

So, you've finally decided that now is the time to build that addition, put in the new solid-fuel heater, construct a new house, extend the garage, provide a sunny space with a conservatory, or whatever.

This is a brief guide of the building consent process and what's involved:-

One of the important first steps (apart from "have I enough money?") is to plan and draw up good enough plans to submit to the Council. These can be done by yourself or a designer/architect/builder, but they must be of a standard acceptable for checking (the better the information provided, the faster the checking process is and the cheaper the building consent fee – all councils have to, by law, now work on a user-pays basis). It is often better to employ a professional person to draft your plans as it can save you money in the long run.

The next step is to drop these plans off to the counter at Customer Services (2 sets required). You fill out the building consent application form with all the relevant data, (this is required for our records, statistics, government agencies etc), and pay an application fee (so bring your chequebook please). This fee goes towards our costs of assessing your project.

Your plans are then 'processed' – that means they go to the building inspector (to check construction details etc), the Planners (boundary distances, heights, site coverage etc) Plumbing and Drainage and Water Services (pipework, sewers etc) and sometimes health inspectors (shops, food etc), Dangerous Goods Inspectors (spraybooths, generator rooms etc).

If the information supplied is incomplete, we will phone you for minor items, or write/fax you a letter requesting additional information. At this stage we "stop the clock" (we are allowed 20 working days, by law, to process plans – so if the clock is stopped while we wait for more information the process takes longer).

If all the plans are OK we ring you and ask that you come in and pick up your plans and pay the balance, the consent issue fee (so please bring your chequebook again).

This fee is made up of the time we take to process (better information means less cost), how many inspections are required (this varies considering the type of work, complexity, materials used etc), fixed government charges (Department of Building & Housing and Building Research Association of New Zealand levies), and some service charges if applicable (sewer connection etc).

All this is added up and your application fee (deposit) is deducted, leaving a balance to pay.

You and your builder are now ready to start construction!

On the front of the copy of one set of plans (stamped 'Approved') returned to you, you will note a white sheet of paper with a number of inspections listed on it. These are the minimum inspections that we are required to do. It is your (or your builder's) responsibility to notify Council 24 hours before you require these inspections. It is vital that you request all the inspections we require. (Please ring the Council and ask to book an inspection at a time to suit you and we will do our very best to fit in with your wishes).

When you have finished the project, please send the application for a code compliance certificate to Council and we will complete a final inspection. If everything is ok we then issue a code compliance certificate (CCC) or leave you a note of items to finish (if there are major problems we issue a 'notice to fix'). This CCC is a very important document.

Beginner's guide to getting a building consent

When you come to sell your house (and everybody does sooner or later) a prospective buyer can ask for a land information memorandum (LIM). This will list, amongst other items, a list of permits and consents that have been noted against the property (we are aware of a number of sales that have failed through incompleting work). In other words always ensure that the CCC is completed (this is also another safeguard before you pay your final account to the builder).

This is a brief summary of the main points of the process. If you are in doubt as to what to do, or what your legal obligations are, then please ring us and ask for us to explain.

We trust that your project is an enjoyable process.

For further information ask for a copy of DBH booklet on 'The Building Act and You' or log on to www.consumerbuild.org.nz



For more information contact:
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