CAREER EDUCATION – WRITTEN Q&A: Alex Round

1. **What is your job role and organisation?**

   I am a solicitor at Mills & Reeve, Cambridge

2. **What do you do in this job?**

   I am a solicitor in the firm's Real Estate practice, specialising in planning law. I act for developers, landowners, and some local planning authorities, in relation to major new development projects.

3. **Why did you choose this career?**

   I have always liked using "both sides of my brain". I was interested in technical / detailed problem solving, including maths and science at school, but have also always enjoyed using language, communicating with people, and being creative. A career in the law allows you to bring all of these things together.

4. **What background education or training do you have?**

   I studied English, History, Maths and Politics at A-level. Politics, Philosophy and Economics at University. Graduate Diploma in Law (conversion course) and Legal Practice Course both from BPP. I also studied for a year for a diploma in the electric guitar!

5. **What has your career path been?**

   I left university with the law in mind, but without having done much to pursue it formally (work experience etc). I started my GDL and began making applications for work experience and training contracts and I got good work experience but none of my training contract applications were successful. I paused between my GDL and my LPC and worked as a guitar and piano teacher for two years. I went back to finishing my legal studies and worked out that I really wanted to stay in Cambridge and that I wanted to work at Mills & Reeve. I trained with Mills & Reeve (beginning in 2014 at the age of 26) and have been with the firm ever since. I am now a senior associate.

6. **What does a typical day involve?**

   Communicating with people – clients, other lawyers, colleagues. Lots of emails, phone calls and meetings. Also lots of reading, thinking and writing. That might all sound a bit "samey" - but it isn't. My job is quite varied in terms of who I am talking to and about what, and the sorts of problems I am asked to solve for different clients.

7. **What is your work environment like?**

   I work in a large office building, which is open-plan, so (excluding pandemic times) it's quite a lively and collaborative environment to be in. My colleagues are great, and that is a big part of why I qualified into the team I did – I had enjoyed my time as a trainee in the planning team so much, including because of the relationships I formed. I work long hours sometimes, but that is part of the deal at a large law firm and I find it rewarding so I am happy to do it.

8. **What aspects of your job are most challenging?**

Sometimes time management, but the progression from "more junior" to "more senior" lawyer is sometimes a hard balance to get right in terms of how much help you seek from more experienced colleagues, and how much responsibility to take on for yourself. In my experience, you have to get a few things wrong before you end up consistently getting them right without help and, while it's never nice to realise you've made a mistake, it's always worth learning the lesson of how and why not to make it again!

9. **Can you give an example of a project or piece of work that you have been most proud of?**

I work typically on major new housing scheme developments. Being able to drive by a site on the weekend for example and watch the progress being made month to month, year to year, is actually really satisfying i.e. you can see with your own eyes the tangible benefit of all the work you have put in while sat in the office. I particularly enjoy the feeling that I have played a part in the creation of a new community and new homes for people to live in.

10. **How do you hope your career will progress?**

I've got no ambition to go anywhere else anytime soon, and there are good prospects at a law firm like Mills & Reeve for continued progression. I did consider becoming a teacher previously, and I think it could be quite rewarding to do some part time lecturing or teaching on a law course at some point in the future, but I'm not considering that just at the moment!