

Cumbria Combined Authority Role Profile

Post Title: Head of Strategic Planning
Date: July 2026
Term: Permanent
Tier Level: T
Grade: 18
Reports to: Director of Policy and Strategy

Purpose of the Role

To provide strategic leadership and expert advice on spatial planning, development, and growth across Cumbria, supporting the Combined Authority Board and Chief Executive to deliver a coherent long-term vision. The postholder will lead the development of the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), overseeing the evidence base, partnerships, and governance required for its preparation, and ensuring alignment between housing growth, infrastructure investment, transport planning, regeneration, and economic development across the county.

In addition, the role supports immediate development and investment priorities by working closely with local authorities, Homes England, MHCLG, and other partners to strengthen delivery readiness. It ensures integration between the SDS and the Local Transport Plan through coordinated evidence and policy frameworks, while helping establish the Combined Authority's strategic planning function. Ultimately, the role drives an integrated approach to growth and place-making, enabling effective use of devolved powers and supporting inclusive growth, infrastructure delivery, and long-term regional prosperity.

Key Responsibilities

- Provide expert advice to the Combined Authority Board and Chief Executive on strategic planning, spatial development and growth priorities across Cumbria.
- Lead development of the Combined Authority's Spatial Development Strategy, including associated governance, evidence gathering, commissioning and stakeholder engagement activity.
- Build strong and collaborative relationships with:
 - constituent authorities;
 - the two national park authorities;
 - Homes England;
 - MHCLG and other government departments;
 - infrastructure providers and statutory agencies; and
 - wider development and investment partners.
- Coordinate work across constituent authorities to develop a coherent understanding of strategic development opportunities, infrastructure constraints and investment priorities across Cumbria.
- Support development of a Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England and wider arrangements to strengthen housing and regeneration delivery across the county.

- Ensure alignment between spatial planning, the Local Transport Plan, transport investment, economic growth, skills priorities and environmental considerations, including the development of a shared evidence base, consistent growth assumptions and integrated infrastructure planning.
 - Lead development of the Combined Authority's strategic planning evidence base, including oversight of commissioned studies and analytical work where required.
 - Lead joint working arrangements with transport planning leads to ensure the Spatial Development Strategy and Local Transport Plan are developed in parallel and are fully aligned in scope, evidence and policy direction.
 - Represent the Combined Authority in discussions relating to planning reform, devolution and future strategic planning responsibilities.
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Key deliverables:

- Establish and lead the programme for development of Cumbria's Spatial Development Strategy.
 - Develop a coordinated strategic picture of Cumbria's development and infrastructure priorities to inform investment and delivery discussions with government and partners.
 - Support agreement of a Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England.
 - Build effective partnership working arrangements with constituent authorities around strategic planning, evidence gathering and infrastructure coordination.
 - Ensure spatial planning priorities are effectively integrated into wider Combined Authority strategies and investment frameworks.
 - Support development of governance and decision-making arrangements associated with future strategic planning responsibilities.
 - Support alignment of business cases and investment programmes arising from the Local Transport Plan with Spatial Development Strategy priorities.
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Knowledge, Skills & Experience (Essential Summary)

Knowledge

- Knowledge of strategic planning, spatial development and growth policy within a local, regional or national context. Relevant qualifications desirable.
- Strong understanding of the relationship between spatial planning, transport planning (including Local Transport Plans), infrastructure delivery, housing growth and economic development.

Skills

- Ability to build strong working relationships and collaboration across multiple organisations and sectors.
- Strong analytical and strategic thinking skills, able to interpret evidence and translate it into clear strategic direction.
- Ability to communicate complex planning and development issues clearly to decision-makers, stakeholders and the public.
- Strong programme coordination and stakeholder management capability.

Experience

- Experience in developing and delivering strategic policy within a local or regional government context, including through public consultation.
 - Experience of working across organisational boundaries and managing complex partnerships.
 - Experience of planning, regeneration, infrastructure or growth-related policy development, including work involving transport planning and/or development of integrated spatial and infrastructure strategies.
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Other Requirements

- Ability to work the hours that are reasonable and necessary to fulfil the requirements of the post.
- Ability to travel across Cumbria and attend meetings outside of the region.
- This is a politically restricted post as defined by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.