

## Town and Country Planning

*We are grateful to the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) for their help with this chapter and for allowing us to use material from their website ([www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk))*

### The Sector

Town and Country Planning (often called Town Planning for short) is concerned with making the best use of limited natural resources, especially land, and with achieving a balance between competing uses and delivering sustainable development. The Town and Country Planning system responds to changes in society and the economy. It is concerned with aspects such as the renewal of our towns and cities, ensuring good quality design of new buildings, conserving historic buildings and valuable landscapes and the provision of space for living, working and playing.

Day-to-day work in planning involves carrying out research and surveys, collating and analysing data and presenting it in a variety of written and graphical formats. It involves drawing-up plans for the future use of land, and controlling development – including handling applications for planning permission and taking enforcement action to ensure that satisfactory development takes place or unauthorised use ceases. Planning is a very broad field, bringing together lots of different skills and areas of expertise.

### Sector Profile

There are about 10,000 professional Planners in Britain and many more Planning Support Staff. Numbers are expected to increase substantially as a result of the reforms outlined in the recent Planning Green Paper. Most planners are employed in local authorities, but the private sector is becoming increasingly important, with a substantial increase in the number of planning consultancies and planners directly employed by large development companies.

### Typical Post Names

Planner (e.g. Transport Planner, Waste and Minerals Planner, Environmental Planner), Development Control Officer/Manager, Planning Inspector, Planning Enforcement Officer, Planning Administrator, Planning Technician, Planning Assistant/Officer

### Main Employers

Local authorities, planning consultancies, regional assemblies, central government departments, large development companies, utility industries, government agencies, regeneration and/or environmental organisations, national park authorities, tourist authorities

### Career Opportunities

Employers now expect all Planners to be graduates, and it is beneficial to be either working towards or in possession of membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). One route to becoming a Planner is to do an undergraduate university course that is accredited by the RTPI. This enables you to get a full planning education in four years, or five years if taking a sandwich course. The other route is to take a planning-related degree, such as geography or architecture, followed by a two year full-time or three year part-time course giving a postgraduate planning qualification accredited by the RTPI. Contact the RTPI for a list of universities offering accredited courses: contact details are given at the end of this chapter.

In order to carry out their roles efficiently and effectively, Planners need help from Planning Support Staff. These staff provide a range of administrative and technical back-up that may be general or highly specialized and include information technologists, draughtsmen and women, cartographers and model builders. Working in Town Planning Support is a valid and satisfying career in its own right and can also provide a springboard for advancement to a career as a Chartered Town Planner, or perhaps into more general administration.

Good GCSEs are normally required for entry to Town Planning Support posts. The generally accepted qualifications towards which staff work are National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQs and SVQs) at Level 3 in Town Planning Support and the Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Planning. Contact the Awarding Body for the Built Environment (ABBE) for details of NVQs and SVQs, and Edexcel for information about HNC courses. Contact details for these organisations are found in the Contacts section at the end of the chapter.

Local authorities offer planners a wealth of skilled planning specialist positions dealing in development control, enforcement, conservation and transport, while the private sector continues to offer varied consultancy work. The widespread growth of interest in environmental issues has resulted in a steady growth in opportunities for planners in non-governmental organisations and pressure groups.

In local authorities, starting salaries range from around £15,000 to £20,000 for Planning Assistants, £18,000 to £25,000 for Planners, and rise to around £35,000 for Senior Planners. Planners can expect to earn higher salaries in the private sector.

### **Issues and Trends**

The Government is intent on reforming the Town and Country Planning system so that it becomes more efficient and positive, helping to contribute to sustainable development by facilitating the right sort of development – that which helps protect the environment and local amenity whilst delivering the homes, jobs and facilities needed by society. Delivering this difficult balancing act is the very stuff of planning, and the Government is determined to see a substantial increase in the numbers skills and capabilities of planners. This is a good time for able young graduates to consider entering the profession.

There are also some opportunities to work in Europe (and overseas), particularly for planners who are able to speak another European language.

### **Personal Profiles**

#### **Nienke Veldkamp – Planning Officer, Kent County Council**

“I work as a Planning Officer with Kent County Council in the Land Use and Transport Policy Unit. As part of the Development Plan team, the main focus of my job is to develop and provide advice on strategic policy matters, in particular relating to minerals and waste planning issues.

My main areas of work include developing and reviewing policies for the review of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, as well as for the review of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plans. This work involves gathering a range of technical background data and information and tracking recent policy changes at national and regional levels, which feeds into and supports the drafting of policies and the plans as a whole. I am a member of the internal Sustainability Appraisal team, appraising the emerging policy documents. I also carry out a variety of monitoring surveys, specifically for minerals and waste planning matters, the information and results of which feed into the work done by the Regional Aggregates Working Party (for minerals) and the Regional Technical Advisory Board (for waste).

I have only worked in planning for just over three years, all of them with Kent County Council. I graduated from the University of St Andrews with an MA in Geography. Throughout my degree I was fascinated by the interaction of people with their environment and decided to explore this relationship further by studying for an MSc in Rural and Regional Resources Planning at the University of Aberdeen. It was through the MSc that I became interested in land use planning. Whilst working with Kent County Council, I have started a three year part-time degree studying for a Masters in Town Planning funded by my employers. As the course is accredited by the RTPI, this will be of benefit in working towards my RTPI membership.”

## **Contacts**

**Awarding Body for the Built Environment (ABBE)** – for information about Vocational Qualifications for Town Planning Support Staff  
Room 417 – Edge Building, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of Central England, Perry Barr, Birmingham, B42 2SU  
Tel: 0121 3315174  
E-mail: james.westley@uce.ac.uk

**Edexcel** - for details of Higher National Certificate courses in Planning  
Edexcel Customer Response Centre  
Tel: 0870 240 9800  
E-mail: enquiries@edexcel.org.uk  
www.edexcel.org.uk

**Planning Portal**  
Gateway to information on Town & Country Planning  
www.planningportal.gov.uk

**Royal Town Planning Institute**  
41 Botolph Lane, London, EC3R 8DL  
Tel: 020 7929 9481/9482  
E-mail: careers@rtpi.org.uk  
www.rtpi.org.uk

**Town & Country Planning Association**  
Extensive resources relating to city, regional and environmental planning  
www.tcpa.org.uk

## **Publications**

**“Planning” magazine** – the official weekly journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute, where most planning jobs are advertised.  
www.planning.haynet.com

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