

Robert Bruce

Partner

'Robert Bruce stands out. He thinks outside the box and always has the client's aims in mind.'

(The Legal 500, 2024)



 0345 128 6958  robert.bruce@freeths.co.uk

Robert has over 20 years of experience advising public and private sector clients on planning, infrastructure, compulsory purchase/compensation, highways, community infrastructure levy and local government law. He principally advises in the residential, infrastructure, commercial, offices, retail and mixed-use sectors.

Robert has particular expertise advising on large urban, greenfield and other developments, infrastructure, compulsory purchase and compensation issues.

He advises clients on strategic issues, DCO applications, CPOs, Transport and Work Act Orders and Hybrid Bills for infrastructure, S106 planning agreements, S38/278 highways agreements, highway orders, planning policies, challenging and defending public authority decisions in court and at planning inquiries, the community infrastructure levy, EIA, SEA, habitats appropriate assessments, enforcement action, listed buildings, conservation areas, tree preservation orders and advertisements.

Robert has a track record of combining detailed knowledge of the law with commercially minded advice to provide solutions and deliver results.

Robert is ranked as a leading individual in Chambers & Partners (2024 edition) as a Leading Individual and is listed as a Recommended Lawyer in The Legal 500 (2024 edition).

Legal Services

Planning

Robert has particular expertise advising on large urban, greenfield and other developments in London and around the Country.

Examples of how we have helped:

- Advised the developer partners of a London mixed-use, town centre regeneration project (1,500,000 sq m including 78,000 sq m shopping centre extension, 395,000 sq m of offices and 7,500 homes) and £1b of infrastructure and planning benefits
- Advised developers and Councils across the County on various large residential or mixed use developments of 100 to 5,100 homes including at a public inquiries
- Advising a major national house builder on EIA and planning matters on two mixed use tower developments including 565 and 300 dwellings on surplus land around north London tube stations
- Advising a private equity developer on a redevelopment for a 4,500 sq m hotel and a Grade II* listed building for a café, affordable workspace and Class B2 industrial use in Whitechapel including at the call-in public inquiry
- Advising a London Council on S106 agreements for major developments such as a development for various towers up to 16 storeys for 1,750 dwellings, Classes A1, A3 and A4 uses, offices and other commercial uses, Classes D1 and D2 uses and a mixed use development including 750 dwellings
- Advising a London Council on highways agreements for a large phased development including around 1,750 new dwellings
- Advised a major developer on a business park including 13,250m² of employment floorspace (Classes B1, B2 and B8), 310 residential units and a primary school site extension
- Advised a market-leading minerals developer and operator on S106 agreements for its minerals sites
- Various highways matters including stopping up, diversions and public rights of way including vehicular access issues

Selected Cases

Compulsory Purchase; CPO; CPO Compensation

Robert has particular expertise in advising clients, particularly developers, land owners and objectors and interested public authorities and similar stakeholders, on large infrastructure, compulsory purchase and compensation issues.

Examples of how we have helped

- Heathrow Third Runway DCO – Acting for Council
- A303 Tunnelling of Stonehenge DCO – Acting for heritage body
- HS2 – Wide variety of land owners across the Country, including challenging the Government's original decision through to the Supreme Court

- Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Proposed DCO – Acted for land owner
- Esso Aviation Fuel Pipeline DCO – Acting for affected supermarket
- London Resort DCO – Acting for land owner
- Thames Tideway Tunnel DCO – Acted for affected restaurant barge owner
- East West Rail Transport and Works Act Order – Acting for approximately 10 land owners
- Crossrail Transport and Works Act Order – Acted for land owner of affected major development site
- Milford Haven Biomass Renewable Energy Plant (Wales) – Acted for promoter
- Housing regeneration scheme CPO for approximately 3,500 homes – Acted for Council acquiring authority
- Thanet Wind Farm onshore cable CPO – Acted for promoter
- Other relevant experience – Various large road schemes, other infrastructure proposals and compensation issues, including claims in the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chambers) such as a multi-million pound claim for a medical centre

Judicial Review

Robert has particular expertise advising in challenging and defending major planning Court cases.

Examples of how we have helped

- Challenged and defended major Court cases on planning matters, including for a major supermarket chain, a market-leading builders' merchant, institutional clients, major developers and land owners, objectors and public authorities and two cases that went through to the Supreme Court on HS2 and important issues on planning conditions

Planning Appeals

Robert has particular expertise advising in appealing and defending major planning decisions at planning appeals.

Examples of how we have helped

- Advised the developer on a public inquiry for a mixed-use development, including 900 homes, in East Cheshire
- Successful appeal of S106 affordable housing obligations, resulting in a reduction in liability of around £3m
- Appeals relating to listed buildings and enforcement issues
- Has acted for clients in more than 35 public inquiries on planning matters

Community Infrastructure Levy

Robert has particular expertise advising on community infrastructure levy issues, including CIL mitigation strategies, often saving clients significant amounts of money.

Examples of how we have helped

- Advised a wide range of clients on community infrastructure levy issues and CIL mitigation strategies including reducing a CIL liability by £550k and a successful appeal saving the client £1m

Sectors