

Building Standards – Guidance for Customers - Site Inspections during the COVID-19 Outbreak

West Lothian Council Building Standards have developed processes and procedures to ensure the safety of staff and customers as we move forward in line with the Scottish Governments phased restart within the construction sector, carrying out our on-site verification duties in relation to building warrants and completion certificates.

The construction notification plan (CCNP) issued with your building warrant identifies when you need to inform us of key construction stages. It is very important that you continue to notify us in line with the CCNP to allow us to discuss with you the best way for us to carry out the verification of your project. We aim to carry out most site inspections in person, however, there may be circumstances where alternative evidence may be appropriate. We may accept the use of remote video inspections (RVI) or photographs as alternative evidence and these will be discussed and agreed as appropriate.

Accepting on-site evidence by photographic means or through an RVI is at our discretion and for us to decide upon once we have taken the type of inspection, construction and site specific details into account. Do not submit alternative evidence that has not had prior agreement as there is a high chance it will not be accepted.

You should notify us by emailing buildingstandards@westlothian.gov.uk providing the warrant reference number, key stage inspection required and your contact details including a contact name and phone number.

In all cases all paperwork and certification should be submitted electronically via e-buildingstandards or by email to buildingstandards@westlothian.gov.uk.

When submitting certification, please ensure the Completion Certificate submission is submitted as a separate document (pdf) from the other information. The EPC, electrical certificate etc should be sent as a separate pdf. If the Completion Certificate is not submitted separately we will not be able to accept the certificate.

If at any time during the inspection process, our staff do not feel safe or that adequate measures are not in place then they will politely cancel the inspection and ask that it be re-arranged.

Site Inspections

We have, following government advice, undertaken risk assessments and implemented safe working practices to ensure the health and safety of our staff and customers during site inspections. Customers also have a responsibility to ensure safe working practices are in place to allow us to carry out our site inspection duties.

Site inspection (Housing site – Contractor/ Developer)

The site specific COVID-19 safety documentation should be emailed for review prior to the site visit. Ensure COVID related safety measures on site are in place and are being adhered to.

A contact name and number should be provided to allow our staff to contact the person on arrival at site.

Ensure house/plot is free of site operatives. It would be preferable to carry out the inspection alone however, we will ask the site representative to wait outside the property or to maintain at least 2 metres distance all times.

Drain testing equipment should be set up and sat on the ground to allow surveyor to view the gauge without having to come into contact with it. In certain instances we will accept/consider the use of remote video inspection or photographic evidence as a means of verifying an open drainage inspection as noted in the CCNP.

Leave all doors, cupboards and hatches open and ready for inspection. Ensure the building has been suitably cleaned down prior to the visit and where possible, arrange for windows to be kept open to aid ventilation of the premises.

Site Inspection (Non Domestic Premises)

You should ensure COVID related safety measures within the building are in place and are being followed by the occupants. If staff have concerns, that those in the building are not following Covid safety measures, national guidance or are uncomfortable with any practices, they will politely end the inspection and provide the reasons for doing so.

Our staff will follow any specific procedures in place.

Leave all doors, cupboards and hatches open and ready for inspection. Ensure the building has been suitably cleaned down prior to the visit and where possible, arrange for windows to be kept open to aid ventilation of the premises.

It would be preferable to carry out the inspection alone, if someone must be present, we would ask you to ensure social distancing is maintained.

Site Inspection (Domestic)

You will be asked to confirm: if anyone in the household has a high temperature, new and continuous cough or displaying other symptoms related to COVID 19, including loss of taste; if anyone in the household is currently self-isolating or in a high risk group.

Contact will be made with homeowners on day of inspection (ensure contact number is entered in diary) , asking if anyone is self-isolating prior to visiting the property. If someone is self-isolating then another visit will need to be arranged when the isolation period ends.

On arrival we will knock the door / ring the bell and stand away from the door to allow you to answer. We will ask again to confirm the above.

It would be preferable to carry out the inspection alone, however, we understand if someone wishes to be present, and in that situation we would ask you to ensure social distancing is maintained.

We would ask that the building has been suitably cleaned down prior to the visit, all doors and hatches are left open to aid inspection and that where possible windows are kept open to aid ventilation during the visit.

We will avoid touching surfaces inside the property (unless absolutely necessary for the purposes of the visit) and maintain hand hygiene at all times.

Remote Video Inspection (RVI)

This is a live video inspection which may be offered to you where appropriate, hosted by one of our surveyors, this is carried out utilising your mobile device. This is a new process and cannot be offered to everyone at this time.

- The date and time of the inspection will be arranged by the surveyor and an email with a link will be sent to you to access the RVI on the arranged date.
- You will be required to download the Zoom app onto your device prior to the inspection. A tape measure may also be required.
- On the date/ time the RVI can be accessed by clicking the email link and following the on screen instructions. You will be admitted to a waiting room and the surveyor will admit you to start the inspection.
- During the RVI the surveyor will direct you to areas they require to see, this may also require you to take measurements.
- Following the visit the surveyor will follow up with an email should any defects be found during the video inspection.