

Town Planning 2025 Mid Year Update

Following the release of our annual Town Planning Salary Survey & Guide in January, this mid-year update provides a snapshot of how the UK planning market has evolved in the first half of 2025.

Resourcing challenges persist across both local authority planning departments and planning consultancies. Development management teams, in particular, continue to manage high caseloads, contributing to sustained pressure on internal resources.

Notably, the first quarter of 2025 recorded 159,468 planning applications in England, a significant 8.4% increase compared to the same period in 2024. This represents the highest quarterly total since 2022 and reflects a resurgence in development activity.

However, the talent pipeline continues to be a concern. Recent research from the RTPI has highlighted an ongoing exodus of mid-level and senior planners from Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to the private sector. This talent drain is creating a critical experience gap that cannot be filled by graduates and apprentices alone. As a result, the demand for experienced interim professionals remains strong. Interim vacancy volumes have risen dramatically, by 55% compared to the first half of 2024. Although overall contractor headcount in LPAs has remained relatively consistent, there has been a marked degree of churn in the market, particularly among newer unitary authorities still navigating settlement issues.

Pay rates have shown limited movement despite the 1.2% rise in Employers' National Insurance contributions. Responses from LPAs have been mixed, with some passing the cost on to contractors, a decision that many in the sector view as contrary to the government's intention for employers to absorb the increase, mirroring treatment of permanent staff.

Nationwide, pay rates have largely stabilised since mid-2024, with minimal changes across sectors and levels of seniority.



Town Planning

The next six months

There is a noticeable trend of hiring managers expecting contractors to be present in the office more frequently, typically two to three days per week. While some contractors are accommodating this shift, the majority continue to value remote working for its positive impact on work-life balance and reduced commuting costs.

That said, there are early signs that the requirement for office presence is being relaxed, a trend we expect to continue throughout the second half of the year.

Looking ahead, continued discussion around devolution is expected to result in increased use of interim staff across councils. We anticipate the start of this trend within the next six months, potentially shaping recruitment activity well into 2026.



2025 Salary Ranges

The following salary bandings are for roles originally not included in our January release.

Public Sector - Contract Rates

Job Title	Contract Rates (Per Hour)		
	Min. Rate	Max. Rate	Average*
Planning Conservation Specialists	£30	£50	£42
CIL & S106 Consultants	£24	£55	£35
Ecologists (in planning departments)	£35	£65	£55

*Mode

The Carrington West 2025 Mid Year Salary Survey details salary information and recruiting trends in the regions and business sectors we cover. Our information has been researched and collated with the help of our clients and candidates and from our working knowledge of the marketplace. Our consultants have extensive expertise in their practice area and the information reported is based on extensive interaction with hiring managers, HR professionals and in-house recruiters as well as data extracted from our own database and internal research resources. As with all reports that detail salary information and trends, we represent the mainstream view and we recognise there will be individual situations that fall outside the data published. This survey is therefore a guide to general movement in the sector. Please contact us for further information or for clarification on any of the compensation trends detailed in this report.