Good knowledge of planning, enforcement, planning policy, case law and relevant legislation (Essential)
- Interpretation of legislation - interpretation of relevant planning legislation and case law in respect of issues arising from pre-application enquiries, applications, appeals and planning enforcement (Essential)

Skills:

- Good negotiation skills and the ability to contribute positively to the resolution of issues (Essential)
- Working under pressure and to strict deadlines, prioritising, organising, and planning own and others fluctuating workloads (Essential)
- Ability to communicate with a range of stakeholders clearly and proactively (Essential)
- Adaptation and responding to change (Essential)
- Ability to use influence and persuasion to achieve objectives (Essential)
- Ability to use thoughtful judgement to manage complex service delivery (Essential)
- Flexible approach to the working day (Essential)
- Shares knowledge and expertise with others (Essential)

Experience:

- Should have experience of working at a Senior level in Development Management and demonstrate the ability to manage a caseload and competing workloads to maintain performance targets (Essential)
- Should have experience of defending the Council at appeal (Hearing/Inquiry) (Desirable)
- Should have experience of working within a team to support team development and CPD (Essential)

Role Description

Notes	
Competencies / attributes	<p>IT Literacy – will need to be familiar with office, comfortable with data input, report writing and presentations.</p> <p>Customer focus – will need to be a clear communicator with excellent negotiation skills. You will need to be able to develop and maintain relationships with Members.</p> <p>Work ethic - You will need to be a methodical and well organised worker to meet performance targets. Networking skills to build relationships with developers. You will need to be enthusiastic, have a flexible approach to working hours and be a good team player.</p> <p>Promote the need for change and models this behaviour.</p> <p>Ability to adapt to changing priorities.</p> <p>Advanced communication skills, including the ability to influence, negotiate and problem solve.</p>
Working conditions:	<p>The full-time post is 37 hours per week with some flexibility to meet the needs of the service.</p> <p>There is a 6 months' probation. Work shall be from the office during the probation period and from then can be flexible with a mixture of remote and office working.</p>
Working arrangements:	Full-time – 37 hours