

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Senior Planning Policy Officer
MANAGED BY:	Principal Planning Policy Officer
GRADE:	10

ROLE OVERVIEW

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) is preparing its first Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). The SDS is a statutory strategic plan that will set the framework for how the region grows over the next 15-30 years. Covering the MCA area and North Somerset, the SDS will guide housing and employment land allocations, identify strategic infrastructure priorities, and embed climate resilience, environmental protection, and inclusive growth.

The SDS must meet strict statutory requirements, pass the Planning Inspectorate's "tests of soundness", and align with both national policy and local authority Local Plans. Government expects adoption within the current Parliament, with the SDS forming the spatial expression of the West of England Local Growth Plan and informing key investment decisions.

Working as part of the SDS team, the post holder will provide professional planning policy support to the Principal Planning Policy Officer and Planning Policy Lead.

They will help deliver the West of England's first SDS, ensuring it meets statutory requirements, is underpinned by robust technical evidence, and aligns with Government expectations, local authority Local Plans, and regional priorities for housing, jobs, infrastructure, climate resilience, and environmental outcomes.

The role will combine research, evidence commissioning, stakeholder engagement, and programme coordination to ensure the SDS is legally compliant, technically sound, and examination-ready.

THE ROLE

Reporting to the Principal Planning Policy Officer, you will specialise in the delivery of aspects of the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).

As a Senior Planning Policy Officer, and in the context of the SDS, you will be expected

to:

- Assist in preparing and maintaining a robust SDS evidence base, including commissioning, monitoring, and quality-assuring technical studies (e.g., housing need, transport modelling, environmental assessments, viability studies).
- Analyse and interpret spatial, demographic, economic, and environmental data to inform strategic policy choices. You will use spatial mapping tools (e.g. GIS) to present data and policy options clearly.
- Support the set-up, preparation and roll-out of engagement and consultation processes and materials in line with our policy and legislative requirements.
- Provide support in preparing research for policy development and formulation.
- Be aware of the process of preparing a strategic plan, and the interdependencies with emerging Local Plans in the region.
- Know what is expected of technical excellence and quality, legal compliance and soundness.
- Develop strong relationships collaborating with the Unitary Authorities and other key stakeholders.
- Be confident working across Directorates within the MCA to review baseline evidence and check interdependencies within emerging strategy work.

As part of your role, you will also be expected to be agile and flexible to supporting wider opportunities from across the Homes and Regeneration function and other Directorates. Current directorate projects include building visions and delivery plans for large scale growth & regeneration opportunities, accelerating building remediation, and developing the region's Growth Strategy.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

You will be expected to be accountable or responsible for the following:

Technical Expertise

- Accountable for inputting into well-researched and justified key strategic evidence base documents, or supporting the overseeing the commissioning and project management of consultants.
- Accountable for striving to deliver technical excellence and 'soundness' is at the core of all evidence work.
- Support statutory consultation stages, including preparation of consultation materials, coordinating responses, and ensuring all engagement meets legal and procedural standards.
- Produce first drafts of assigned sections, collating evidence and analysis in line with national policy and legislative requirements.
- Maintain programme documentation, track milestones, and escalate delivery risks to the relevant Principal Planning Policy Officer.

- Coordinate cross-authority officer working groups and provide updates to political and technical boards.
- Support preparation of reports, briefings, and presentations for MCA committees, local authority cabinets, and examination hearings.
- Own continuous professional development, maintaining current knowledge of planning reforms, appeals and decisions.
- Input into spatial planning and maps to enable information to be presented and communicated in a clear and succinct manner.

Collaborating across the Housing and Regeneration Directorate and MCA Directorates

- Reporting to the Principal Planning Policy Officer, work effectively across the team and other Directorates.

Representing the MCA Externally

- Liaise with unitary authority planning teams, Government departments, statutory consultees, developers, and community representatives.
- Work collaboratively with local authorities and other organisations in the delivery of key MCA strategies including the SDS, in particular in relation to programme management and engagement activities.
- Attend and support stakeholder events as directed, capturing feedback and providing technical input where relevant.
- Support with liaison with key stakeholders to provide accurate information for internal and external monthly reporting, co-ordinating all internal returns.
- Ensure the Public Sector Equality Duty and climate change duties are embedded in SDS outputs.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL (MUST HAVE)	Senior Planning Policy Officer
Qualifications and Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educated to degree level or equivalent in relevant academic subject (planning, built environment, environmental planning) with technical knowledge and have relevant practical experience. • Good planning knowledge and practical experience of policy and legislation. • Good knowledge of strategic issues within the West of England, and interaction of strategic and emerging Local Plans.
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience preparing or supporting the preparation of technically sound evidence base documents. • Previous experience working in multi-disciplinary environments, and working collaboratively to achieve good outcomes. • Experience in programme management and inputting into the overall SDS programme. • Previous experience working in political environments
Skills and Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent communicator, with strong written and visual communication skills through the full range of Microsoft packages. • Ability to support the making of effective, justified, balanced and evidence-led recommendations. • Ability to balance competing priorities on time and workload. • Demonstrable commercial and programme management awareness. • Ownership of continuous professional development.
DESIRABLE	
Qualifications and Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) or working towards chartered status. • Understanding of viability assessments, transport modelling, or environmental impact assessments.
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience preparing and defending decisions at Examination in Public.
Skills and Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ArcGIS and Spatial Mapping • Current driving license.