



## Alex Williams

Call: 2017 [Public Access](#)

### Practice areas:

Planning, Environment, Public Law



## Practice Profile

Alex is a seasoned public lawyer with years of high-level academic experience to underpin his practice. He has represented clients at all judicial levels including in the Supreme Court and several appearances in the Court of Appeal. He regularly acts unled in High Court matters and at public inquiries and has acted unled in Court of Appeal matters. He is a member of the Attorney General's C Panel of Junior Counsel to the Crown.

Alex is ranked as a leading planning junior in Legal 500, as up-and-coming in Chambers and Partners, and as a top-rated junior in the Planning Law Survey. He represents the full range of planning clients including a particularly enviable list of developer clients. He frequently receives instructions from some of the UK's foremost planning and property consultancies and has acted for high-profile national and international corporate clients including the Vidal Sassoon Group, in relation to its recent plan to open a new world-class training academy in Soho.

Alex studied at Cambridge (BA, MA) and Durham (MJur, PhD), following which he was a Lecturer in Law and Co-Director of the Human Rights Centre at Durham University, where he specialised in public law and human rights. He has also held visiting fellowships at Cambridge University, University College London and UNSW, Sydney. He has published widely in academic and practitioner journals, contributed to the most recent edition of *Supperstone, Goudie & Walker on Judicial Review* (7th edn, LexisNexis, 2024) and co-authored a major undergraduate textbook, *Text, Cases and Materials on Public Law and Human Rights* (4th edn, Routledge, 2016).

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## Planning

Alex is ranked as a leading planning junior in Legal 500, as up-and-coming in Chambers and Partners, and as a top-rated junior in the Planning Law Survey.

He is instructed principally by developers but also by local government and other clients, all of whom benefit from his considerable academic experience as a public lawyer, particularly when involved in judicial review challenges. He is routinely involved in High Court litigation, often as sole counsel, and has undertaken written advocacy as sole counsel in Court of Appeal proceedings.

Alex's cases at High Court level and above include:

- **[2026] EWHC 954 (KB)**: acted for the LPA in contempt of court proceedings involving a 'freeman of the land'-style defence by the defendant, who had breached a longstanding planning injunction.
- **[2026] EWHC 165 (Admin)**: acted for the claimant in a challenge resulting in the High Court clarifying the meaning of 'grey belt' in the 2024 NPPF.
- **R (Tesco Stores Ltd) v Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council [2025] EWHC 2547 (Admin)**: acted as junior counsel for the LPA, and sole counsel at the oral permission hearing, resisting a challenge to the grant of a s.73 permission to allow retail food sales at an out-of-centre site (permission refused on all grounds).
- **R (Finch) v Surrey County Council [2024] UKSC 20**: as junior counsel, defended Surrey County Council in ground-breaking JR proceedings concerning the scope of the EIA process, specifically whether it requires consideration of the environmental effects of downstream greenhouse gas emissions when granting permission for oil extraction. Also appeared in the High Court ([\[2020\] EWHC 3566 \(Admin\)](#)) and Court of Appeal ([\[2022\] EWCA Civ 187](#)).
- **R (Royal Mail Group Ltd) v Cornwall Council (AC-2023-CDF-000113)**: as sole counsel, defended the Council in JR proceedings concerning its decision to approve a scheme of highway improvement works in Truro (claimant's interim injunction application to halt the works dismissed; permission refused on all grounds of claim).
- **Aurora Properties (UK) Ltd v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (AC-2023-LON-002536)**: acted as junior counsel for the interested-party LPA, successfully resisting a s.288 TCPA appeal (permission refused on all grounds) against an inspector's decision to refuse outline permission for 125 dwellings and a care facility.
- **R (Widdington) v Uttlesford District Council [2023] EWHC 1709 (Admin)**: acted as sole counsel for the interested-party developers in a JR concerning fallbacks, heritage issues and the consistency principle.
- **R (Llandaff North Residents' Association) v Cardiff Council [2023] EWHC 1731 (Admin)**: acted as junior counsel for the Council in a JR concerning EIA matters and the construction of a new sewerage pumping station in Hailey Park.
- **Manor Properties (Bishops Stortford) Ltd v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (CO/979/2023)**: acting as sole counsel for the developer, secured consent to judgment by the Secretary of State on a s.288 TCPA appeal involving an inspector's appeal decision that failed to mention the tilted balance despite the parties having agreed that there was no 5-year housing land supply.
- **R (Blacker) v Chelmsford City Council [2023] EWCA Civ 25**: as junior counsel, defended the Council in an appeal concerning the principle of consistency between planning decisions, also successfully resisting an application to the Supreme Court for permission to appeal.
- **R (Mentesh) v Uttlesford District Council (CO/715/2022)**: as sole counsel for the claimant, secured consent to judgment by the Council in a JR concerning the validity of a LDC issued in respect of development purportedly carried out under GPDO, Schedule 2, Part 1, Class E.
- **R (Smith) v Castle Point Borough Council [2020] EWCA Civ 1420**: acted as junior counsel for the claimant in appeal proceedings concerning the extent to which local and national policy required the Council to consider intensification of the use and contamination of neighbouring land when granting planning permission for the construction of a new boundary wall at a scrap metal and

waste recovery yard.

- **[HJ Banks & Co Ltd v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government \[2018\] EWHC 3141 \(Admin\)](#)**: acted as junior counsel for the third interested party (Save Druridge) in attempting to secure permission to appeal to the Court of Appeal in a s.288 TCPA challenge concerning the lawfulness of the Secretary of State's decision to refuse permission for a surface coal mine.

Alex's public inquiry and other court work includes:

- **[Meadow Cottage, Hill Wootton, Warwick](#)**: acted for the LPA in an enforcement appeal concerning the construction of a sizeable 'outbuilding', purportedly under the GPDO.
- **[Back Lane, Rowington, Warwick](#)**: acted for the LPA in an enforcement appeal concerning an unauthorised traveller site in the Green Belt.
- **[27-29 High Street, Carshalton](#)**: acted for the developer in relation to a scheme to demolish and replace the existing pharmacy with 9x residential units and 2x commercial units in a conservation area.
- : acted for a local parish council alliance in resisting an application for outline permission to construct a secure truckstop facility on a site in the Green Belt and adjacent to the Kent Downs National Landscape Area.
- **[Nova Equestrian, Glasshouse Lane, Lapworth](#)**: acted for the LPA in a s.174 TCPA appeal involving unauthorised Green Belt development, including in a subsequent ground (a) appeal against a second-bite enforcement notice.
- **[Riversleigh, Nipsells Chase](#)**: acted for the LPA in enforcement proceedings involving the unauthorised construction of a dwelling in place of an apple storage barn.
- **[Ambers of Amersham](#)**: represented the developer in an appeal concerning the impact of a 2-dwelling development on the integrity of the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation.
- **[Stone Cottages, Shimpling, Suffolk](#)**: acted for the LPA in a LDC appeal concerning the question of when a habitable building is a dwelling.
- **[Land at Hopkins Reeds, Hatch Lane, Wormley](#)**: acted for the LPA in relation to a joint LDC and enforcement notice appeal involving the carrying out of engineering operations on the site of a builder's yard in the Green Belt.
- **[Lee Farm, Botley Road, Chesham](#)**: acting for the LPA, resisted an enforcement appeal concerning Green Belt development and Part 1, Class E permitted development rights.
- **[Suffolk House, Westcliff-on-Sea](#)**: acted for the LPA in a joint LDC and enforcement notice appeal involving the conversion of a former care home into self-contained apartments.
- **[101 Grove Road, South Woodford](#)**: acting for the developer on appeal under s.174 TCPA 1990, secured the early withdrawal of an enforcement notice issued in respect of a conversion from C3 to C4 accommodation (the developer relied on permitted development rights, arguing that the material change of use took place before an Art 4 direction issued by the Council took effect).
- **[35-41 New Dover Road, Canterbury](#)**: acted for the LPA in a s.78 TCPA appeal involving a 50-unit Extra Care scheme for older persons.
- **[Land North and South of Fitch Way, Pods Brook Road, Braintree](#)**: as junior counsel, acted for the LPA in a called-in appeal involving an outline application for up to 1600 residential dwellings, involving wide-ranging issues.
- Visual amenity prosecutions under s.216 TCPA 1990 and proceedings involving planning enforcement orders.
- Magistrates', Crown Court and County Court highways matters including highway classification, repair, and street works liability.

Alex's advice and other work includes:

- **House of Sassoon, 16-17 Greek Street, Soho:** provided legal advice to accompany an application for an LDC in respect of Vidal Sassoon's proposal to open a world-class new training academy on the former site of the Condé Nast College of Fashion & Design.
  - **131 Church Elm Lane, Dagenham:** provided legal advice to accompany the developer's application for an LDC confirming that planning permission for a mixed commercial and 75-unit residential scheme had been validly commenced.
  - **217-221 London Road, Camberley:** provided legal advice to accompany the developer's reapplication for prior approval to convert commercial space into 24 new apartments, the LPA having refused the earlier application based on a misunderstanding of the scope of Class MA permitted development rights.
  - **227-235 Cranbrook Road, Ilford:** provided legal advice to accompany the developer's application for an LDC confirming that planning permission for a mixed retail and 9-unit residential scheme had been validly commenced.
  - Advising developers and other clients on a range of matters including minor material and non-material amendments, CIL liability, the implementation of planning permissions including inconsistent permissions, the modification of planning obligations under s.106A TCPA for viability reasons, nutrient neutrality and environmental impact assessment.
  - Delivering training, including on planning prosecutions, planning enforcement orders and the role of previous inconsistent decisions in decision-making.
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## Environment

Alex has acted for a diverse range of clients in environmental and climate-related matters including **R (Finch) v Surrey County Council [2024] UKSC 20**, acting as junior counsel in all three courts defending Surrey County Council in ground-breaking JR proceedings concerning the scope of the EIA process. Alex also appeared as junior counsel for the LPA in **R (Llandaff North Residents' Association) v Cardiff Council [2023] EWHC 1731 (Admin)**, a JR concerning EIA matters and the construction of a new sewerage pumping station in Hailey Park.

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## Public Law

Keen to apply his considerable research expertise in the field to his practice, Alex is regularly instructed on public law and human rights matters across a range of different fields including planning, housing and licensing. He has acted as sole counsel in several judicial reviews and statutory High Court appeals.

Recent experience includes:

- **R (Borges) v London Tribunals & Waltham Forest LBC (CA-2024-002896):** as sole counsel, successfully defended the respondents in the Court of Appeal (permission to appeal refused on the papers). The challenge began as a JR against the Parking Adjudicator's decision to dismiss the claimant's appeal against a penalty charge notice issued in respect of a traffic violation. Also acted as sole counsel for the Council at the oral permission hearing in the High Court (AC-2022-LON-002413).
- **R (Humber Landlords Association) v Hull City Council [2019] EWHC 332 (Admin):** as junior counsel, defended the Council in a JR challenge to its decision to revise its policy on private sector

housing enforcement.

- Acting for local authorities defending homelessness decisions in judicial review proceedings and public-law appeals brought under s.204 of the Housing Act 1996.
  - Acting for landlords in possession claims and injunction proceedings involving public-law defences including under the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010.
  - Acting for the local planning authority in proceedings concerning the interpretation of the ouster provision in s.171BB(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
  - Acting for a council in JR proceedings concerning its decision to enforce a penalty charge notice for a road traffic violation.
  - Acting for the Government in civil proceedings concerning the scope of the power to remove untaxed vehicles from the highway.
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## Education

- Cambridge University (BA 2006, MA 2010)
  - Durham University (MJur 2008, PhD 2013)
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## Associations

- Administrative Law Bar Association
  - Planning and Environmental Bar Association
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## Books & Journal Publications

- 'Restrictions on the Availability of Judicial Review', in Supperstone, Goudie and Walker, *Judicial Review* (7th edn, LexisNexis, 2024).
- 'Costs', in *Cornerstone on the Planning Court* (2nd edn, Bloomsbury Professional, 2021), at 153-182 (with James Findlay KC).
- 'Public Authorities and the HRA 1998: Recent Trends' [2020] *Judicial Review* 179-190.
- 'Planning Enforcement Orders, Time Limits and Self-Certification under the TCPA 1990 s.171BB' [2020] *Journal of Planning & Environment Law* 224-230.
- 'The Pointlessness of Section 6(5) HRA 1998' [2018] *Judicial Review* 128-144.
- 'Judicial Review and Monopoly Power: Some Sceptical Thoughts' (2017) *Law Quarterly Review* 656-682.
- 'Public Authorities and the HRA 1998: Recent Trends' [2017] *Judicial Review* 247-262.
- 'Public Functions and Amenability: Recent Trends' [2017] *Judicial Review* 15-26.
- *Text, Cases and Materials on Public Law and Human Rights* (4th edn, Routledge, 2016) (with Helen Fenwick and Gavin Phillipson).
- 'The British Bill of Rights Debate: Lessons from Australia' [2016] *Public Law* 471 (with George Williams).
- 'Strasbourg's Public-Private Divide and the British Bill of Rights' [2015] *European Human Rights Law Review* 617-630.

- 'Public and Private: Neither Deep Nor Meaningful?', in Kit Barker and Darryn Jensen (eds), *Private Law: Key Encounters with Public Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), at 45–88 (with William Lucy).
- 'Horizontal Effect and the Constitutional Constraint' (2011) *74 Modern Law Review* 878–910 (with Gavin Phillipson).
- 'Public Authorities: What is a Hybrid Public Authority?', in David Hoffman (ed.), *The Impact of the UK Human Rights Act on Private Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), at 48–65.
- 'A Fresh Perspective on Hybrid Public Authorities under the Human Rights Act 1998: Private Contractors, Rights-Stripping and "Chameleonic" Horizontal Effect' [2011] *Public Law* 139–163.
- 'YL v Birmingham City Council': Contracting Out and Functions of a Public Nature' [2008] *European Human Rights Law Review* 524–531.

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## Quotes

*"Alex is technically really strong on all things planning. He is proactive, and the service levels are very strong. But what sets him apart in my eyes is his advocacy skills."*

Chambers and Partners, 2026

*"Hard-working, thorough and very good at problem solving."*

Chambers and Partners, 2026

*"His drafting skills are excellent."*

Chambers and Partners, 2026

*"Alex has excellent knowledge and is a go-to barrister."*

Chambers and Partners, 2026

*"Alex is a highly skilled advocate. He is always quick to understand the issues and clients appreciate his succinct advice."*

Legal 500, 2026

*"Very clear and concise with his advice, and importantly able to quickly pickup on the issues and potential arguments."*

Legal 500, 2025

*"Alex cross-examines to great effect and his submissions are excellent. His advocacy can't be faulted."*

Legal 500, 2024