



Candidate Information Pack

PLANNING OFFICER



May 2023

Surrey Heath Borough Council
Knoll Road, Camberley GU15 3HD
human.resources@surreyheath.gov.uk



A Message from the Head of Planning

Thank you for your interest in this role for the Council. This is a fantastic opportunity for an exceptional individual with the drive and talent to be a key part of a busy Development Management team, by helping the service fulfil and exceed performance targets and to be involved in exciting planning projects within Surrey Heath Borough Council.

I wanted to let you know that alongside our clear ambition, we are also a friendly and collaborative organisation where our staff feel really proud of the work that they do and the difference they make every day to the lives of our communities. This makes Surrey Heath a very special place to work.

I hope in the pages below we are able to give you a flavour of what Surrey Heath has to offer. If this excites your interest, I'd be delighted to receive your application.

Best wishes,

G.Chinniah

Gavin Chinniah
Head of Planning
Surrey Heath Borough Council





Surrey Heath

Situated in North West Surrey, with a population of 90,500, Surrey Heath is a beautiful place to live and work. We rank first in the Home Counties for wellbeing (NOMIS 2019) and first in England and Wales for tree coverage (Bluesky). Combine that with close proximity to London and our ambitious regeneration programme for Camberley town centre (the Borough's largest town), and we have a lot to offer.

The Borough covers 36.5 square miles in north west Surrey, on the border of both Berkshire and Hampshire and is a contrast of urban and rural environments. The area has unique military heritage with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where all Officers in the British Army are trained, and Deepcut Barracks.

Generally an affluent area, people who work here have the second highest average weekly wage in the South East. But having enough homes for people that need them and are affordable is a challenge when balanced against the need to maintain the green nature of the Borough and the extensive specially protected heathland (SPA).

This is a uniquely challenging time for local businesses, therefore a strong economy and vibrant town and village centres are vital for local employment and future business success. The Council has invested significantly over recent years in Camberley town centre. We will continue our work with our towns, villages and rural communities to make these areas attractive to businesses and visitors.



About Surrey Heath Borough Council

We are one of the smallest Boroughs in the country with 35 elected members, currently in no overall control and 250 staff with a strong ethos for public service. We recognise that nothing can be achieved in isolation, and we have a strong foundation in Surrey Heath of partnership working.

We have an excellent track record of financial management and during almost a decade of austerity and cuts in Local Government funding, Surrey Heath has managed to protect frontline services and continue to invest in priority initiatives. However, during the same period the Council's budget has had a growing reliance on income from commercial rents including rents from the retail sector, which can no longer be sustained at previous levels.

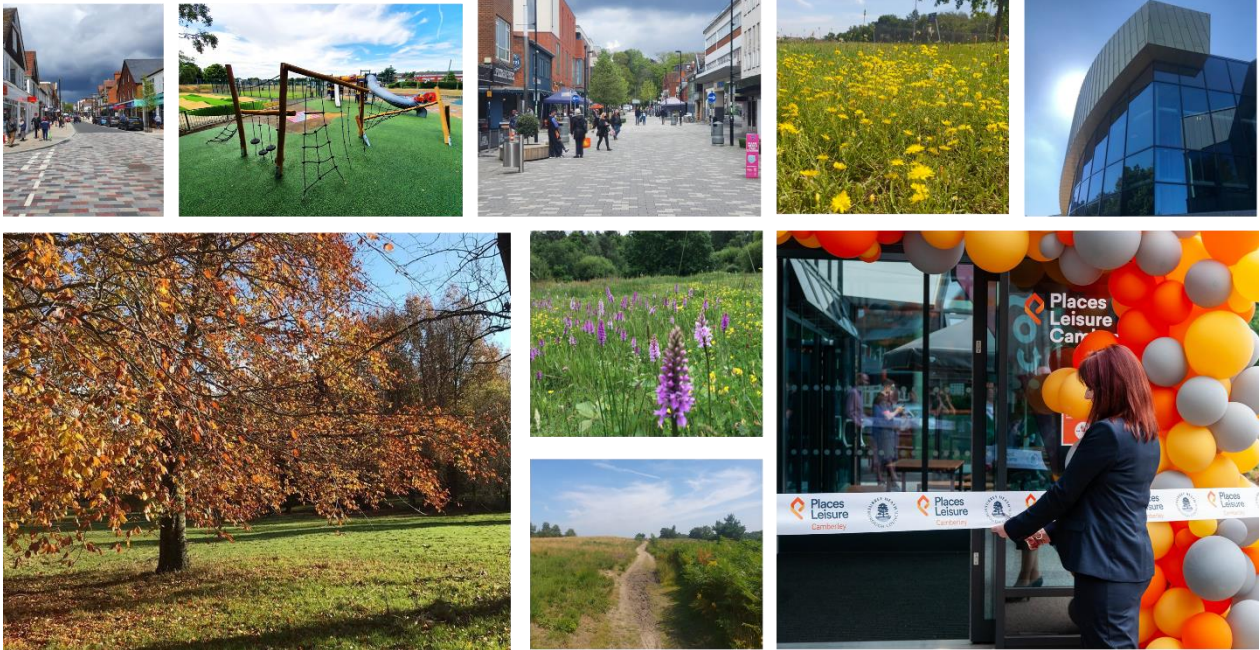
We are committed to taking action on climate change, helping the increasing number of people who find themselves in poverty in Surrey Heath and increasing our focus on the health and quality of life of our residents. This means more investment to support our vibrant villages and rural communities, alongside our continuing improvements to Camberley town centre.

The Council has developed a new Five Year Strategy through extensive engagement with residents, businesses and partners under the emerging themes of Environment, Health & Quality of Life, Economy and being an effective and responsive Council.

These build on key priorities for the organisation including: Supporting the economic recovery and the recovery of our communities; Delivery of a programme of regeneration including delivering a return on the Council's property holdings; Supporting community and voluntary organisations and their volunteers; A greater focus on partnership working and collaboration; The urgent need to protect the environment and tackle Climate Change; Contribute to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our communities; Tackling poverty, diverging mortality rates and other inequalities that exist within our communities; Place shaping – including the development of a new Local Plan, supporting and strengthening our town and village centres, and the delivery of more affordable housing; increasing enforcement activities and tackling anti-social behaviour; Achieving a balanced budget and investing in the future. Our work is underpinned by effective project management and delivery, excellent customer service and meaningful community engagement.



Recent Project Success



Camberley Town Centre – Regeneration and Public Realm

The Council is committed to supporting and regenerating Camberley. SHBC's investments have already seen the acquisition of The Square shopping centre, commencing its refurbishment programme within the first year of ownership. Followed by an ambitious set of projects to improve the roads, pavements and street scene in the town centre including the installation of public art which following public engagement workshops. A redundant office building has also been purchased to create 116 high quality town centre apartments, with proposals to re-deliver new commercial space. As well as the rebuild of a new multi-million pound leisure centre the Council continues to develop plans for a 5.5 acre multi-use development site opposite the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

New multi-million pound leisure centre opened in Camberley

A multi-million pound, state of the art leisure centre opened in Camberley at the beginning of July 2021. The centre was successfully constructed throughout the pandemic despite the enormous challenges faced by the construction industry. The centre features a cutting edge fitness suite – equipped with the latest workout machines and apparatus, 25 metre 6-lane pool, learner pool with adjustable floor, splash zone (interactive water confidence area), eight court sports hall, group exercise studios, health suite, temperature controlled yoga studio, immersive cycling studio, a vibrant Clip 'n Climb climbing arena and a Costa Coffee Café. A fun purpose-built adventure play area is also available for families to enjoy.



Sixth highest recycling rate in the England

The latest recycling figures show Surrey Heath was ranked sixth in a list of English councils with the highest household waste recycling, compost and reuse rates in 2019/20.

The impressive result in Defra's Local Authority league table reveals Surrey Heath's recycling rate increased by 1% from last year, taking it to 62.9%. which was just 1.2% below the top performing English authority. At a local level Surrey Heath was the top recycling area in Surrey.

Award winning Parks and more trees than any other Borough

There are two premier parks in the Borough, both hold the prestigious Green Flag. Frimley Lodge Park attracts a large number of visitors with its beautiful open spaces, picnic areas, pitch and putt course, newly refurbished children's playground; as well as a miniature railway, barbecue and private hire areas. There's also a 3G all-weather football pitch, traditional football and cricket pitches, and a café.

Lightwater Country Park is predominantly heathland habitat, but there are also ponds, woodland, meadows and areas of scrub providing essential habitats to a wide variety of wildlife, birds, mammals, plants and insects. The area of heathland within the Country Park has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The park also offers a café, new children's playground, information point, educational service, walking trails, grazing livestock, bee hive and fishing.

We're proud of our status as the Borough with the most tree coverage in the whole of England and Wales.

Relationships with our partners

Positive and effective partnership working is a hallmark of Surrey Heath's approach to delivery, including our latest partnership with Runnymede for the operation of our wellbeing services such as community transport, our wellbeing day centre, telecare and meals at home.

But it is not only our partnership with other Councils that sets us apart. During the Covid pandemic we helped galvanise over 2,000 volunteers, who stepped forward to help others in their communities. 80% of our staff were redeployed in some way to our welfare response – stepping out of their normal roles and 'comfort zones' to protect and support the most vulnerable in our communities. The Council supported the NHS by taking all vaccination phone calls and helping residents book appointments to ensure our communities were kept safe.



What our staff say...

"Surrey Heath Borough Council has helped shape me into the person I am today, and with continuous support and opportunities, I am confident my career will only flourish here."

"I would strongly recommend Surrey Heath Borough Council to anyone."

"The friendly atmosphere allows for a non-judgmental and positive experience and I believe the Council does well in fostering collaborative working across services."

"It is an exciting time to be joining Surrey Heath Borough Council as we deliver our ambitions for the next five years, put in place new strategic partnerships and start delivery of a range of exciting new initiatives."

97%

"I am proud of the work of my team"

Staff Survey June 2022

94%

"I work with highly capable people"

Staff Survey June 2022

97%

"My line manager trusts me to do a great job"

Staff Survey June 2022

92%

"I am encouraged to offer my ideas & suggestions for improvement"

Staff Survey June 2022

Our ethos is to invest in our staff; offer opportunities to individuals to grow and develop their skills and nurture our talented people. Our training and development for staff includes; A well development talent-management approach including apprenticeships, hugely successful internship programme and Local Government Association National Graduate Development programme; Internal mentoring programme; Surrey Learn Partnership providing excellent personal development opportunities; Management development programmes for aspiring, new and experienced managers; Significant investment in staff qualifications and career paths via the 'Post entry training' scheme and a wide range of e-learning, including mandatory and induction training.





The Role

As part of a team your primary purpose will be to process planning applications so that the service can deliver its statutory duty. Additionally, you will undertake pre-application enquiries and, when the need arises, undertake appeal work and present at committee.

You may be a graduate, or you may already be working in a planning department or a local authority and looking to move up the career ladder. We will support you with obtaining Chartered RTPI Membership. This includes APC mentorship and, if required, funding and supporting you with a Masters university course.

The successful applicant will:

- Possess knowledge of development management and the planning process
- Demonstrate excellent communication and customer service skills
- Be a highly motivated person, possessing ambition and drive
- Demonstrate excellent time management skills
- Be personable, be willing to learn, demonstrate a flexible attitude, be supportive of others and be a team player
- Be able to handle pressure and competing interests





How to apply

Applications

Applications are to be completed online and submitted no later than **21st May 2023**. CV's can be submitted via the online portal but cannot be accepted without a completed application.

Appointment Information

Salary

The salary grades for the post is SH5 and the incremental points are:

Scale Point	Salary (£)
5.19	32,570
5.20	33,928
5.21	35,265
5.22	36,622
5.23	37,234

All incremental progression within the grades is related to the performance of the post holder in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Scheme. All performance related changes are effective from 01 April of each year. In addition, you will receive a £2,000 golden hello and £2,000 per annum essential car allowance plus mileage

Annual leave

The post carries an annual leave entitlement of 24 days. After 5 years' continuous Local Government service, you will be entitled to an additional 5 days' annual leave.



Pension

All Surrey Heath employees who under the age of 75 and have a contract of employment for at least 3 months will automatically become a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) on their first day of employment, unless they opt out of the scheme upon joining the Council. You will be required to pay the relevant contributions to Surrey County Council LGPS. Further information on LGPS can be found on Surrey County Council Pension website <https://www.surreypensionfund.org/>

Benefits

The Council recognises that its main asset is its staff. In recognition of this the Council offers a generous benefits package which is currently as follows:

Local Government Pension Scheme.

A minimum of 24 days annual leave entitlement (pro-rata for part-time employees).

An additional 5 days annual leave after 5 years continuous Local Government service.

Hybrid working and other flexible working arrangements on offer, including up to 2 days flex a month.

Free private medical insurance for all staff after three years continuous service at Surrey Heath Borough Council.

Three times salary Life Assurance cover for all staff in the Pension Scheme.

Free parking for all non-casual staff

Regular health checks and other welfare initiatives and health promotions.

Subsidised gym membership.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Free VDU eye examinations every 2 years.

Free vaccinations when / where appropriate.



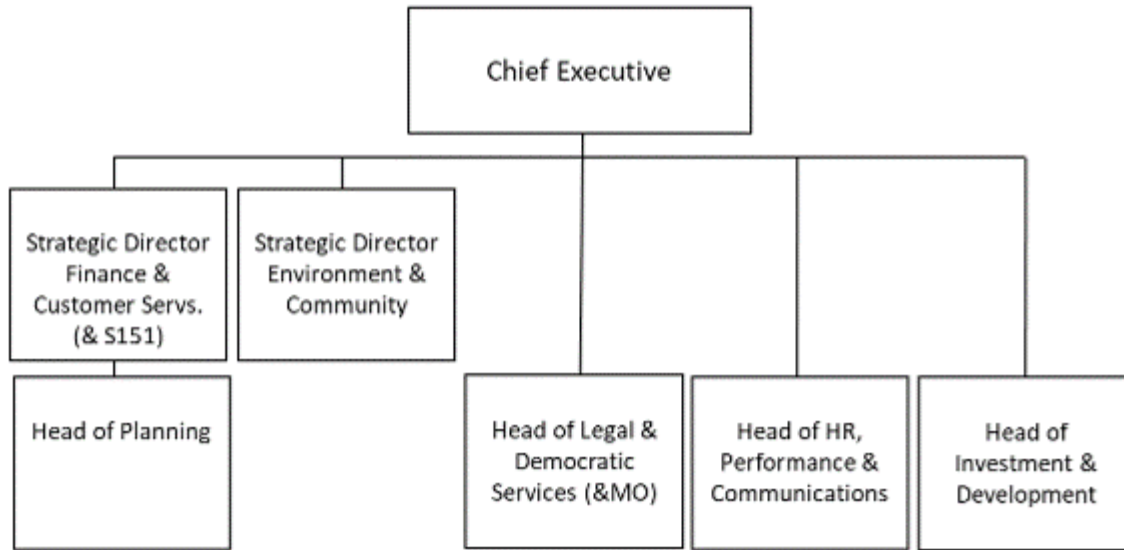
Access to reduced travel insurance.

Staff uniforms where required for all appropriate employees.

Flexible working policy.

Commitment to regular learning and development linked to Corporate objectives and support for professional learning and development, where appropriate.

Organisation Chart



Job Profile

Role Title: Planning Officer

Service: Planning

Location: Surrey Heath House, Knoll Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3HD

Reporting To: Development Management Team Leader

Role Purpose

As part of a team your primary purpose will be to process planning applications so that the service can deliver its statutory duty. Additionally, you will undertake pre-application enquiries and, when the need arises, undertake appeal work and present at committee.

Main Duties and Accountabilities

Knowledge and Expertise

- To review the content of registered applications in your name to ensure that you have the necessary plans and documents and that the correct persons have been consulted. When required, you may have to validate planning applications.
- To undertake site visits and attend meetings, as the needs arises.
- To be able to negotiate and resolve issues with statutory consultees, the applicant and interested parties.
- Be able to assimilate complex and conflicting views on planning proposals, assess them and make sound judgments.
- Be able to write concise and proportionate delegated and committee reports.
- To present at the Planning Applications Committee.
- To defend the Council's reasons for refusing planning applications on appeal.
- To undertake enforcement related work, if the need arises.

Creativity and Innovation

- Will need to be able to negotiate unique development solutions to enhance development proposals.



Financial Accountability

- None required. However, you will understand the importance of delivering a service on time and the Planning Guarantee.

Impact upon the Organisation & the Community

- Will have impacts on various internal services which will be required to make inputs into the planning process, including legal services, IT services, communications team, environmental services and others.

Management & Supervisory Responsibilities

- None required, but be there to assist junior members of the team, if needed.

Initiative & Independent Action

- An ability and confidence to make day to day decisions but not be afraid to ask for help and to fully engage in manager 1-2-1s and team workshops.

General

- Attend and present at Planning Applications Committee

Continuous Professional Development

- To undertake a post graduate degree course (if required), APC (if required) and be committed to obtaining RTPI Chartered Membership.
- To undertake external and internal courses for personal development
- To contribute to Team Meetings

Customers and Contacts

Important Internal Relationships

- Team Leaders, Development Manager and Head of Planning
- Corporate Management Team and Wider Management Team
- Technical Services Team



- Planning Policy and Conservation Team
- Corporate Enforcement
- Arboriculture Officer
- Design and Conservation Consultant
- Drainage Engineer
- Infrastructure Delivery Officer
- Legal
- Environmental Health
- ICT and Comms Teams
- Democratic Services
- Building Control
- Local Councillors

Important External Relationships

- Surrey County Council (particularly Highways Authority and Lead Local Flood Authority)
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Surrey Wildlife Trust
- Parish councils and amenity groups
- Developers, agents and applicants
- Borough's residents

Additional Requirements

- To continuously suggest/improve and/or update processes and procedures by digitalisation and streamlining with a view to maximising effectiveness, efficiency and to enable data sharing.
- To work collaboratively with colleagues in accordance with our corporate values and policies to achieve the Council aims and objectives.
- Ability to work from home if required, with access to reliable fast broadband connectivity.
- No contra-indications in personal background or criminal record indicating unsuitability in this role.



- Legally entitled to work in the UK.
- Ability to participate in the Council's out of hours Civil Emergency arrangements.
- Carries out any other duties commensurate with the grade of this post as is required of the Council.



Career Grade Planning Officer/Senior Planning Officer - Person Specification

Qualifications and Training

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Undergraduate degree (or equivalent qualification)	Essential	Application
Post graduate Masters or Diploma in Town Planning	Desirable	Application
Member of Royal Town Planning Institute	Desirable	Application

Knowledge and Experience

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Knowledge of planning legislation, national planning policies and planning reforms	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Understanding of the planning application process and planning enforcement	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Planning work experience, preferably in a local government environment	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Experience of presenting to an audience	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment



Skills and Relations with People

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Ability to develop effective working relationships with councillors and deal with their enquiries.	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
An ability to network effectively with key staff internally and with key organisations	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Good customer service skills	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment

Creativity and Innovation

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Ability to negotiate and deliver solutions to planning problems	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Flexible approach to work organisation	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Ability to craft planning reports which skilfully and concisely identify key determining issues and demonstrate the application of sound planning judgements, dealing with matters of principle and detail	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Able to project manage handling of large applications to identify other service/ organisational input required in a timely and effective manner	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment



Financial Accountability

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
None but to have an understanding of delivering a service on time and the Planning Guarantee	Desirable	Interview.

Impact upon the Organisation and the Community

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Willingness to contribute to service and organisational improvements and initiatives.	Desirable	Interview.
To demonstrate high levels of customer service, to be available and approachable for the public and councillors, and to be solution driven.	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment

Management and Supervisory Responsibilities

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
None but to assist junior members of the team, if needed	Desirable	Interview.

Initiative and Independent Action

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
Ability to take day to day decisions. Able to judge when more complex or highly politicised issues need to be discussed with managers.	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Able to manage the day to day interactions with other individual services and organisations	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment



Additional Requirements

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Application, Interview or Assessment
To demonstrate continual professional development	Essential	Application, Interview, Assessment
Full valid driving licence	Essential	Application

