

Victoria Groves

Associate Planning Director,
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What do you do?

I manage our strategic sites – from sign up through to planning consent. A key part of my role is project management, appointing and working with the consultant teams and defining the planning strategy.

How did you get into it?

I didn't follow the tradition route into the industry, having started out with a degree in history.

My Dad's a quantity surveyor, so I knew a bit about his job, and it looked interesting. I had a look at courses and found a post graduate diploma in surveying that I completed through a distance learning course.

I started out doing work experience with a local surveyor, who was a self-taught town planner specialising in rural planning which included farm diversification, listed building consents and equestrian developments. From there I moved to a national planning consultancy where I was introduced to large scale development including commercial buildings, residential schemes and retirement living. I then moved to a housebuilder before joining Catesby in my current role in strategic land.

Although my degree wasn't development related, I can see that it taught me analytical skills and how to present a case to prove your point of view, essential skills for a planner.

What do you love about your job?

I like the challenge and the fact that every site is different. Each has a unique set of merits to maximise and weaknesses to overcome. It's an ongoing learning process.

I also enjoy presenting the case for the development – whether to the public, stakeholders or local councillors – however, if you aren't comfortable with public speaking, there are a wide range of planning roles where this is not a key requirement.

Top tips for anyone considering a career in the industry:

There are many varied career opportunities in planning and construction. Within the public sector you will be responsible for writing planning legislation, government and local planning policies as well as delivering major national infrastructure. Here you are able to influence government strategies for economic growth, environmental protection and housing provision.

You are also at the coal face in determining planning applications and ensuring the correct implementation of planning policies. You will be determining what new development will actually look like.

The private sector also provides a variety of planning roles, you can work for planning consultancies who will help clients achieve planning consent for housing, industrial buildings, renewable energy, theme parks and zoos, the list is endless.

There are such a wide range of opportunities at the start and throughout your career. You don't have to come into the industry from a traditional planning/development background and, once you have developed your core skills set, it can be applied to different disciplines, so you can change throughout your career.



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