WEST OF ENGLAND | MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE:	Team Lead – Mayoral Planning & Development Management
MANAGED BY:	Head of Housing and Strategic Planning
GRADE:	13

Approx. size of team	Initially 0, with an expectation of upcoming recruitment
Approx. annual budget:	C£1-2m
Key accountabilities:	• Lead the West of England MCA's Mayoral Planning & Development Management service. • Act as the MCA's lead adviser on mayoral planning powers, strategic development management and planning interventions. • Oversee the assessment of planning applications of strategic importance and provide recommendations to the Mayor regarding intervention, call-in and determination. • Ensure planning decisions, reports and associated processes are legally robust, evidence-led and delivered within statutory timescales. • Lead the MCA's response to legal challenge, including supporting the defence of Mayoral planning decisions at Judicial Review and other legal proceedings. • Manage strategic relationships with constituent authorities, MHCLG, statutory consultees, applicants and other key stakeholders.
Key relationships:	• Mayor and Mayoral Office • Corporate Leadership Team • MHCLG • Planning Inspectorate • Constituent Unitary Authorities • Statutory Consultees • Developers, landowners and planning agents • Planning legal advisers and Counsel

ROLE OVERVIEW

In September 2026, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched a consultation on mayoral planning powers. The consultation proposed granting Mayors outside London powers similar to those exercised by the Mayor of London, including the ability to intervene in planning applications of Potential Strategic Importance, direct local planning authorities to refuse planning permission in specific circumstances, and call-in planning applications for Mayoral determination. These proposals form part of the Government's wider agenda to strengthen strategic planning, accelerate housing delivery and support economic growth.

The consultation proposed that the necessary secondary legislation would be introduced during late 2026, with the new powers expected to come into force in 2027. When implemented, the changes will create a new statutory planning function within the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), requiring the establishment of a dedicated Mayoral Planning & Development Management service.

The service will be responsible for supporting the Mayor in exercising these powers, including assessing planning applications referred to the Mayor, advising on strategic planning interventions, managing call-in processes, undertaking planning determinations where required, and ensuring decisions are supported by robust evidence and legal compliance. The service will operate within a highly visible political and legal environment, balancing the need to accelerate delivery of homes and economic growth with the requirements of due process, transparency and sound planning practice.

The Team Lead – Mayoral Planning & Development Management will lead the establishment and operation of this new service, helping to shape how the West of England MCA exercises mayoral planning powers and supports the delivery of sustainable growth across the region.

THE ROLE

The Team Lead – Mayoral Planning & Development Management will lead the West of England MCA's Mayoral Planning & Development Management service.

Reporting to the Head of Housing & Strategic Planning, the postholder will act as the Combined Authority's lead adviser on mayoral planning powers, strategic development management and planning interventions. They will oversee the assessment of planning applications of strategic importance, provide recommendations to the Mayor regarding intervention, call-in and determination, and ensure the Mayor receives robust, evidence-led and legally compliant advice.

The postholder will be responsible for establishing and leading a high-performing development management team, developing the systems, governance arrangements and operating procedures required to support the exercise of mayoral planning powers, and building effective relationships with constituent authorities, government departments and key stakeholders.

Working at the interface between planning, politics and law, the role will carry significant responsibility for managing legal, procedural and reputational risk. This includes supporting the defence of Mayoral planning decisions through Judicial Review, statutory challenge and other legal proceedings where required, ensuring the MCA's planning decisions are robust, defensible and capable of withstanding external scrutiny.

The postholder will play a key role in ensuring the effective operation of mayoral planning powers to support sustainable growth, accelerate housing delivery, unlock regeneration opportunities and advance the Mayor's priorities across the West of England.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership & Service Development

- Lead the establishment, mobilisation and continuous improvement of the Mayoral Planning & Development Management service.
- Develop and maintain the operational model, governance arrangements, procedures and performance framework required to support the exercise of mayoral planning powers.
- Manage service budgets, resources and commissioned support.
- Ensure the service operates efficiently, effectively and in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Contribute to the leadership of the Housing & Strategic Planning service and wider Place Directorate.

Mayoral Planning & Development Management

- Oversee the assessment of planning applications referred to the Mayor under relevant legislation and regulations.
- Provide professional advice and recommendations to the Mayor on applications of strategic importance.
- Oversee the preparation of planning reports, recommendations, briefings and supporting evidence.
- Ensure planning assessments appropriately consider national policy, local development plans, strategic infrastructure requirements and Mayoral priorities.
- Act as senior responsible officer for planning applications called in for Mayoral determination.
- Oversee the organisation and delivery of hearings, consultations and decision-making processes associated with called-in applications.

Legal Compliance, Risk & Decision Making

- Ensure planning decisions and recommendations are legally robust, evidence-led and capable of withstanding external scrutiny.
- Manage legal, procedural and reputational risks associated with the exercise of mayoral planning powers.

- Lead the MCA's response to legal challenge, including supporting the defence of Mayoral planning decisions through Judicial Review, statutory challenge and other legal proceedings.
- Commission and oversee specialist planning legal advice and Planning Counsel support where required.
- Monitor changes to planning legislation, policy and case law and advise on implications for the service.

Stakeholder & Partnership Management

- Develop and maintain effective relationships with constituent authorities, MHCLG, the Planning Inspectorate, statutory consultees and other partners.
- Act as the MCA's senior point of contact on strategic development management matters.
- Promote collaborative working arrangements with local planning authorities to support efficient operation of planning referral processes.
- Represent the Combined Authority at local, regional and national planning forums.
- Build constructive relationships with applicants, developers, landowners, agents and infrastructure providers.

Strategic Advice & Influence

- Provide expert advice to the Mayor, Corporate Leadership Team and senior officers on planning and development management matters.
- Support the development of regional positions on planning reform, strategic planning and growth.
- Lead engagement with government and other Mayoral Strategic Authorities on mayoral planning powers.
- Ensure planning interventions support the MCA's wider housing, regeneration, transport, economic growth and environmental objectives.

Leadership & People Management

- Lead, manage and develop a high-performing team of planning and support professionals.
- Set clear objectives and expectations, managing performance and supporting professional development.
- Promote a culture of technical excellence, collaboration, accountability and continuous improvement.
- Ensure appropriate workforce planning, recruitment and resource allocation across the service.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL (MUST HAVE)
Qualifications and Knowledge • Educated to degree level or able to demonstrate equivalent experience in planning, development management, regeneration, urban development or a related discipline. • Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) or equivalent professional qualification. • Excellent knowledge of planning legislation, development management processes and planning policy. • Strong understanding of the legal and procedural requirements associated with planning decision-making. • Knowledge of strategic planning, regeneration and growth challenges facing major urban and regional areas. • Understanding of the role of Mayoral Strategic Authorities and the wider planning and infrastructure landscape.
Experience • Significant experience in development management, strategic planning, planning consultancy, planning law or a related field. • Experience of advising elected members, senior officers or other high-profile decision-makers on complex planning matters. • Experience of preparing or overseeing complex planning reports, recommendations and decisions. • Experience of operating within a politically sensitive environment. • Proven leadership experience in managing professional teams and delivering complex work programmes. • Experience of managing competing priorities and balancing legal, technical, commercial and political considerations. • Experience of building effective relationships with multiple external stakeholders and organisations. • Experience of representing an organisation in high-profile or potentially contentious situations. • Experience of giving evidence, defending professional recommendations or supporting legal proceedings relating to planning matters
Skills and Competencies • Strong professional judgement with the ability to make balanced, evidence-led recommendations on complex matters. • Ability to analyse complex planning, legal and technical issues and communicate them clearly to non-specialist audiences. • Excellent written communication skills, including the preparation of reports suitable for publication and public scrutiny.

- Excellent stakeholder management, negotiation and influencing skills.
- Ability to build consensus while maintaining professional independence and integrity.
- Strong leadership skills with the ability to motivate and develop teams.
- Ability to operate confidently and credibly with senior political and executive leaders.
- Resilient and comfortable working under pressure in a highly visible environment

DESIRABLE

Qualifications and Knowledge

- Postgraduate qualification in planning, urban design, development, regeneration, law or a related discipline.
- Understanding of the planning and growth challenges facing the West of England.
- Knowledge of planning inquiries, statutory hearings, Judicial Review and other legal challenge processes.

Experience

- Experience of strategic planning applications, nationally significant development, major regeneration projects or large-scale infrastructure schemes.
- Experience of working within a Combined Authority, regional body, government department, mayoral authority or equivalent organisation.
- Experience establishing or leading a new service, function or programme.
- Experience working with legal advisers and Planning Counsel.
- Experience appearing as an expert witness or supporting legal proceedings.

Skills & Competencies

- Strong commercial awareness and understanding of development viability and delivery.
- Ability to identify opportunities for service improvement and organisational innovation.
- Ability to operate effectively across organisational and professional boundaries.
- Commitment to continuous professional development and professional excellence.