

Job description

Senior Landscape and Ecology Officer

Band 7

This role will be based at both our Bury St Edmunds and Mildenhall offices. You may reasonably be required to work at any other of the council's premises as required to meet the needs of the service.

At West Suffolk Council we positively encourage agile working, with work being an activity we do, not a place we go. Work styles are led by operational and organisational need and are jointly agreed between the manager and employee.

Job purpose

- To assist in the delivery of a high performing and effective planning service for West Suffolk Council supporting our ambitions for good growth.
- To provide specialist ecology and landscape advice including consultation responses on masterplans and planning applications.
- Cross-council working to deliver corporate objectives.
- To lead on the implementation of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- To support the preparation of the new Local Plan and associated planning documents for the district.
- Management of research and policy development / drafting and projects including management of consultants.
- Ensure timely and meaningful engagement with other sections of the Council, elected members, statutory and non-statutory bodies, developers, our community and stakeholders.
- The post sits within the Council's Strategic Planning Service, reporting to the Principal Conservation Officer.
- The post has management responsibility for the Ecologist (Career Pathway) and Landscape Architect posts that also sit within the Strategic Planning Service.

Key responsibilities and activities

- Lead Officer providing specialist ecology and landscape advice throughout the development management process, on development schemes which have an impact on protected landscape, ecology or require strategic landscape advice (for planning applications, pre-applications, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), discharge of conditions, appeals and enforcement).
- Assess, advise, and make recommendations to Planning Officers in relation to the effect of development on landscape and ecology as part of the planning process.
- Attending Development Control Committee and other meetings to provide such specialist advice to Members.
- Lead officer advising on content of Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs) undertaken for the Council, and in relation to those associated with major development projects and planning applications.
- Comment on S106 Agreements in relation to trees, ecology, biodiversity and landscape matters.
- Act as the Council's expert witness at planning appeals and inquiries concerning ecology and landscape matters.
- To provide professional ecology and landscape advice on major development schemes and infrastructure and negotiate the delivery of high-quality places on behalf of West Suffolk. The advice should be timely, reasonable, clear, robust and realistic.
- To inform and lead in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the Local Plan, policies, briefs, supplementary planning documents and any other land use planning documents in relation to ecology and landscape matters.
- To provide specialist advice on landscape and ecology matters to inform the drafting of masterplans for major development proposals including Local Plan allocations.
- Assist and advise the Council's Planning Officers on the implementation of the West Suffolk Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Study (RAMS) in relation to planning applications.
- Advise and support the Council's Planning Officer's on West Suffolk's role as a supporting authority to the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This would include attendance and contribution to working group meetings on the LNRS.
- To advise, develop and deliver appropriate green infrastructure strategies, tools, initiatives, assessment methodologies that lead to the creation of distinctive and high-quality places/environment.
- To work with the council's Planning Officers in the implementation, assessment, monitoring and enforcement of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This includes advising on validation of assessments using the latest BNG Metric, commenting

on Biodiversity Gain Plans and advising on the monitoring of BNG implementation including off-site contributions. This also includes preparation of the Council's 5-yearly Biodiversity Report.

- To liaise with other local authorities and national organisations, prepare and present reports, briefs and recommendations on key ecology and landscape issues to staff, councillors and leadership team as appropriate.
- To assist the Principal Conservation Officer and Strategic Planning Service Manager in developing commercial strategies to generate income.
- To advocate, influence and upskill various stakeholders and partners, internally and externally on landscape and ecology and the creation of high-quality places and environment.
- To support and supervise staff on ecology and landscape activities and manage the work of any consultants as required.
- Assisting with enforcing against breaches of legislations affecting the natural environment – Tree and Hedgerow Regulations, Ecology, Protected Habitats etc.
- To participate as part of a multi-disciplinary team to secure the development of high quality natural and built environment within and across the district with a specific focus on growth areas.
- Giving advice to developers, private individuals, Council Members and prospective applicants on planning matters whether in person, by phone, email or replying to correspondence. Contributing to stakeholders and Members having high confidence in West Suffolk as a Local Planning Authority.