

Lead Officer – Development Management
Permanent role, based in Kingston
Grade K

Job Description/role profile

Context

Kingston faces significant growth pressures, major regeneration opportunities, evolving London Plan requirements and increasing expectations for high-quality, sustainable development. The borough's diverse urban environment, heritage assets, housing needs and infrastructure challenges require exceptional planning leadership and coordination.

The Lead Officer – Development Management plays a critical role in shaping Kingston's places by leading the planning process for all planning applications, from householders to complex, strategic and sensitive development proposals. The role provides professional leadership within the Development Management service, supports continuous improvement, strengthens Member engagement and ensures Kingston delivers high-quality outcomes for its communities.

Role Purpose

To lead and coordinate all aspects of the planning process for all planning application types, including householder, certificates, prior approvals, major, strategic and complex development proposals, providing expert professional advice and ensuring timely, robust and transparent decision-making, including taking a lead role in planning committees.

The postholder acts as a key interface between developers, Members, senior officers, the GLA, TfL, statutory consultees, community stakeholders and internal services. The Lead Officer will champion design quality, sustainable development, climate-positive outcomes and high standards of customer service.

Reporting to the Head of Planning, the role has direct line management responsibilities which include Principal, senior and planning officers.

Key Activities

1. Planning and Professional Leadership:

- a) Provide authoritative professional and technical advice on planning legislation, London Plan requirements, Kingston's Local Plan and material considerations.
- b) Lead on all planning applications, ensuring the highest professional standards and delivering outcomes aligned with Kingston's priorities.
- c) Coordinate and project-manage Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) and negotiate robust, deliverable milestones with applicants and consultees.
- d) Oversee the preparation and presentation of committee reports, Member briefings, design review submissions, decision notices and associated outputs.
- e) Represent the Council at Planning Committee and associated briefings, providing clear, balanced and defensible advice.

- f) Act as Kingston's expert witness at hearings and public inquiries for major applications.

2. Design Quality, Placemaking and Sustainability

- a) Promote high-quality design, inclusive neighbourhoods, climate resilience and healthy place-making principles.
- b) Ensure development proposals align with Kingston's local policies, London Plan policy, design codes and master planning frameworks.
- c) Engage proactively with the borough's Design Review Panel and design officers to secure high-quality outcomes.

3. S106, Viability and Infrastructure Planning

- a) Lead negotiations on planning obligations, affordable housing, viability reviews, infrastructure requirements and delivery mechanisms.
- b) Work with Legal Services, Housing, Transport, Public Health, Education, Environment and Corporate Estates to ensure obligations are robust, justified and deliverable.
- c) Ensure financial and non-financial obligations contribute meaningfully to Kingston's corporate priorities and infrastructure needs.

4. Partnership Working and Customer Focus

- a) Build positive, professional relationships with developers, consultants, landowners, key agencies, community groups and statutory partners including GLA, TfL and utility providers.
- b) Engage with residents and Members to ensure development proposals are well communicated and community views are understood and considered.
- c) Respond to complex complaints, enquiries, FOIs and Ombudsman cases with clarity and professionalism.

5. Leadership and Service Improvement

- a) Provide visible leadership and support to planning officers working on major applications, offering coaching, case direction and quality assurance.
- b) Support the Head of Planning in modernising the service, improving performance, strengthening processes and delivering digital transformation.
- c) Contribute to service planning, policy development and corporate initiatives related to regeneration, sustainability, inclusive growth and service innovation.
- d) Deputise for the Head of Planning as required.

6. Commissioning and Performance Management

- a) Lead on the commissioning of external consultants and specialists (viability, design, transport, environmental, legal) where required.
- b) Monitor consultant performance, outputs, timescales and value for money.
- c) Lead internal working groups and project boards for major applications, ensuring consistency, transparency and accountability.

7. Digital and Modern Working

- a) Promote and support digital tools, case management systems, GIS and collaborative platforms to deliver a modern, efficient planning service.
- b) Advocate for process improvements and data-led insights to improve performance and customer experience.

Person Specification

Qualifications

- Degree in Town Planning or a related built environment discipline.
- Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) or eligible for chartered membership.

Experience

- Extensive experience managing major and complex planning applications, ideally within a London Borough or comparable high-density urban authority.
- Demonstrated ability to lead multidisciplinary teams and secure high-quality design and sustainable development outcomes.
- Strong experience of Member engagement, committee presentation and political awareness.
- Experience negotiating planning obligations, viability, and infrastructure contributions.
- Experience acting as expert witness at appeals or inquiries (desirable).

Knowledge and Skills

- Expert understanding of planning legislation, national policy, the London Plan and current best practice.
- Strong understanding of urban design, sustainability, climate action and infrastructure planning.
- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal, including report writing and presentation.
- Ability to manage risk, resolve complex issues, influence stakeholders and drive performance.
- Strong project management, negotiation and organisational skills.

Kingston's STAR Values

Lead Officers are expected to model Kingston's organisational values:

- Supportive – encouraging innovation, collaboration and continuous improvement
- Transparent – open, clear and constructive in communication
- Appreciative – recognising success and supporting staff wellbeing
- Respectful – fostering inclusion, equity and positive relationships