

Planning Technician

Introduction

The challenge for Town and Country Planners is to achieve a balance between demands for land and its use. Should it be developed for housing or roads, farming or factories? In County Councils, planners research and produce a 'structure plan', which outlines the county's planning priorities. Planners in District and Unitary/Metropolitan authorities develop a detailed plan in line with this, taking into account needs and concerns in their district.

Anyone wanting to build or develop land within an authority needs to gain permission from the Planners first.

It's within this framework that Planning Technicians provide support for the professional Planners.

Planners and Technicians are employed in every authority in England and Wales.

Work Environment

As a Planning Technician, you'd divide your time between work indoors - largely in an office environment but also occasionally in village community centres or town halls, for example, when public meetings take place - and on-site visits, out in the open air, in all weathers.

You'd usually work normal office hours, but sometimes you may need to attend meetings - with the public or developers, for instance - outside office hours.

Daily Activities

Your daily activities as a Planning Technician would focus around the needs of the Senior Planning Officers. You'd work as part of a team and your tasks may include:

- helping to identify planning needs, opportunities and weaknesses
- gathering and collating information, providing technical support
- helping to conduct surveys - devising questions and identifying the right people to talk to
- working and liaising with contractors, local authorities, outside bodies and agencies and the public
- organising public meetings - setting up exhibitions and writing leaflets
- organising, indexing and storing plans, photographs, maps, reports and notes on listed buildings
- producing extracts and enlargements or reductions of maps - and revising them

- dealing with minor planning applications and schemes and preparing reports for Senior Planning Officers
- handling general planning enquiries and providing technical advice on the Council's policies and procedures to Councillors, developers, other Councils and departments, as well as the public
- monitoring developments once they've been completed to make sure they comply with planning conditions
- monitoring waste management and landfill sites through data collected as well as site visits and meetings with developers, to make sure that they comply with planning law, contractual obligations and after care
- investigating potential and alleged breaches of planning legislation
- building databases - for waste management and landfill, for instance
- taking necessary enforcement action (under the supervision of senior planning officers).

Skills & Interests

You'd need to:

- be meticulous - have an eye for detail and accuracy
- be flexible, able to respond to a range of requests and complete them within a deadline
- have good communication skills - you'd be dealing with all kinds of people and would need to be able to explain details of planning conditions clearly and succinctly, including writing reports
- be a good team worker
- have an interest in all aspects of the environment - both urban and rural
- have a driving licence.