

Land Management Officer – Job Description

Company Overview:

Robert Hitchins Ltd. was established in 1958 as a family-run housebuilding company. Today, the second generation continues to operate the business (with the third generation also involved), which has evolved from housebuilding to specialising in land development. The company focuses on securing planning permissions for residential and commercial land and ceased its residential construction operations over 25 years ago. The office, located in a historic 1600s manor house in Boddington, just outside Cheltenham, serves as the base for the company's operations, with a primary focus on the Gloucestershire area and the surrounding counties.

Role Overview:

The Land Management Officer will support the Land Manager and initially work closely with the current Assistant Land Manager as part of the Land Department, overseen by the Land & Planning Director. The department is an integral part of the wider Estates Department, comprising 13 professionals across Planning, Technical, and Land functions. The primary responsibility of the department is to source land, secure planning permissions, and ultimately sell land to housebuilders.

This role is essential to the ongoing management of the company's land portfolio during the planning process. You will play a key part in ensuring that the land assets are well-maintained and managed until they have gained planning permission and sold.

Key Responsibilities:

- **Managing Land Portfolio:** Assist in overseeing the smooth operation of the company's land holdings, including coordination with landowners and agents.
- **Ground Maintenance Coordination:** Manage the upkeep of non-tenanted land, working with contractors for activities such as hedge trimming, fencing, and grass cutting. Ensure compliance with laws surrounding Public Right of Ways, bird nesting seasons etc.
- **Lease & Licence Management:** Assist in managing land leases, licences, and Farm Business Tenancies (FBTs), including assisting in rent reviews and ensuring contractual obligations are met.
- **Site Visits:** Conduct regular site inspections of the land parcels within the portfolio (within usually a 1hr/1.5hr radius of the office) to monitor contractor activities, prevent trespassing, and ensure compliance with maintenance requirements. Photograph and document findings as well as implement necessary actions.
- **Contractor Coordination:** Collect and assess quotes for works and services related to land management and maintenance.
- **Public Enquiries:** Address and resolve queries from the public, including issues related to boundaries, vegetation, and other land-related concerns.
- **Consultant Coordination:** Facilitate access for external consultants (e.g. ecologists, tree surgeons, and ground surveyors) to conduct necessary site assessments.
- **Reporting & Communication:** Provide regular updates and collaborate directly with the Land Manager on land management issues and project status.

Required Skills & Attributes:

Essential:

- **Strong Communication Skills:** Ability to liaise effectively with a wide range of people, from legal professionals to landowners, tenants and contractors.
- **Problem-Solving Ability:** Capable of addressing issues independently and proposing effective solutions.
- **Organisational Skills:** Strong attention to detail with the ability to prioritise tasks and manage time efficiently.
- **Self-Motivation & Teamwork:** Comfortable working autonomously, as well as collaborating within a team of professionals.
- **Adaptability:** Ability to learn quickly, adapt to new processes and changing priorities.
- **Full Driving Licence:**

Desirable:

- **Rural Land Management Knowledge:** Familiarity with rural tenancy arrangements and agricultural practices such as identity of crops.
- **Ecological Awareness:** Basic understanding of trees, hedgerows, farming practices, and obnoxious weeds.

Contract Details:

- **Salary:** Competitive, circa £35,000 - £40,000 (negotiable based on experience).
- **Working Hours:** preferably full-time (37.5 hours per week, Monday to Friday).
- **Annual Leave:** 27 days, plus statutory bank holidays. (A portion of annual leave is typically used during the Christmas and New Year period, when the office is closed).
- **Office Location:** Working in an historic office with formal gardens set in Boddington, Cheltenham, with some flexibility for remote/home working.
- **Employee Benefits:** Company car, mobile phone, pension and healthcare scheme (available after a six-month probationary period).