

Benchmarking the levels of inspection

This document highlights several different elements in a typical property where the differences between the inspection levels are illustrated. Please note that this is not a comprehensive listing of what is or is not inspected. Instead, it provides critical benchmarks around which our Level 1, 2 & 3 surveys are based and in accordance with the RICS Home Survey Standard (1st Edition, November 2019).

Windows

Survey level	Description
General	<p>In all cases, the RICS member only opens windows where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• permission has been given and• any keys/locks are available and are easy to operate without force or damage. <p>The presence of occupier possessions and heavy curtains will often restrict level one and two inspections. For level three, a small number of possessions/curtains will be repositioned. Where inspections are restricted, the RICS member must inform the client.</p>
Survey level one	Include one on each elevation.
Survey level two	Include one on each elevation and one of each different type of window where there is a variety.
Survey level three	Attempt to open all windows where possible.

Roof space

Survey level	Description
General	<p>The RICS member will carry out an inspection of roof space that is not more than three metres above floor level, using a ladder if it is safe and reasonable to do so.</p> <p>Energy efficiency initiatives have resulted in thick layers of thermal insulation in many roof spaces. Usually it is not safe to move across this material as it conceals joist positions, water and drainage pipes, wiring and other fittings. This may restrict the extent of the inspection and the scope of the report. Consequently, this matter should be discussed with the client at the earliest stage.</p>
Survey level one	The RICS member will not remove secured access panels and/or lift insulation material, stored goods or other contents. The RICS member will visually inspect the parts of the roof structure and other features that can be seen from the access hatch.
Survey level two	In addition to that described for level one, the RICS member will enter the roof space and visually inspect the roof structure with attention paid to those parts vulnerable to deterioration and damage.
Survey level three	<p>The RICS member will enter the roof space and visually inspect the roof structure, with attention paid to those parts vulnerable to deterioration and damage.</p> <p>Although thermal insulation is not moved, small corners should be lifted so its thickness and type, and the nature of the underlying ceiling can be identified [if the RICS member considers it safe to do so].</p> <p>Where permission has been granted and it is safe, a small number of lightweight possessions should be repositioned so a more thorough inspection can take place.</p>

Floors

Survey level	Description
Survey level one	The RICS member will inspect the surfaces of exposed floors but will not lift carpets, floor coverings or floorboards, or move furniture. The RICS member will not lift hatches or carry out an 'inverted head and shoulders' inspection. The RICS member will assess floors for excessive deflection by a 'heel-drop' test.
Survey level two	In addition to that described for level one, where floors have unfixed access hatches/panels or floorboards, the RICS member will inspect subfloor areas by an inverted 'head and shoulders' inspection where appropriate and it is safe to do so. RICS members will not enter the subfloor area.
Survey level three	<p>The RICS member will inspect the surfaces of exposed floors and will lift the corners of any loose and unfitted carpets or other floor coverings where practicable. The RICS member will assess all floors for excessive deflection by a 'heel-drop' test. For a more complete assessment, the magnitude of any identified deflection/slope should be measured.</p> <p>Where the subfloor is inspected, an inverted 'head and shoulders' inspection will be carried out at the access point (either physically or using mirrors, cameras and the like). If it is safe to do so, the RICS member will enter the under-floor area to carry out a more thorough inspection.</p>

Inspection chambers and underground drainage

Survey level	Description
General	<p>The RICS member does not perform or comment on design calculations or test the service installations or appliances in any way. At all levels, inspection chamber covers in common areas of flats are not lifted.</p> <p>In all cases, the RICS member will advise the client that further tests and inspections will be required if the occupier does not provide evidence of appropriate installation and/or maintenance, or the client requires assurance as to their condition, capability and safety.</p>
Survey level one	The RICS member will not lift inspection chamber covers to drains or septic tanks.
Survey level two	The RICS member will lift accessible inspection chamber covers to drains or septic tanks (where it is safe to do so and without causing damage) and visually inspect the chamber(s).

Survey level	Description
Survey level three	<p>The RICS member will lift accessible inspection chamber covers to drains and septic tanks (where it is safe to do so and without causing damage) and observe the normal operation of the drains in everyday use. This will be restricted where properties are empty and drained down.</p> <p>Where the RICS member considers it appropriate, and where practical, to the assessment of the system, 'everyday use' will usually include turning on water taps to sanitary ware and flushing toilets so the performance of visible drainage pipework can be observed and the nature of the below-ground connections identified.</p>

Other services

Survey level	Description
General	<p>Other services are taken to mean all piped and cabled services associated with the property including electrics and other cabled systems, hot and cold water systems, heating, above-ground drainage, ventilation services, renewable energy systems and so on.</p> <p>The RICS member does not perform or comment on design calculations or test the service installations or appliances in any way.</p> <p>In all cases, the RICS member will advise the client that further tests and inspections will be required if the occupier does not provide evidence of appropriate installation and/or maintenance, or the client requires assurance as to their condition, capability and safety.</p>
Survey level one	The RICS member will visually inspect an identified sample of the parts of the different service systems that can be seen.
Survey level two	The RICS member will visually inspect all parts of the different service systems that can be seen within the normal course of the inspection.
Survey level three	In addition to those actions described under 'Inspection chambers and underground drains', the RICS member will observe the normal operation of the services in everyday use [where it is safe to do so and without causing damage] including operating an identified sample of lights and extractor fans and asking the occupier to operate the heating.

The grounds

Survey level	Description
General	RICS members will carry out a visual inspection of the grounds from within the boundaries of the subject property and where necessary, from adjoining public property.
Survey level one	<p>RICS members will carry out a cursory inspection of the grounds during a general walk around. The assessment should include external features relevant to the instruction and requests from the client.</p> <p>The inspection should also include the inside and outside of all permanent outbuildings not attached to the main dwelling, where access is possible, relevant to the instruction and client requests.</p> <p>RICS members will use appropriate methods and equipment to inspect a roof that is not visible from a window or another part of the building, and that is not more than three metres above ground level if it is safe and reasonable to do so.</p>
Survey level two	In addition to that described for level one, RICS members should perform a thorough inspection of the grounds, noting any limitations.
Survey level three	As in level two, the RICS member should perform a comprehensive inspection of the grounds, noting any limitations. Specific defective features and other matters associated with the grounds can be costly to resolve and may affect the client's decision. Consequently, the RICS member should fully account for these during a level three service and be prepared to follow the trail of suspected problems to a greater extent than at levels one and two. Examples include assessing retaining walls in danger of collapsing, deeply sunken paths or driveways, and dilapidated boundary walls or fences, as well as the legal and insurance implications.