

Apply for building consent

Last updated: 1 April 2016

You can't usually start any physical work until you have building consent (unless your work is exempt or there is an emergency), so make a good application and avoid unnecessary delays. Everyone involved benefits from a complete, accurate, easily understood application as it becomes the plan everyone has to follow.

Once you've confirmed that you need a building consent, make a good application as this forms the approved plans for your building project.

You cannot start any physical work on your building project until you have the building consent (and any other required approvals, such as resource consent).

Through good planning and proper preparation, your application can provide everyone involved with a solid foundation to make well-informed, efficient and cost-effective decisions. It can also help speed up consent processing and approval time.

The plans and specifications you have drawn up for your application will be reviewed or used by many people, even if your building project is simple. This can include:

- designer
- quantity surveyor
- truss manufacturer
- window provider
- consultant engineer
- builder
- electrician
- concrete pourer
- plumber
- drainlayer
- homeowner or developer
- council staff, including:
 - administration
 - consent processing
 - inspection
 - engineering
 - town planning.

<https://www.building.govt.nz>

Flow chart of the building process

[PDF 151 KB]

<https://www.building.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/projects-and-consents-and->



[consents/building-process.pdf](#)

Find out about each step in the building process and who is responsible. Diagram suitable for printing on A3 paper size.

Who should make the consent application?

The person completing the application needs to understand the application requirements and the Building Code, and also be able to provide or source the information that shows how your project will comply. That might be you, or your representative (such as architect, builder or project manager).

If you have restricted building work, you need the licensed building practitioner who is going to do your work to also complete or supervise the completion of the relevant part of your building consent application.

[Restricted building work \(https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/choosing-the-right-people-for-your-type-of-building-work/use-licensed-people-for-restricted-building-work/restricted-building-work/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/planning-a-successful-build/scope-and-design/choosing-the-right-people-for-your-type-of-building-work/use-licensed-people-for-restricted-building-work/restricted-building-work/) in more detail.

Applications often fail to show compliance in these three key areas, so make sure the person completing the application knows about Building Code requirements related to:

- structure
- external moisture
- laundering facilities.

How to apply for consent

You can usually pick up an application pack from your council or download one from their website. If you haven't already, this is a good time to discuss your plans with them.

You can also find out if they have special requirements, such as filing your application online. Although these requirements are not related to the Building Code or Building Act, it might save you time if you ask your council what they need before completing your application. You might need to make an appointment to see the right person.

Many designers produce, deliver, store and retrieve documents electronically. Some councils can also receive and process documents electronically. If this is the case, ask the council if you can lodge your application electronically.

By applying electronically you can:

- reduce the cost and inconvenience of producing and exchanging hard copy information
- prevent problems with accessing and interpreting hard copy or scanned documents.

Staged consents

An owner may make a series of building consent applications for stages of the proposed building work. This may be useful where the scope of each part of the work can be clearly defined.

Applications that might be staged are:

- large multi-storey buildings
- multi-unit apartments or development blocks
- shopping malls
- site works, foundations and drainage, with the balance of work completed under a separate stage (this might occur where it is desirable to start the project early but where plans and calculations have not been completed for the balance of the work).

Staged consents may also be useful where more than one household unit is being built specifically for sale, and the units are not connected. A household unit being built specifically for sale cannot normally be transferred without a code compliance certificate. However, the owner or builder can stage the consents so that a code compliance certificate can be obtained for each unit.

Get the build signed off

Get council sign-off (code compliance certificate) to complete your build and meet your legal obligations.

Get the build signed off (<https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/sign-off-and-maintenance/completing-your-project/get-the-build-signed-off/>)

It is an offence to use public premises that are affected by building work and have not had a code compliance certificate issued. If you're building or altering a public building and want the public to be able to use part of it before the build is signed off by council as complete, you may be able to:

- stage the consents so that some parts of the building can be completed, issued with a code compliance certificate (and then used)
- apply to the council for a certificate for public use.

Council interpretations (and why they vary)

Every building project is different, due to factors that range from personal taste through to practicalities, legislation and local land use requirements. Councils have to take all of these things into consideration, as well as the designer's specifications for how the build will meet the performance based standards of the Building Code.

In addition, every council has its own structure and processes. Ask your contact at the council whether you need to talk to anyone else about your project, and ask for specific information about the process.

Your council will assess your building consent documentation to ensure it complies with the Building Code, the district plan and any other laws (such as heritage). It will also check you are complying when it inspects the work during construction and at the end of the project.

If you don't agree with a council decision about a building consent you can apply to us for a legally-binding determination or make a complaint against the council.

[Resolving problems \(https://www.building.govt.nz/resolving-problems/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/resolving-problems/) explains determinations and making a complaint.

Building consent fees

You will need to pay a fee for the building consent. The amount varies, depending on your council, the complexity of your project and the value of

the proposed finished building.

It might also include a government levy, depending on the value of the project. The levy contributes to the development and management of national building regulations (Building Act and Building Code).

If the council identifies something that requires further investigation, or wasn't in your application, it may request the information. You will need to source the information and might need to pay additional fees.

If you amend your plans once your building consent is granted, you will need to pay additional fees for the council to review your amendment.

Local councils

Will have specific information related to your region.

Find your local council (<http://www.localcouncils.govt.nz>)

Make a good application

Your plans and specifications need to show how you intend to construct, alter, demolish or remove a building. Your council, in its capacity as a building consenting authority, issues a building consent if your detailed plans show that the finished building would comply with the Building Code.

Most councils provide guidance on any additional documentation they require with a building consent application (such as check sheets).

Councils do not:

- design or correct insufficient consent documentation
- ensure quality and aesthetic requirements are met, unless it affects compliance with the Building Code.

Your application will need to include:

- details of the building work location
- information about the owner (name, address, property certificate of title, etc)
- relevant clauses of the Building Code and how the work complies (see design summary)
- waivers and modifications sought for any Building Code clauses, and the reasons
- an estimated value of the building work
- detailed plans and specifications showing site, foundations, drainage and bracing (include a clear description of materials and building elements that cannot be shown in drawings)
- any resource consent certificate, or other permit
- any development contribution notice
- details of any practitioners engaged to carry out restricted building work (including licence numbers)
- the council fee
- any other information the council reasonably requires.

You will probably need someone who understands the Building Code to help complete your building consent application. A good application can help the process run smoothly and reduce the need to rework or provide more information.

Depending on your project, you might also need to provide:

- schedule or schedules of materials, products and systems to be used (including any maintenance requirements)
- design calculations (for example, for a specifically engineered design element)
- project information memorandum (PIM), if you have one
- manufacturers' data
- technical opinions or appraisals

- codes of practice
- any specified systems (in a new build)
- modifications or additions to a specified system (in an existing building).

Your application should provide an accurate historical record that can be used when further building work, alteration, repair or maintenance is needed, or the property is sold.

It should also include appropriately worded quality standards to assist in defining contractual obligations. This will minimise and more rapidly resolve disputes. Where an owner has a requirement or expectation of tolerances and finishes above industry norms, this should be explicitly communicated and included in the construction contract.

It is best for the owner to discuss their requirements with their designer before completion of the design. A higher quality of work, for instance the desired levels of finish and flatness, may require changes to the underlying building structure; it is easier and more affordable to plan for this during design than to make changes during the construction process.

If you make any changes to the plans after the consent has been granted - including changing the materials used - you will need to inform your council and find out how to amend your plans.

Making changes to your plans [\(https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/build-to-the-consent/making-changes-to-your-plans/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/build-to-the-consent/making-changes-to-your-plans/)

Guide to applying for a building consent (residential buildings)

[PDF 3 MB]

<https://www.building.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/projects-and-consents/guide-to-applying-for-a-building-consent.pdf>

Plans and specifications

The larger and more complex your project, the more detailed your plans will need to be. However, even if your project is small and simple you need to provide a good level of detail.

Information should be project-specific. General phrases, such as 'refer to manufacturer's specification and/or requirements' or 'installed in accordance with best trade practice' are insufficient. Manufacturers' specifications can change, and views on 'best trade practice' vary between practitioners.

If you refer to Standards, Acceptable Solutions or Verification Methods, be specific. Some Standards are cited (in whole or in part) in the Acceptable Solutions, while other Standards only offer advice. Some Standards contain several options. References to other industry guides, such as BRANZ publications, should also be specific.

References need to:

- uniquely identify documents with titles and dates
- be specific about the paragraphs, clauses and sections to be followed.

Specification structure

A good project-specific specification has a logical structure and navigation. New Zealand's default standard classification system is Coordinated Building Information (CBI). You can recognise it by the 4-digit number used to classify each specification work section (or chapter).

An example of Coordinated Building Information:

3 Structure

31 Concrete

311 Formwork and reinforcement for concrete

3111 Formwork for in situ concrete

At the least, your specifications should include:

- Preliminary and General sections

- a series of technical work sections or chapters, laid out in a consistent pattern. For example:
 - General
 - Products
 - Execution
 - Selections
- a consistent clause numbering system.

Specification content

Keep material separate:

- tender, contract and project management
- technical matters
- proposed product and material selections.

You can describe product and material selections in each work section, grouped together in a single schedule, or listed on drawings. You can also have a mix of trade-based, material-based, process-based and element-based sections or chapters.

Specifications must be project-specific and not include unrelated generic information, as this can slow down the consenting process while councils identify what is relevant.

[How to support your consent application \(https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/apply-for-building-consent/support-your-consent-application/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/apply-for-building-consent/support-your-consent-application/)

[Requirements for quality drawings \(https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/apply-for-building-consent/support-your-consent-application/quality-drawings/\)](https://www.building.govt.nz/projects-and-consents/apply-for-building-consent/support-your-consent-application/quality-drawings/)



New Zealand Government

This information is published by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Chief Executive. It is a general guide only and, if used, does not relieve any person of the obligation to consider any matter to which the information relates according to the circumstances of the particular case. Expert advice may be required in specific circumstances. Where this information relates to assisting people:

- with compliance with the Building Act, it is published under section 175 of the Building Act
- with a Weathertight Services claim, it is published under section 12 of the Weathertight Homes Resolution Services Act 2006.