

Typical council inspections of a building project

Once construction begins, it's the property owner's responsibility to ensure the council inspects the project according to the schedule set out in the building consent.

A missed inspection can have significant consequences for the owner and contractors. It might mean some work has to be undone and redone. It could also prevent the council from signing off the build.

Through regular inspections, you and the council can be confident that the work has been done according to the consented plans. One of the reasons councils do this as the project progresses, rather than at the end, is so they can see work while it is still exposed. For example, if they only inspected framing at the end of the build they would have to remove the interior wall linings to check it had been done properly.

The required inspections will be listed in your building consent, based on the council's evaluation of your plans, specifications and other information. They could include inspections by your nominated engineer, if your project requires it.

Common inspections for residential buildings can include:

- pre-pour (before concrete is poured, for example, for piles, footings, slabs, in situ walls or blockwork infill)
- tanking/waterproofing (before back-filling retaining walls, covering membranes on decks or laying tiles in wet areas such as showers)
- pre-clad (before wrapping the building in building paper or building wrap and installing the cladding)
- post-clad (before applying coatings to fibre cement or polystyrene systems, possibly including inspections during plastering)
- pre-line (with insulation installed but before installing internal linings. This inspection may include checking the plumbing installation under pressure test)
- drainage (before filling in trenches and covering the in-ground pipework). Pipework should be under test for this inspection. Drainage testing can include smoke, air or water testing
- final inspection for plumbing, building and drainage work (once the work described in the building consent is complete).

Generally, gas and electrical work is not inspected as it must be done by a licensed professional. On completion of the work they will give you a signed energy work certificate. Keep all energy work certificates safe and on site with your other project documentation. You will need to show all documentation to your council to get final sign-off.

If your building consent includes a producer statement, the professional who issued it may be involved in inspections.

Make sure you understand what inspections are needed and when. Discuss them with your council if you need any clarification.

The council does not verify the quality of the building work beyond checking it complies. Their role is not to comment on the aesthetics or the quality of workmanship.

Responsibility for organising inspections

When booking an inspection, try to give the building consent authority as much notice as possible. The property owner is ultimately responsible and needs to regularly check that they are happening, although builders and installers usually arrange inspections relevant to their work.

You or your representative need to:

- find out about your council's inspection booking process (how far in advance and preferred method, such as phone, email or smartphone application)
- keep a diary of inspection due dates (you could also diary when to call and make the booking (generally 1-2 days in advance))

In advance of the inspection contact your council to make a booking, providing:

- building consent number
- property address

- required inspection date and type
- name and phone number of on-site contact.

When you are booking the final inspection, make sure you give your council plenty of notice. They need time to prepare a pre-CCC (code compliance certificate) report prior to the inspection, detailing everything required to complete the project.

What to expect on inspection day

On inspection day, you or your agent need to be on site with consented plans and associated documentation. Building consent authorities can refuse to undertake an inspection if a copy of the approved consent documentation is not available. These should always be on site anyway to be used as the 'building plans' by your builder and other contractors.

You, or your representative, need to:

- respond to any requests from the inspector, so that they can give you approval to proceed:
 - minor problems might be easily fixed or approved, and noted on the inspection record (part of the building consent documentation)
 - major problems might require a formal amendment through the council before work can proceed
- following an inspection, check the inspection record to see whether the work passed or failed and that all inspections performed are listed
- if the work passed, continue with your work
- if the work failed, fix all areas of non-compliance and arrange another inspection within the advised timeframe.

Building consent authority inspection requirements will vary with the size and complexity of each project.

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