

Urban and Regional Planners

AI drafts reports and code reviews, summarises consultations and runs scenario models, reshaping desk work while public process stays human.

EXPOSURE	WINDOW	ADOPTION TODAY	READING
57 Elevated exposure	2–6 yrs until change lands	Medium	The role is being reshaped. Exposure is the share of today's work AI can plausibly take on within the window.

§ 01WHAT IS HAPPENING

What is happening to urban and regional planners

Impact	Planners now use AI to summarise thousands of public comments, draft staff reports and policy text, check development applications against zoning rules, and generate land-use and transport scenarios in minutes rather than weeks. GIS platforms have added AI tools for classifying imagery, cleaning data and answering spatial questions in plain language. The day-to-day shifts from assembling documents and running analyses towards framing the right questions, weighing competing interests and defending recommendations in front of councils and communities.
Risk	Analytical and drafting tasks reshape; the planner's value moves to judgement, negotiation and legitimacy of public process. The score sits in the elevated band: the occupation has a high task-applicability measure and the highest official exposure tier, while observed usage of generative AI by planners is still low and sector adoption is medium. Report drafting, comment analysis, code compliance checks, data preparation and first-pass scenario modelling are the tasks being automated. Deciding what a community should look like, balancing housing, transport, environment and politics, and holding a legitimate public process remain human and accountable. Over the 2-6 year window, expect faster application processing and more evidence-rich plans, with fewer junior roles spent on routine analysis and a premium on planners who can lead engagement and negotiate outcomes.

Sector readiness

Uneven Adoption Across Public Agencies

Private planning consultancies and large metropolitan authorities have begun using AI for comment analysis, report drafting and scenario modelling, and GIS vendors have built AI into their platforms. Most smaller local authorities are early in the process, constrained by procurement rules, data quality and legitimate concerns about transparency in public decision-making.

§ 02 POSITION

Where you stand

- i Position yourself as the planner who leads engagement and negotiation rather than the one who assembles the report.
- ii Build recognised expertise in a domain such as housing delivery, transport or climate adaptation where judgement and policy knowledge dominate.
- iii Become your authority's lead on responsible use of AI in planning decisions, including transparency and bias in automated reviews.

§ 03 ACTIONS

6 POINTS

What this means for you

Concrete changes to how the work gets done, in the order you are likely to meet them.

- 01 **Let the machine read the comments.** AI can summarise thousands of consultation responses quickly and fairly well. Use it, then check that minority voices and unusual objections have not been flattened out.
- 02 **Draft with AI, decide without it.** Generated staff reports are a starting point. The recommendation and its reasoning must be yours, and you must be able to defend every line in public.
- 03 **Learn scenario tools properly.** Being able to run and interpret land-use and transport scenarios yourself makes you far more persuasive in debate than relying on a consultant.
- 04 **Guard the process.** Automated code checks and comment analysis raise legitimate questions about transparency. Be the planner who can explain how the tools were used and where humans decided.
- 05 **Spend saved time in the community.** Engagement, site visits and relationships with stakeholders are where planning legitimacy comes from and are not automatable.
- 06 **Specialise in the hard trade-offs.** Housing need against heritage, growth against environment. These are the questions that require a planner, and expertise in them is durable.

What is pushing this change

- 01

AI drafting of reports and policy text. Staff reports, policy drafts and application summaries can be generated from structured inputs, cutting the largest desk task.
- 02

Automated consultation analysis. Language models classify and summarise large volumes of public comment, replacing weeks of manual coding.
- 03

Rule-based application checking. Tools that check development proposals against zoning and building rules are automating first-pass review.
- 04

AI-enabled GIS and scenario modelling. GIS platforms and planning software now generate scenarios, classify imagery and answer spatial queries in natural language.
- 05

Highest official exposure tier. Occupation-level measures place planners in the top tier because so much of the written task list is analysis and documentation.
- 06

Low observed usage and medium adoption. Actual use by planners is still limited, especially in smaller authorities, which keeps the score in the elevated band.

Impact by sector

The headline figure is an average. Where you work changes the picture.

Local government development management	Application processing is the most exposed function, with automated compliance checks and report drafting arriving first.
Strategic and regional planning	Scenario modelling and evidence gathering accelerate, but long-range judgement and political negotiation remain human.
Private consultancy	Faster adoption driven by competition, with AI used for drafting, data analysis and visualisation; billable routine work shrinks.
Transport and infrastructure planning	Heavy use of AI-assisted modelling and data, while stakeholder management and approvals remain people-driven.

Skills to build

The skills that keep the human part of this work valuable as the routine part is automated.

- 01

Public engagement and facilitation. Running fair, credible processes and handling conflict is central to the role and not automatable; seek training and practice.
- 02

Negotiation and political judgement. Reconciling competing interests and advising elected members is where planners earn their authority.
- 03

Scenario and spatial analysis. Learn to run and interpret AI-assisted land-use and transport models so you can test options yourself.
- 04

Critical review of AI output. Comment summaries and code checks can miss nuance or embed bias; build habits for verifying them.
- 05

Policy domain expertise. Depth in housing, climate, heritage or transport policy makes your judgement valuable beyond what tools can produce.
- 06

Data literacy and GIS. Comfort with spatial data and modern GIS platforms is now a baseline expectation.

Tools in use

KINDS OF TOOL WORTH KNOWING

- 01

Automated zoning and permit review tools. Software that checks applications against local rules is emerging and will change development management.
- 02

Mobility data platforms. Tools that model population movement from aggregated data are reshaping transport and land-use evidence.

NAMED TOOLS ALREADY IN USE

- Esri ArcGIS**

VISIT

The dominant GIS platform, now with AI tools for imagery classification, data preparation and natural-language assistance.
- UrbanFootprint**

VISIT

Scenario planning platform used to model land-use, transport and sustainability outcomes.
- Autodesk Forma**

VISIT

Early-stage site and urban design tool with AI-driven analysis of sunlight, wind, noise and massing options.
- Microsoft 365 Copilot**

VISIT

Widely deployed in public bodies for drafting reports, summarising documents and consultation responses.

In practice

Ways people in this role are already using AI, and what they get from it.

Consultation response analysis

EXAMPLE 1

HOW

A local plan team uses a language model to classify and summarise several thousand public responses by theme, then reviews the clusters and reads unusual submissions in full.

GAIN

Weeks of manual coding become days, with staff time redirected to responding substantively.

First-draft staff reports

EXAMPLE 2

HOW

A development management officer generates a report draft from the application file and policy references, then edits the assessment and writes the recommendation.

GAIN

Faster determination without removing the planner's judgement from the decision.

Scenario testing for a growth strategy

EXAMPLE 3

HOW

A regional planner runs housing and transport scenarios in a modelling platform to compare outcomes before presenting options to members.

GAIN

Decisions are informed by tested evidence rather than a single consultant model.

How this role compares

Three neighbouring roles chosen to show the direction of travel.

Business Intelligence Analysts

MORE EXPOSED

AI IMPACT

Dashboarding and report generation are being automated directly, with less of the public-process work that protects planners.

WORK MOVES TO Data storytelling and decision support.

Environmental Engineers

DIFFERENT SKILLS, GROWING

AI IMPACT

AI speeds modelling and reporting while demand for climate and environmental work keeps growing.

WORK MOVES TO Technical design, compliance and remediation.

Civil Engineers

COMPLEMENTARY, LESS EXPOSED

AI IMPACT

Design is augmented, but site supervision, construction and liability keep exposure lower.

WORK MOVES TO Infrastructure design and delivery on the ground.

Closing judgement

If you are a planner, the hours you spend turning data and consultation into documents are the hours most exposed, and that is a large share of a typical week. What AI cannot do is decide what a place should become or persuade a divided community and a sceptical council that a plan is fair. Learn the tools so you can produce better evidence faster, and put your energy into the judgement, engagement and negotiation that give planning its authority.

Evidence and revisions

What the exposure figure rests on, what changed when it was last revised, and the published work cited for this role.

SCORE

57

WINDOW

2-6 years (unchanged)

The 5 October 2026 review held the score.

Exposure Index v2. Inputs: task applicability 66/100 (Microsoft AI applicability score 0.33 for Urban and regional planners); observed usage 13/100 (Anthropic observed exposure 0.10); official exposure tier 100/100 (BLS: very high); labour-market trajectory not yet mapped for this occupation, so its weight was spread across the other inputs; published adoption rating 40/100 (medium adoption). Weighted base 57.4. Final score 57. New report: the window of 2-6 years is set from the score band.

HOW THE FIGURE IS BUILT (EXPOSURE INDEX V2)

Task applicability — Microsoft Research, AI applicability score	66 × 39%	25.7
Observed usage — Anthropic Economic Index, observed exposure	13 × 22%	2.8
Official exposure tier — US BLS AI-exposure category	100 × 22%	22.2
Labour-market trajectory — US BLS projected employment change 2025–35	not measured	—
Published adoption rating — This report’s adoption level	40 × 17%	6.7
Weighted base		57.4
Exposure score		57

MEASURES BEHIND THE SCORE

US Bureau of Labor Statistics · *Employment Projections 2025–35 and AI Exposure Categories* (27 August 2026)

AI-exposure tier: Very high. Projected employment change not yet mapped for this occupation. Matched to Urban and regional planners.

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Microsoft Research · *Working with AI: Measuring the Applicability of Generative AI to Occupations* (10 July 2025)

AI applicability score 0.33 for SOC 19-3051; scaled to 66/100 as the task-applicability input.

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Anthropic · *Anthropic Economic Index report: Cadences* (26 June 2026)

Observed exposure 0.10 for SOC 19-3051; scaled to 13/100 as the observed-usage input.

PUBLISHER PDF

UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology · *Assessment of AI capabilities and the impact on the UK labour market* (28 January 2026)

UK context: around 70% of UK workers are in occupations with tasks AI could perform or enhance, above the US average; a one-standard-deviation rise in exposure was associated with a 3.9% fall in UK job postings.

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<https://www.careerguard.ai/sources>

§ 12 APPENDIX

Method and sources

Each report was written from a large body of published research. The exposure score itself is computed, not written: it is the CareerGuard Exposure Index, a weighted average of occupation-level measures from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (AI-exposure classification and 2025–35 projections), Microsoft Research (AI applicability scores) and Anthropic (observed exposure), together with the adoption rating published on the report. The organisations and publications below are the standing literature behind the narrative sections. Every source, with dates, licences and archived copies where we are permitted to hold them, is catalogued in the research library.

Exposure Index v2 (October 2026). Each input is scaled to 0–100 and weighted: task applicability 35% (Microsoft AI applicability score ÷ 0.5), observed usage 20% (Anthropic observed exposure ÷ 0.75), official exposure tier 20% (BLS very high = 100, high = 70, moderate = 40, low = 10), labour-market trajectory 10% ($50 - 2.5 \times \text{projected \% employment change}$), published adoption rating 15% (very high = 85, high = 70, medium-high = 55, medium = 40, low-medium = 25, low = 10). Inputs not measured for an occupation are dropped and the remaining weights renormalised. An editorial adjustment of at most ± 12 points is allowed only for automation channels the measures cannot see (robotics, self-service, machine vision, medical imaging, RPA/OCR, generative video) and is always logged with its reason. Scores are whole numbers, not rounded to five. The change window shifts one notch (a year at each end) per ten points of movement.

World Economic Forum

The Future of Jobs Report series — Employer survey of expected job growth and decline, skill shifts and technology adoption (2020, 2023 and 2025 editions); *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Entry-Level Work* (2026).

AI governance and transformation reports — Frameworks on ethical AI, talent strategy and industry transformation.

McKinsey Global Institute

AI, Automation and the Future of Work series — Research quantifying automation potential by task, sector and demographic, from "Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained" to "Agents, robots, and us" (2025).

Industry-specific reports — Financial services, healthcare, manufacturing and others.

PwC

Global AI Jobs Barometer — Annual analysis of job postings and productivity by AI exposure (2024–2026 editions).

Upskilling Hopes and Fears survey — Employee perceptions and readiness.

Microsoft Research and Anthropic

Working with AI (2025); Anthropic Economic Index (2025–2026) — Occupation-level usage data from Copilot and Claude conversations, the two observed-usage measures behind the 2026 revision.

Stanford Digital Economy Lab and Stanford HAI

Canaries in the Coal Mine? (2025–2026); AI Index Report (annual) — Payroll evidence on early-career employment in exposed occupations; annual measurement of AI capability, investment and adoption.

Deloitte

Human Capital Trends series — Workforce, talent and HR technology trends.

Tech Trends series — Emerging technologies and their business implications.

Accenture

Technology Vision series — Forward-looking analysis of emerging technology, with emphasis on AI.

Fjord Trends — Design, innovation and human experience in a digital world.

Boston Consulting Group

AI/ML insights and industry solutions — "The AI Revolution in the Workplace" and related research.

EY

AI and workforce reports — Adoption, talent strategy and ethics.

IBM Institute for Business Value

AI and automation studies — Business models, workforce evolution and leadership.

OECD

AI Policy Observatory — International data and policy on AI, labour markets and skills.

Employment Outlook — Labour-market trends including technological impact (2023–2026 editions).

International Labour Organization

Generative AI and Jobs: A Refined Global Index of Occupational Exposure (2025) — Task-level exposure gradients for every ISCO occupation; successor to the 2023 global index.

International Monetary Fund

Staff Discussion Notes on AI and work (2024, 2026) — Complementarity framing: where AI augments and where it substitutes.

UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

Assessment of AI capabilities and the impact on the UK labour market (2026) — UK occupational exposure and job-posting evidence.

Brookings Institution

AI and automation research — Economic and social implications, displacement and skills.

Yale Budget Lab and Goldman Sachs Research

Tracking the Impact of AI on the Labor Market; AI and the US labour market (2026) — Aggregate labour-market monitoring; macro displacement estimates.

Oxford University (Oxford Martin School)

The Future of Employment — Frey & Osborne and subsequent research on susceptibility to automation.

MIT Technology Review

AI & Work — Reporting on AI research and its implications for industries and jobs.

Gartner

Hype Cycle for Artificial Intelligence — Maturity and adoption of AI technologies.

Future of Work reports — Workplace models and talent strategy.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Employment Projections 2025–35; AI Exposure Categories; Occupational Outlook Handbook — Ten-year employment projections and, from the 2025 cycle, an AI-exposure tier for every detailed occupation.

Indeed Hiring Lab

AI at Work Report (2025) and posting-market updates — Skill-level transformation estimates and job-posting trends by occupation.

II CORE AI AND MACHINE-LEARNING RESEARCH

OpenAI

Research papers, blog and API documentation — Large language models, generative AI, safety and societal impact.

Google DeepMind

Research papers and blog — Reinforcement learning, AI for science, AGI and ethics.

Meta AI

Research papers and blog — Large language models, computer vision, AI for social good.

Hugging Face

Transformers library and model hub — Open-source state-of-the-art NLP models.

TensorFlow and PyTorch

Documentation and community forums — Core frameworks illustrating practical capability.

arXiv

cs.AI, cs.LG, cs.CV, cs.CL — Pre-print research.

NeurIPS and ICML

Conference proceedings — Top-tier academic research.

ACM and IEEE

Journals and proceedings — ACM Computing Surveys; IEEE Transactions on AI.

Kaggle

Datasets and competition solutions — Applied machine learning on real-world problems.

The Alan Turing Institute

Research and reports — Responsible and applied AI.

III ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE AI DEPLOYMENT

NIST

AI Risk Management Framework — Voluntary framework for managing AI risk.

European Commission

AI Act — Risk-tiered legal framework for AI.

Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI — Principles for responsible development.

Partnership on AI

Research and best practice — Responsible AI development.

AI Now Institute

Annual reports — Social implications: power, inequality, rights.

ACM FAccT

Proceedings — Fairness, accountability and transparency.

Data & Society

Publications — Social implications of data-centric technology.

WIPO

Conversation on IP and AI — Intellectual-property implications of AI.

IEEE Global Initiative on Ethics of AI/IS

Ethically Aligned Design — Recommendations for ethical AI design.

Center for AI and Digital Policy

Policy briefs — Accountable AI policy.