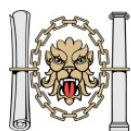


Beyond COVID-19: Recovery measures for architectural technologists and building surveyors in design and contract administration roles

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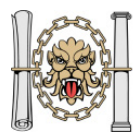
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About CIAT

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Contents

1 Introduction	1
1.1 Government COVID-19 recovery guidance	1
1.2 Construction industry plans	1
1.3 Limitations	2
1.4 Feedback	2
2 Key principles	3
2.1 General industry recommendations for individual behaviour to reduce risks associated with COVID-19	3
3 Strategy, preparation and briefing considerations (RIBA Stages 0 and 1).....	5
3.1 Client engagement	5
3.2 Gathering site information before inspections	6
4 Design stages/office work considerations (RIBA Stages 2, 3 and 4)	8
4.1 Design team support	8
5 Construction and site visits (RIBA Stage 5)	9
5.1 The pre-contract meeting	9
5.2 Site inspections	9
5.3 Site progress meetings	10
6 Post-inspection safety considerations.....	11
6.1 COVID-19 symptoms and response	11
6.2 After site inspections	11
6.3 Good practice COVID-19 administration	11
7 Professional accountability and responsibility	13
8 Impact on appointments and contractual obligations	14
8.1 Force majeure	14
8.2 Employer's right to postpone the works	14
8.3 Contractor's right to loss and expense	15
Appendix A Risk assessments	16



1 Introduction

This guide is intended to build on government and wider industry guidance and gives practical advice to CIAT and RICS professionals working in building design and contract administration (referred to here as ‘designers’) on working as the COVID-19 lockdown measures are lifted and we work through the restart phase of recovery.

It will highlight the risks at key stages in the design and construction process, identify control measures that can be adopted, and offer useful tools and advice on how the designer may mitigate COVID-19 risks.

1.1 Government COVID-19 recovery guidance

COVID-19 has had a significant effect on construction in the UK, with many projects being put on hold and construction sites closing or seeing significant delays. As lockdown restrictions are gradually lifted, government advice in England on [going back to work](#) has identified construction as being one of the sectors encouraged to resume.

At the time of writing, there are several overarching sources of government COVID-19 recovery guidance, as follows:

- **Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy:** sets out the timetable for lifting restrictions. The changes to policy in step one came into effect on Wednesday 13 May 2020 in England, and the government has advised that workers who cannot work from home should travel to work if their workplace is open.
- **Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19):** The UK government, in consultation with industry, has produced guidance to help ensure workplaces are as safe as possible, including the latest government guidance on [COVID-19 vulnerable groups](#).

1.2 Construction industry plans

Following this ease on restrictions and encouragement for construction to resume, the [Construction Leadership Council](#) has created an Industry Recovery Plan (IRP), [Roadmap to Recovery – An Industry Recovery Plan for the UK Construction Sector](#), which sets out 3 key stages in the recovery process:

- 1 **Restart:** measures required in the short term (0-3 months) to support confidence and mobilisation of the sector, increasing the level of activity in construction, consistent with application of social distancing.
- 2 **Reset:** measures in the medium term (3-12 months) to evolve our ways of working for both COVID-19 resilience and improved long-term productivity.
- 3 **Reinvent:** measures developed now for the long term recovery beyond 12 months, taken to support recovery of the UK economy and delivery of the government’s policy priorities.

At the time of writing, the construction sector is in the ‘Restart’ phase of the plan, and CIAT and RICS are monitoring the situation closely. Feedback from our members as they work in practice is key to understanding the situation and developing strategy to best support our members. We therefore encourage interaction with CIAT and RICS (see section 1.4).

1.3 Limitations

It is important to note that this document is intended to outline good practice and provide useful advice for the designer during COVID-19 restrictions. Recommendations have been extrapolated from high level government guidance and built on where practicable to provide advice specific to the work of the designer. It is not intended to be highly prescriptive, to enable the designer to adapt the advice and use their own professional judgement for the individual situations they will face. During this time where COVID-19 is active, it is critical that before acting, designers consider and assess the most up to date government guidance.

This document is not intended to replace existing safety requirements, such as [The CDM Regulations](#), and does not give legal advice. If any legal risks are identified, advice should be sought from a legal professional. Recommendations and updates from the relevant authorities should always be followed, and site safety procedures for individual sites observed.

It should be noted that there are currently differences in COVID-19 advice and construction site procedures in devolved administrations and this guidance is aimed at England only. Nevertheless, there is practical guidance within the document that may be useful to designers in other regions. However, COVID-19 restrictions can be applied locally and members should always take the current restrictions in their own region (or the region of their project/site) into account before applying the advice in this document.

The COVID-19 situation is fluid and the guidance provided in this document is correct at the time of writing. The guidance will be reviewed and updated as necessary as the recovery situation changes.

1.4 Feedback

Lessons learned in good practice are important and any further comments from RICS and CIAT professionals on how they are tackling COVID-19 or comments on this document are welcomed. The [RICS Insight Community](#) can be used for this purpose, or by contacting [Graham Chalkley](#) at CIAT.

2 Key principles

As COVID-19 restrictions lift, designers should ensure they continue to provide the highest levels of service while adhering to current social distancing guidelines. Safeguarding the health and safety of other people while carrying out services on site in accordance with the public health guidance issued by the relevant public health body for the location of the services undertaken should be paramount.

It is important to monitor how COVID-19 restrictions may impact upon the designer's service and the construction contract in general where the instruction includes this. Chapter 8 of this document discusses appointment and contractual obligations in more detail.

This guidance cannot cover every circumstance, so it is essential that the designer objectively assesses their own project and sites to develop their own plan for safe working and continues to follow any changes and updates in government guidance.

The UK government has published new '[COVID-19 secure](#)' guidelines to help employers reopen their businesses and ensure workplaces are operating as safely as possible under the current circumstances, including guidance [specific to construction sites](#).

It is recognised that part of the designer's work may include dealing with clients, colleagues, members of the public and site operatives during site inspections. The following guidance has been adapted from these key principles.

The designer should familiarise themselves with their employer's COVID-19 requirements/risk assessments and any site-specific health and safety or COVID-19 requirements imposed by the site owners.

2.1 General industry recommendations for individual behaviour to reduce risks associated with COVID-19

- Limit as much as possible any contact with people outside personal households – this is the most important condition for staying healthy.
- Transmission is affected by both duration and proximity of contact; individuals should not be too close to other people for more than a short amount of time. When close proximity is necessary, stay side-to-side rather than facing people.
- When travelling, professionals should continue to avoid public transport wherever possible.
- Wherever possible, go directly from home to work and then back home, avoiding peak travel times.
- Wash hands as often as possible with soap or use hand sanitiser or wet wipes when you are outside.
- Eat at home and/or bring own food to work.
- If returning from an area with high risk of contamination, follow the advice on the [NHS website](#).
- Don't shake hands. Use the knuckles of your fingers to touch the light switches, elevator buttons, etc.
- When at petrol stations, use a paper towel or disposable glove to operate the pump.
- Open doors with an elbow or otherwise, not the palm.

- Wash hands for 20 seconds and/or use hand sanitiser before and after going into a property.
- Upon returning home or to a place of work, wash hands with soap for 20 seconds and/or use hand sanitiser.
- Always have hand sanitiser. Have hand sanitiser on hand near the front door of the home and in the car for use after visiting a petrol station or touching items when it is not possible to immediately wash hands.
- Cough or sneeze in disposable towels and throw them away.
- If using disposable gloves, when taking them off, dispose of them and immediately wash hands thoroughly.
- Aim to wear a face-covering in enclosed public areas.
- Avoid touching the face at all times.
- Where possible, avoid touching surfaces when in someone else's home.
- Follow a common-sense approach when interacting with, or entering, people's homes or other buildings.

3 Strategy, preparation and briefing considerations (RIBA Stages 0 and 1)

In the early stages of a project, the designer should communicate and agree appropriate COVID-19 safety strategies in order that the strategy can be prepared in good time, communicated to the relevant project team and reviewed throughout the life of the project. This stage may not involve other consultants, but the designer should have a sufficient understanding of the client's brief and any existing property in association to understand what COVID-19 safety procedures may be required at this stage. Any restrictions to normal design services need to be recorded, agreed and where appropriate highlighted on any correspondence with the client.

Guidance from MHCLG notes that site inspections can resume/continue, where safe to do so. This means there are specific safety considerations for designers where inspections of existing properties are required. An assessment should be made of any additional time constraints these safety measures will add to the service.

For new instructions, COVID-19 related limitations should be considered and communicated to the client as appropriate and added to terms of engagement (or equivalent) where necessary. Due consideration should be given to the impact this additional time may have on completing the service.

If it is not possible to inspect or visit existing properties safely to the extent required to provide the service on a restricted basis, it may be necessary to decline the inspection/site visit and discuss alternative means of gaining information as-existing.

For projects that are already underway, consider how additional safety measures may impact on later stages of the service. Any potential COVID-19 limitations should be communicated to the client as appropriate to confirm any restrictions or changes to the terms of appointment.

For those managing employees, CIAT and RICS professionals should always consider the safety and wellbeing of their employees in their decision-making process. CIAT has guidance available on [health and wellbeing support](#).

Say if it's not ok. Speak up or report any specific safety issues encountered to the client, contractor, project manager, etc. as appropriate. This will allow knowledge of specific risks to be communicated and collaborative risk mitigation procedures to be put in place.

The checking of construction work in progress is an important contract administration process and progress checks are normally made during the construction phase, where the designer's instruction includes this requirement. The use of remote inspections can assist the designer in checking progress of the work they identify as requiring an inspection, providing this is planned and agreed in advance.

3.1 Client engagement

The term 'client' as it is used in this document means not only the contractual party who has appointed the designer, but also other stakeholders in a project with whom the designer has to engage (e.g. project managers and other members of the design team and project stakeholders), as appropriate. Similarly, the term 'site' is used generically to cover all purpose groups of buildings, including construction sites.

In order to interact with the client and stakeholders safely:

- avoid physical contact where possible. Make contact by use of digital technology, for example email, video conferencing platforms or telephone, etc. where possible. Where this is not possible, observe social distancing.
- act in a transparent and professional manner with all parties involved, and be clear with the client about any restrictions to the service as a result of COVID-19.
- advise the client on the potential use of alternative design or inspection approaches, for example re-structuring feasibility studies to carry out 'desk studies' first, or utilising the client's images of existing property before visiting. Clarify any limitations to using these methods, and where physical site inspections will still be required.
- where the designer's instruction includes site inspections, advise the client on the potential use of alternatives in lieu of site progress inspections, such as photographs or videos from the site. Clarify any limitations to using these methods and where physical site inspections will still be required, for example for key construction details that may be difficult to view remotely.
- brief the client on your safety restrictions early in your engagement to allow them to understand and make necessary arrangement for inspections, etc.

During COVID-19 restrictions, there is likely to be increased financial pressure on the client, the design team and contractors. Designers are advised to monitor their client's resilience, be vigilant of cashflows, and where necessary exercise contractual rights to payment to mitigate financial risks.

3.2 Gathering site information before inspections

Where site visits are necessary to inspect existing property or construction works, the following steps should be considered.

- Check your employer's current risk assessment advice.
- Request the client's **COVID-19 secure certificate** if they have one.
- Ask the client for their risk assessment and any site-specific requirements where applicable.
- Check what social distancing measures are in place, and if any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is mandatory.
- Confirm if there are toilet facilities available for visitors.
- Check to see if site conditions or restrictions have changed since the last visit, if appropriate.
- Any designer planning or organising a visit to the property should confirm to the client that they have no COVID-19 symptoms.
- Confirm if the property will be occupied.
- Request that the site or vicinity of your attendance is evacuated for the short time of the inspection, if possible.
- Ask if entry systems that require skin contact (e.g. fingerprint scanners) can be disabled, if possible.

- Request that any door handles and the like are cleaned before and after any physical site inspection, if possible.
- When inspecting residential properties, check first with the occupiers whether anyone has had COVID-19 or has any COVID-19 symptoms, are shielding or clinically vulnerable, or have not yet completed the required period of household self-isolation. If you need to record this information remember that it will be health data and subject to additional data protection requirements. RICS has recently published [Beyond COVID-19: Data protection and reopening the property market](#) to advise members on how to handle such information lawfully.
- When inspecting other building purpose groups, the designer should make background checks on the building layout, access requirements, occupation (including any ‘quiet times’) and risk and use their judgement when making their arrangements for site visits. The risk assessment process set out in appendix A can assist the designer in prioritising and documenting risks and communicating these to relevant persons on site.

4 Design stages/office work considerations (RIBA Stages 2, 3 and 4)

During the design stages of a project, the designer is more likely to be working from an office or, where possible, working from home. COVID-19 lockdown measures are unlikely to have a significant effect on the design process, but designers should continue to observe ways of working at distance, whether in client consultations or design team meetings and continue to utilise digital technology where possible to facilitate this.

BSI has recently published a second edition of their [Safe Working During the COVID-19 Pandemic Guidelines](#), which is a good source of further information for design practices.

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures and in the current context of COVID-19, the following steps should be considered:

- Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible).
- Increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
- Keeping any close contact activity time as short as possible.
- Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other.
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).

Designers should carry out an assessment of the risks posed by COVID-19 in their workplace as soon as possible. Many workplaces may have completed this already, but this document can be used to gauge possible further improvements.

4.1 Design team support

Where the designer manages a team or is responsible for staff, consideration should be given to the effect of different working practices on the team, their productivity and wellbeing. Further [guidance is available](#) from RICS.

5 Construction and site visits (RIBA Stage 5)

If the designer's instruction includes site inspection and contract administration, this stage is when they are most likely to come into contact with people outside of their immediate workplace.

The types of sites to be inspected and their constraints can vary significantly, from single occupancy dwellings with no client safety measures imposed to large construction sites with significant safety measures that must be observed.

In all cases the designer should complete a risk assessment (see appendix A) based on the information gathered on the site, followed by a brief to clients on any safety requirements before attending, and adhering to any risk assessment advice from the employer. CLC have produced **Construction Sector – Site Operating Procedures** as a good practice guide for construction site operators.

5.1 The pre-contract meeting

In addition to the typical agenda for a pre-contract meeting, it is recommended to add an agenda item specifically for a review of all COVID-19 safety measures and restrictions. These should be reviewed periodically at progress meetings and any risks identified should be recorded to ensure they are monitored through the project life cycle. COVID-19 related items that could be discussed at the pre-contract meeting include:

- Site restrictions, access and PPE.
- Copies of current risk assessments and/or risk registers.
- Use of photographs, etc. to record progress.
- Procedures for site inspections.
- Protocol for site meetings.
- Requirements for contractors to record delays specific to COVID-19.

5.2 Site inspections

Government guidelines give current recommendations around the use of PPE. Face coverings are required under certain circumstances and the **government guidelines** should be checked for up to date requirements. Note that some sites may have their own PPE requirements.

In line with recent UK government guidance, designers and employers must ensure that the risk assessment for the business and premises they are visiting or inspecting addresses the risks around COVID-19. Consider the following:

- Assess whether a physical site inspection is required or whether alternatives may be possible, for example obtaining photographs proving work has been completed in accordance with the contract documents, in order to avoid congested areas. Document any decisions made.
- Site inspections should ideally take place outside of commuting times to avoid rush hour, particularly in areas where people are taking public transport. Whenever possible, public transport should be avoided.

- Adhere to current PHG relating to health and safety and PPE.
- Maintain a safe 2m distance whenever possible.
- If it is not possible to maintain a 2m distance, consider whether the activity should continue and, if so, carry out a risk assessment and respond accordingly.
- Where a 2m distance is not possible consistently, plan site inspections, including access and egress, to enable social distancing wherever possible.
- For smaller sites, occupants ideally should not be in the property while the inspection is taking place, if possible. If not, social distancing and PPE should be observed, as appropriate.
- Avoid peak site times for inspections where possible, and avoid contact with common contact surfaces in reception, office, access control and delivery areas, e.g. scanners, turnstiles, screens, telephone handsets and desks, particularly during peak flow times to larger sites.
- Avoid touching surfaces as far as reasonably possible during the inspection, and everyone should avoid touching their faces.
- Allow plenty of space between people waiting to enter the site.
- Notify the client and/or site manager in advance of the designer's arrival time, and allow plenty of time to access the site where there are phased entry procedures, etc.
- On entering the site, wash hands or use hand sanitiser.
- Allow regular breaks to wash hands or use hand sanitiser where hand washing facilities are unavailable.
- Check the preferred safe routes for vertical movement on site, i.e. stairs or lifts in use. Consider the least congested option with best ventilation for vertical movement risk assessment.

5.3 Site progress meetings

Assess whether meetings can be held remotely using the appropriate digital technology. If this is not possible, consider the following.

- Where it is necessary to attend a site meeting, only those absolutely essential to the meeting should attend.
- The meeting arrangements and safety procedures should be communicated to all parties prior to the meeting. If the organiser does not provide this, safety information should be requested including number of attendees, safety measures for the meeting, and why this meeting cannot be held remotely.
- Consider holding face to face meetings in open areas where possible.
- Meeting rooms should be well ventilated or have windows opened to allow fresh air circulation.
- Maintain a safe 2m distance in seating, etc. whenever possible.

6 Post-inspection safety considerations

Good practice during COVID-19 restrictions extends to more than just the site inspection. Normal professional reporting procedures should continue with keeping thorough records of any additional measures, in order to justify your decision-making process and facilitate the development of good 'lessons learned' in the workplace during safety reviews.

6.1 COVID-19 symptoms and response

If the designer develops a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or their sense of smell and taste change, [current NHS guidelines](#) for COVID-19 symptoms should be followed. Some considerations are:

- cover the mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash hands afterwards
- inform the manager and follow any relevant workplace policies in place
- follow [current NHS and government guidelines](#) on self-isolation.

6.2 After site inspections

Once the visit is concluded, consider the following steps:

- Immediately after leaving the site, sanitise hands with hand sanitiser.
- If a vehicle has been used to travel, clean surfaces in the vehicle using gloves and domestic cleaning products at the end of the day, paying special attention to areas touched by hand.
- Dispose of any disposable PPE used during the inspection in accordance with current PHG.
- Wash and sanitise any equipment or reusable PPE taken on site inspections in accordance with current PHG.
- Wash hands with soap upon returning home.
- Wash clothes used during site inspections as soon as practically possible after the inspection (e.g. upon returning home).

6.3 Good practice COVID-19 administration

In order to keep thorough records of any additional measures, consider the following:

- Keep a record of any safety precautions undertaken during the site inspection or meeting, and any people met during the visit.
- Note any limitations to the service delivered as a result of social distancing measures and health and safety risks.
- For smaller projects (for example inspection of dwellings) and where practical to do so, recommend that the client carries out a deep clean in accordance with [government guidelines](#).

- Record any situation where you could not follow full safety guidelines, for example instances where 2m distancing could not be followed.
- Record any alternative approaches that were utilised to mitigate risks.
- Report any hazards encountered during the inspection to the relevant site personnel and employer (where applicable) as soon as possible, and keep a record of this.
- Record any valuable lessons for further review and to update risk assessments if appropriate.
- Update any risk registers active for the project or provide relevant information to those responsible for updating the register.

7 Professional accountability and responsibility

CIAT and RICS professionals are expected to behave ethically and professionally, while taking adequate steps to consider health and safety at all times for all parties involved.

The government has set out enforcement measures to ensure compliance to social distancing guidelines. Professionals must adhere to government guidelines at all times.

Please note, in line with current government guidelines, people with symptoms going to work who cannot work from home, can [apply to get a test](#).

8 Impact on appointments and contractual obligations

Where designers cannot attend site safely and other options such as remote access have been considered and ruled out, they will need to review the terms of their own appointments for options. This would include rights to suspend services and force majeure (see further below). It is advisable to engage pragmatically with clients to try to reach a reasonable agreement about how the situation can be managed most effectively without causing hardship for any one party.

Such circumstances may suggest construction works are not capable of operating safely within the terms of the CLC's **Site Operating Procedures** for construction sites. Each project and site will need to be reviewed individually. Employers and contractors will need to consider their options under the terms of the building contract.

Each building contract must be considered on a case by case basis, but the following points are likely to be relevant for contracts that commenced before COVID-19 was widely known.

Events that permit extensions of time to the completion date – building contracts usually permit extensions of time due to a force majeure event. The question is whether the clause applies in light of the current circumstances and, if so, the impact on other contract terms such as the contractor's entitlement to loss and expense. Professionals performing the role of contract administrator faced with an application for an extension of time on these grounds should consider whether the clause specifically refers to a 'pandemic'. If so, the position is likely to be clear as the World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

8.1 Force majeure

Whether a force majeure clause has been triggered by a particular event will depend on the interpretation of the words that have been used within the clause and how the current events apply to this interpretation. If there is no contractual definition of force majeure, the position is uncertain. Force majeure is generally understood to cover circumstances that are not within a contracting party's control. This will have to be very carefully assessed in the context of the government's view that construction sites should continue to operate provided that they can follow Public Health England guidance. They must have suitable measures in place to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading and against any contractual requirements to take steps to mitigate the effects of events that may cause delay. Service of relevant notices under contracts will need to be adhered to and contractors will still need to demonstrate that delay has been caused and in what way.

8.2 Employer's right to postpone the works

The building contract may permit an employer to instruct the postponement of the works. This is a matter for the employer and will involve consideration of the impact on other contract terms such as the contractor's entitlement to loss and expense.

Contractual rights to suspend performance should be checked. Under an unamended JCT, if a force majeure event goes on for longer than 2 months there is a mutual right of termination. The parties still have the option though to agree to extend this period.

8.3 Contractor's right to loss and expense

No right to loss and expense would generally flow from a force majeure event but would generally flow from an employer instruction to postpone. Again, each contract should be considered on a case by case basis. Parties may, however, try to reach a commercial agreement to manage the current situation in both of their interests.

This is a fast-moving situation where guidance is changing rapidly. The views above are subject to change and CIAT and RICS professionals should take appropriate legal advice to assist their decision making.

Appendix A Risk assessments

An employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees. The employer should identify any COVID-19 hazards likely for any job undertaken by its employees, and take action to remove or control the risk. The first step in considering the risk of working during COVID-19 restrictions is to understand what measures an employer has in place and review these regularly. It is important to report any additional risks found in practice to a manager. Further information on risk assessment is [available from the HSE](#).

There may be instances where a designer is required to carry out a risk assessment, for example in deciding on a particular course of action for site inspections. If the employer has provided a risk assessment template, it should be used. An example template is provided below.

Each construction site and site visit will present its own challenges in managing the risks identified by the government concerning COVID-19. While these are easing, it is incumbent upon everyone to remain vigilant. Therefore, designers should continue to consider the risks on a case by case basis and ensure that the contractor/building owner or occupier has made arrangements to ensure that the correct measures have been taken prior to any site visit.

The following general aspects may be considered in a risk assessment:

- Identify the potential hazards, using the general COVID-19 construction industry guidance, the information in this document, and information from a manager/employer.
- Identify who might be harmed. For COVID-19 risks, this could include the designer, their staff, other people on site and at home, for example.
- Identify any existing control measures in place.
- Estimate the risk probability.
- Estimate the impact of the risk, should it materialise.
- Calculate the resulting risk rating, for example high (red), medium (yellow) or low (green). This can be established using a probability/impact grid.
- Note the suggested risk response, for example accept, reduce, transfer, reject.
- State the proposed risk action.
- List who should carry out any actions, or a risk owner.
- Note when the action is needed by.

Example COVID-19 risk assessment form

Cause of risk/ issue	Who could be harmed	Existing control measures	Prob. [1-5]	Impact [1-5]	Risk rating [R/Y/G]	Risk response	Risk action	Risk action by	Action required by	Status
Site visits to inspect foundation stage before covering up. Potential to spread/catch COVID-19	Surveyor, site operatives, surveyor's family	Site safety measures at site entry	4	5	HIGH	Reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPE for surveyor. Organise inspection at quiet times. Organise arrival process at site gate and request area to be cleared. Avoid contact on site and maintain 2m spacing. During site inspection clean hands regularly. Post site, clean up and decontaminate as per SOPs. 	Surveyor and site agent	Before site inspection	Open
Site meetings. Potential to spread/catch COVID-19	Surveyor, client, site operatives, surveyor's family	Site safety, measure at site entry. Existing site meetings outside	3	5	HIGH	Remove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct meeting via video conferencing. Client notified; designer has instructed all meetings including design to be via video conference. 	Surveyor and client	30/05/2020	Closed
Travelling to site for inspections. Potential to spread/catch COVID-19	Surveyor, client, site operatives, surveyor's family	Government guidance points to avoiding public transport where possible	4	4	MEDIUM	Reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit inspection to car access. Stipulate that site inspections can only be taken on by those who can drive. 	Surveyor	Before site inspections are organised	Closed

Note: this is an example only and does not constitute risk mitigation advice, which must be conducted by the member or firm's own risk assessment.

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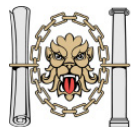
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