

Britain's best planning lawyers and biggest planning law firms

18 March 2021 by David Dewar and Bryan Johnston

This year's Planning Law Survey features new names at the top of the lists of the most admired QCs, the top-rated planning junior barristers and highest-regarded juniors under the age of 35.

THE PLANNING LAW SURVEY 2021

LARGE EMPLOYERS OF PLANNING LAWYERS

Rank	Firm	Number of employees
1	Town Legal	1,200
2	Pinsent Masons	800
3	Eversheds Sunderland	450

THE LEADING SOLICITORS

TOP-RATED PLANNING JUNIORS UNDER 35

Rank	Name	Firm
1	Simon Ricketts	Town Legal
2	Claire Dutch	Ashurst
2	Iain Gilbey	Pinsent Masons

HIGHEST RATED BARRISTERS FOR RESIDENTIAL

Rank	Name	Firm
1	Simon Ricketts	Town Legal
2	Claire Dutch	Ashurst

HIGHEST RATED BARRISTERS FOR COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL

Rank	Name	Firm
1	Simon Ricketts	Town Legal
2	Claire Dutch	Ashurst

HIGHEST RATED BARRISTERS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Rank	Name	Firm
1	Simon Ricketts	Town Legal
2	Claire Dutch	Ashurst

For the third successive year, Town Legal is the highest-rated law firm. Pinsent Masons retains its second place ranking in the table of most highly-regarded firms. It also tops the [table of biggest employers](#) of planning solicitors, with more than twice the number of any other firm. The third most highly regarded firm is Eversheds Sunderland.

In terms of the [top five individual solicitors](#), Town Legal's Simon Ricketts maintains his long-standing hold on top spot. Ashurst's Claire Dutch and Pinsent Masons' Iain Gilbey share second position, with Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner's James Good and Town Legal's Meeta Kaur sharing fourth place.

Top five highest-rated law firms

For the third successive year, Town Legal is the highest-rated law firm. It is also seventh equal in the table of largest employers of planning solicitors. “It has well-established, friendly people who know their stuff,” says one consultant. Key projects in the past year include acting for HB Reavis on its Elizabeth House redevelopment next to Waterloo Station, Lambeth; acting for U+I on its called-in application for the proposed redevelopment of 8 Albert Embankment, also in Lambeth; the redevelopment of the Olympia Exhibition Centre site in West Kensington; and the Radlett strategic rail freight interchange in Hertfordshire.

Highest-rated individual solicitors

In terms of the top five individual solicitors, Town Legal’s Simon Ricketts maintains his long-standing hold on top spot. Pinsent Masons Iain Gilbey and Ashurst’s Claire Dutch share second position, with Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner’s James Good and Town Legal’s Meeta Kaur sharing fourth place.

Ricketts has topped the table of individual solicitors for more than a decade and clearly continues to command the respect of the profession. One consultant says he is “simply the best-informed and most thoughtful planning solicitor out there”. Another notes: “He is always bang up to date on planning law and the government’s reform agenda and always uses this to give insightful advice, which is always expressed very clearly.” In the past year, Ricketts has worked on a series of high-profile schemes, including the Waterbeach new town project to the east of Cambridge, Fawley Waterside’s proposed redevelopment of the former Fawley power station site in Hampshire, Stansted Airport’s proposed expansion and British Land’s 5 Kingdom Street, Paddington, project.

Level with Gilbey in fourth position, Kaur is praised by one voter for her “realistic and pragmatic” advice. “She anticipates the position of the local planning authority to ensure that the client does not waste time and money,” he says. Another adds: “I know I can rely on her to provide sound and pragmatic legal solutions and advice in a timely manner.” In addition, one voter notes Kaur’s commitment to equal representation of women in planning and describes her as an approachable role model. Recent projects include St William Homes’ residential-led, mixed-use redevelopments of Marian Place and Bow Common gasworks, both in Tower Hamlets, as well as Telford Homes’ Stratford Bus Layover scheme.