

CASE STUDY

Ellie Hendry, Chartered Town Planning Apprenticeship, Basildon Borough Council

My name is Ellie Hendry, and I am a Planning Higher Apprentice at Basildon Borough Council. I joined the council in September 2018 as a Level 2 Apprentice studying a business administration NVQ. I left secondary school in July 2018 and went straight into this apprenticeship after hearing about it through my sister applying and getting the role in the previous year.



What made you apply for an apprenticeship role?

I wanted to apply for this apprenticeship as there wasn't anything I was particularly interested in specifically to go into in after school regarding A levels, a BTEC course etc. I thought a business administration apprenticeship would give me a lot of scope to and give me good experience in a professional environment. Luckily, I was successful in interview and started in the Housing Allocations team for a year. I then completed my L2 NVQ and moved on to a level 3 Business Administration NVQ starting in the project and performance team for a few months. I then interviewed for a planning apprentice role as I wanted to progress into a different department and after researching into what planning was it seemed interesting and was something I was keen to work in. I was then successful in this role and completed my Level 3 NVQ throughout this time. I completed this NVQ with a distinction and was given the opportunity to interview for a higher planning apprentice role within the department I was already working in, which I was successful in receiving and through this I was able to apply for a Town and Country Planner part time degree which is what role I am currently in now and am still ongoing this degree which will finish in 2026.

What does your typical day look like?

My main responsibility in this role is processing planning applications that come into the council. These vary from lawful development applications to householder applications, Tree Preservation Orders etc. I am assigned these applications and am responsible for assessing the application all the way through and coming to a decision. I also support my department helping with things like research, Planning Committees and small projects. Day to day I am usually working on my planning applications including writing my reports, looking through plans, communicating with agents, consultees, and applicants. I also spend a lot of time learning new things through the help and expertise of my colleagues by asking for guidance to help me progress. I also usually do some of my uni reading during the day and work on any essays and assignments I am due to complete.

How do you balance working and studying at the same time?

Regarding keeping up a work/study balance, luckily for me things within my job role have specific dates in which they need to be looked at or completed. So, with my university day being a Friday, it means I can get all my planning work done before this day and I can get my Uni work done on the Friday. With aspects like reading time or essays I usually slot this in when I have gaps within my day or do this on my Uni day depending on what time I get home. Throughout my time in the Council, I have always been able to establish days for work with my managers and teams, helping me achieve a successful work/study balance.

What's been the most rewarding part of your apprenticeship so far?

The most rewarding part of my apprenticeship so far would be starting my degree as I never thought I would ever be able to do this and to be given that opportunity by the Council whilst being able to work on a career I want to keep working and progressing in is amazing. One thing I am also very proud of is presenting two of my applications to the Planning Committee as this was very daunting for me. I am very proud that this went well, and it gave me a lot of confidence within my abilities and presenting.

What do you hope to accomplish career-wise over the next five years?

In five years', time I hope to have a planning officer role within Basildon Council. I hope to have gained even more planning knowledge and experience and to have accomplished my Town and Country Planning degree. I also would like to be looking at moving onto to masters after completing my degree.

How would you promote 'working for a local authority' to other potential apprentices?

Overall, I have found being an apprentice in the Council an amazing experience. I have been given countless opportunities, the chance to complete many qualifications and work experience I don't think I would have found anywhere else. I think that a huge benefit of being an apprentice at the Council is you get the chance to do 'real' work that everyone in the Council also does, helping you learn so much more.

You get to complete vital qualifications which can help you move up within the Council. You also have so much choice in the journey you take, as there are so many different departments you really have endless options of what path you take and get the opportunity to discover what line of work is best for you. I would 100% recommend an apprenticeship in a local authority to anyone considering it as you really get the best work and study experiences whilst earning a good wage and by finding opportunities to progress further and further into what you wish to do. I am so grateful for the opportunities I have worked for and been given, and I am so glad I took this route as soon as I left school as I don't think I would have progressed so quickly and successfully without these apprenticeships.

Quote from Basildon Council's Learning & Organisational Development Officer (Claire Evans)

"Ellie has been a pleasure to have on the apprenticeship programme and has become a fantastic role model for fellow apprentices, and colleagues. Ellie has always approached work with such commitment and has always been full of great energy. Her attitude, drive and hunger to succeed has allowed Ellie to get to the position she's in today. I am very proud of the progress Ellie has made, and I am so excited to see Ellie achieve everything in her very bright future as she continues to grow at Basildon and invest in her personal learning journey. Go Ellie!!"