

Louise – Land Buyer

My name is Louise and I am a Land Buyer. After completing an honours degree in Geography and French I was looking for a job when a friend suggested applying for a job as an administrator with a housing association, I did and I went on to do all kinds of jobs within a housing association and this is useful to me today because I understand what everybody does and what they want from me.

In my current career I get houses and flats built for people to rent or part-buy.

So I have fun looking for sites that are available for sale and must be near schools, hospitals/medical centres, public transport and shops.

When I find a site, I choose an Architect to look at it and tell me how many flats/houses can be built on it and agree with me how they will be designed and what materials they will be made from.

I then get surveys done to make sure it is environmentally suitable to build on and that the local planning authority will allow the building.

- I use a Quantity Surveyor to calculate how much it will cost to buy the land and build the buildings.
- I use a Solicitor to buy the land.
- The Quantity Surveyor helps me agree a contract with a Builder so that the properties will be built for an agreed cost and time and I keep my eye on things until the properties are built.
- When the properties are built I hand them over to the Housing Manager for letting.

Interesting Information

An interesting fact about me.....

One thing that happened to me was....Some years ago, my sister and I and our boyfriends were held up at gunpoint in some forest in Bulgaria when we got lost. We did not speak Bulgarian so there was a lot of sign language and waving of passports and pointing at visas to finally convince them we were holidaymakers on our way to Turkey.

Next in line is the Solicitor who helps me to buy the land I need

Elaine Allen – Solicitor

My name is Elaine and I never actually intended to be a solicitor. I was going to do a degree in French and Philosophy without much thought about a future career. My headmistress at school told me to study law. She found me a course and told me to apply. I just did what I was told!

I studied Law and French combined studies and then decided to become a Solicitor. I now really enjoy working in property law especially since I started working for clients like the Land Buyer because I like buying land.

Once the Land Buyer has chosen a site or area of land they wish to buy then the Solicitor steps in. We basically do all the checks on the land to be purchased to make sure that it is ok and has no major problems. It is a problem solving profession – a little bit like doing a jigsaw. I have to think about things such as :-

1. Does the person selling the land own all of it! You'd be surprised how often we find that sometimes the person selling does not actually own part (or even all) of the land.
2. Are there rights to get on to the land? It sounds strange but sometimes people try to sell land for which there are no rights to actually enter it!
3. We ask the sellers Solicitors a lot of questions to make sure that there are no problems with the land. For Example we want to make sure that there are no problems such as pollution in the ground that could affect the health of the people who will end up living there.

It is very detailed work, very challenging and very interesting. There is a lot of information I need to find out before I can satisfy myself that I can tell the Land Buyer to buy the land. However, you need to like masses of paperwork! The Housing Association clients tend to be very nice and down to earth so that helps.

Interesting Information

An interesting fact about me.....

Some interesting information about me is that several years ago I was arrested in Bruges with my Mum and some American relatives and wrongly accused of armed robbery of a Chocolate shop!! We were locked up for 5 hours. This is completely true.... (Funny things happen in Bruges....!)

Next in line this morning is the Architect, who designs the buildings for the Land Buyer.....

Michelle Minogue – Architect

My name is Michelle and I have been working as an architect for 11 years.

When I was growing up my father was involved in the construction industry and Saturday mornings were often spent on site with him. I knew from an early age that I wanted to become an Architect and to make my own contribution to the built environment.

After completing my A 'levels I postponed University for a year to do an art foundation course at Art College – A level art in those days was all about drawing bowls of fruit and I wanted to loosen up a bit!! Architecture is a vocation and I was lucky that I knew with a passion what I wanted to do. Studying architecture is a long, but enjoyable, slog - don't be put off by the thought of seven years training, as there are other ways of getting there if that is the career path that you choose.

The practice I work for deals primarily in the housing sector but we also design education, health and commercial projects.

The majority of my workload involves working with my Client – usually the Land Buyer to develop a 'Brief' or list of requirements for the site, analyse the site then provide advice on the site's development potential. I then design what the building will look like and how the rooms will be laid out inside, often with lots of consultation with existing residents and the local community and then, apply to the local Council to get planning permission. I often help draw up the detailed plans that the Builder needs to build the building and whilst works are in progress I may have to visit the site to check on the quality and content of the work

Interesting Information

An interesting fact about me.....

I have a beautiful baby boy – just days away from his first birthday and in my former life I was mad about bagpipes! My weekly band practice wasn't enough for me so I would play them for hours at a time in my bedroom or in the garden – our friendly neighbours never complained once but looking back now I must have been the original neighbour from hell.

Next, you will hear from the Engineer, who makes sure the buildings are built to the correct standards and also design the roads, drains and foundations.

Syreeta Robinson-Gayle - Engineer

My name is Syreeta. I couldn't decide what to do for my first degree, but I was vaguely interested in Psychology and Architecture. I went to Camden Library at Kings Cross to look up courses on Psychology and got side tracked into reading a book about Materials Engineering. I delayed my application to university for a year and took a science and Maths A-level. There was some confusion when I applied, because I like knitting and sewing everyone at my school thought that I had applied to do a textiles course. I applied to five universities and was accepted on the Materials Engineering with Management Course at Brunel.

Engineers carry out calculations and checks to ensure that the buildings designed by the Architect can be built safely and to the right standards. This might mean calculating the depth of the foundations or the thickness of glass needed for a window. I use my engineering background help my clients to make decisions about their buildings. I review the drawings presented by the Architects and builders and check the calculations made by other engineers and to ensure that buildings meet all of the regulations and legal requirements.

The most exciting part of my job is working on competitions to design new buildings – Often for our Clients: the Land Buyer. There is a lot of work to do in a short time, but it is good fun!

Interesting Information

An interesting fact about me.....

I am currently helping a premiership footballer to build his house.

Next to speak to you is the Quantity Surveyor who works out the costs of a project and makes sure the Builder constructs the buildings in the right timescales.

Sally Ingham – Builder/Contractor

My name is Sally and I work for a Construction Company. I completed 'A levels' at School and went to University, but didn't know what I wanted to do in my career, so I chose to study something I was interested in – History.

After graduating I started work at a Government Agency which helped turn old, contaminated, derelict sites into new developments. I saw run down pieces of land used mainly for dumping cars and waste transformed and liked the positive impact this had on people's lives through building new housing. I decided a career in the housing sector could offer various career options – from Housing Association Land Buyer to Housing Management who looks after the residents once they move into the properties.

Once the Land Buyer has bought the land for the Housing Association and the architect has designed the building, the Housing Association must find someone to construct the scheme for them. This is where the Builder comes in!

There are lots of different people who do different jobs within building companies but I work as a Business Development Manager. I work with the Surveyors in my Company, putting a price together for housing projects, making sure we know how much it will cost to build, how we are going to actually build it and how long it is going to take us.

I then create a report for the Land Buyer which sets out our proposals and includes our price and our technical solutions - for example how the drains will work. Our designs for the foundation under the building and what materials will be used to build it, for example whether or not we use bricks and if we do what colour will they be.

Once we have come to an agreement with the Land Buyer, I make sure they are happy with the project once it is on site and sometimes organise events to get the local community involved. Once the building is finished, I liaise with the press and media to make sure the scheme is advertised and promoted and people get to know what is going on in their local area. One of our schemes appeared on London Tonight because we discovered a Roman Road, I was involved in meeting the reporter on site to talk about the find and discuss the scheme, what we were building and how the discovery would affect our work on site.

Interesting information:

An interesting fact about me.....

- I recently took up a childhood hobby of horse riding thankfully I now spend more time on the horse than falling off it, as I did as a kid!
- I bought a flat 2 years ago which has needed a lot of work. I have now finished all the work and can have my weekends back – unfortunately I'm close to growing out of it!
- And thirdly I am off to Barcelona at the weekend for a holiday.....looking forward to the sunshine and experiencing somewhere new!

Once the Builder has finished the project and everyone is happy with it, the Housing Association can start to move their residents into the new homes. We will lastly hear from the Housing Manager who looks after this part of the process.

Maxine Gordon - Head of Housing

My name is Maxine and I am a Housing Manager. I got in to my career by accident! I wanted to make use of my customer service and problem solving skills so applied for the position of Rents Administrator at Notting Hill Housing Group in July 1993. The rest is history ...

My Job involves

- Managing a team of 13 housing staff who deal with tenancy and maintenance issues on a housing estate in NW London:
 - This involves dealing with rent arrears, providing debt advice, and making sure people receive rent statements which tell them how much they have paid.
 - Provide a repairs service for problems that have gone wrong with the property for example there has been a broken lock or the central heating has stopped working.
 - Anti Social Behaviour – for instance complaints about noisy neighbours or dogs
 - Find new tenants for properties that have become empty
 - Ensure that empty properties are made safe and redecorated before a new tenant moves in
 - Employment and training
- I spend a lot of time at meetings with other departments and contractors discussing issues which affect tenants on the estate:
 - Police
 - Social Services – Age Concern
 - Youth Offending Services
 - Probation Services
 - Mental Health Agencies

If you enjoy talking to people – both face to face and on the telephone and solving problems, working in housing management is ideal!

Interesting information

An interesting fact about me.....

- I am currently studying for a part time degree in Business Studies
- I have a 16-year-old son who is currently studying for 3 'A' Levels
- I once ran a magazine with 3 friends and spent the summer of 1988 touring New York and interviewing rappers!