



# BUILDING LOCATION CERTIFICATE GUIDANCE

Every building consent for a new structure needs to have the location and finished floor level confirmed. How confirmation is achieved will vary depending on the complexity of work, location, planning rules and the methods available to confirm the location.

A building location certificate, also known as a siting certificate, is required for most building consents. Visit [www.dunedin.govt.nz/building-services-forms](http://www.dunedin.govt.nz/building-services-forms) to find the Dunedin City Council template form.

Please note, if using a different template make sure all the information required in the DCC template is included.

To discuss any of the information contained in this guidance, contact Building Services on 03 477 4000 or email [building@dcc.govt.nz](mailto:building@dcc.govt.nz)

## Know your boundaries

Certain properties have record of title with boundary locations that may not be well defined. Common examples are:

- properties that are 'Limited as to Parcels' – this is marked on the property record of title just below the main heading
- properties that have a legal description which includes a 'Section' or 'Part Section'
- properties that have a legal description which includes a 'Lot' with a suffix number less than 10000 (e.g., Lot 3 DP 8509).

Should you wish to carry out building work on such a property, it is recommended that you seek advice from a licensed cadastral surveyor (a specialist in establishing real property boundaries). Building without a qualified determination of boundary alignments may result in considerable risk for the property owner and construction delays while extensive re-surveying of the property is carried out. It is important that you discuss this issue with your surveyor to ensure that a building location certificate can be issued. It is possible that considerable additional cost may be incurred.

DCC site inspectors will not allow work to proceed unless a building location certificate confirms the location is within tolerance, or the discrepancy is approved by way of an amendment to the building consent.

## Pre-pour inspections

Pre-pour inspections by a DCC site inspector or a structural engineer are required if specified in the record of required site inspections issued with the building consent. The DCC will not accept pre-pour inspection bookings unless it is confirmed that any building location certificates required will be available at the time of the inspection.

Please check the record of required site inspections issued with the building consent to confirm if a building location certificate is required. If you are in doubt, please contact DCC Building Services.

## Work that may not require a building location certificate

- Alterations and extensions will generally not require surveyor confirmation; however, confirmation may still be required at the discretion of either the DCC building consent processor or site inspector. Factors influencing this decision include the scale and complexity of the work, steepness of the site, proximity of the extension to boundaries, setback lines, easements and drainage structures, and the ability to identify boundaries.
- Buildings in a rural zone where the set-out distances to boundaries are large and a small set-out discrepancy will have no effect on the completed building or neighbours, may be exempt from requiring a building location certificate. To be exempt, the proposed building work will need to meet the following criteria:
  - In a rural zone
  - 20m or more from any property boundary
  - 10m or more from any easement boundary
  - At least 5m inside any yard setbacks or recession planes specified under the District Plan or 2GP
  - Not subject to any height plane restrictions or side or front yard restrictions under the District Plan or 2GP (see rule 16.6.10)
  - Have set-out dimensions on the site plan provided in such a way that location can be easily confirmed by site inspectors
  - Any vertical levels are referenced to local benchmarks in such a way that they can be easily confirmed by site inspectors
  - Must be in general accordance with any resource consent requirements.

- Importance level 1 buildings, where the location of any adjacent boundaries, easements or rights of way can be accurately defined. Examples of accurately defined include:

- a string line between survey pegs or surveyed setback marks
- set out, carried out and confirmed in writing by a cadastral surveyor

Fences and hedges cannot be used to accurately define a boundary.

To claim this exemption, the site plan for building consent will need to either:

- show the location of survey pegs or setback marks that have been identified on site and will be used for site set out, or
- state that set outs will be carried out and confirmed in writing by a surveyor.

Importance level 1 buildings are defined in clause A3 of the New Zealand Building Code:

- *Buildings posing low risk to human life or the environment, or a low economic cost, should the building fail. These are typically small non-habitable buildings, such as sheds, barns, and the like, that are not normally occupied, though they may have occupants from time to time.*

### Information required with building consent applications

- Refer to the appropriate application checklist to determine what information needs to be included in the building consent application.  
Get one at [www.dunedin.govt.nz/building-services-forms](http://www.dunedin.govt.nz/building-services-forms)
- Heights are to be specified in NZVD2016.
- In some circumstances, a finished floor level based on a local reference point, such as the crown of the road, will be acceptable. This information must be clearly set out on the building consent application.
- Building consent application instructions require applicants to provide a site plan showing a range of information including distances to boundaries, easements, contours/or ground levels, proposed floor heights and the extent of cut and fill. We strongly advise that a topographical survey be undertaken so that information provided for building consent is accurate and achievable. If assumed site information does not match actual site information, delays and additional costs often result. An example would be a building breaching a height plane restriction, even though the plans do not indicate this. Work would have to be halted while resource consent and an amendment to the building consent are obtained.

### Key information for designers

The designer plays the greatest role in providing site and set out information to the DCC on behalf of the owner. The more complex the design is, the greater the risk involved with keeping the dimensions within the District Plan and Building Act restraints.

Surveyors are required to confirm that site layout matches the site plan, therefore it is critical that site plans contain the necessary information:

- Boundary offsets should lock in the position and rotation of the building, and make it clear what part of the building the measurement is taken from (i.e., slab edge or foundation)
- Heights are to be specified in NZVD2016
- Location of local benchmarks such as survey pegs or crown of the road are to be clearly defined.

Further guidance and examples can be found in our site plan guidance document here: [www.dunedin.govt.nz/building-services-forms](http://www.dunedin.govt.nz/building-services-forms)

- We strongly advise that a topographical survey be undertaken so that information provided for building consent is accurate and achievable.
- The designer will need to propose how site location is to be verified by way of one or more building location certificates. Examples include:
  - a location, floor level, boundary set back or a recession plane that needs to be checked within a single build under a single building location certificate
  - several structures proposed to be constructed and verified at different stages as part of a single building consent
  - different levels for one structure such as for commercial buildings or complex hill sites to be verified at different stages.

### Key information for surveyors

- The surveyor's primary role is to confirm that the building's location, finished floor level and height are in accordance with the building consent.
- The building location certificate survey should take place when foundation blockwork or boxing is in place (not profiles and string lines). The building location certificate must confirm that the construction location and height is as per the approved building consent documents prior to concrete pour. Horizontal setout accuracy must be within the tolerances set in the Cadastral Survey Rules 2021 and vertical level within  $\pm 3$ cm, where this can be achieved in terms of survey accuracy. Failure to meet this tolerance will result in the project being halted while an amendment to the building consent is obtained.
- You may be asked to provide a building location certificate for one or more specific stages that the designer or DCC have requested to be verified. A certificate needs to be filled out for each stage as per the instructions on the form. Please note, if the building consent has had any amendments or minor variations, the latest copy of the approved plan is to be used.
- The building location certificate has a section to declare any deviations from the approved consented dimensions. In this situation, the surveyor needs to clearly record the consented dimensions as well as the dimensions that are not in accordance with the building consent on a copy of the approved consent plan, preferably in centimeters. If they are not in accordance with the consent, the surveyor must advise the owner/builder that an amendment to the building consent is likely to be required and that the owner/builder should confirm this with DCC Building Services.
- If specifically required by DCC as part of the building consent, the building location certificate should also confirm if any recession planes will be breached and if so, by how much. Note, this confirmation would normally take place at construction/boxing stage, with the outcome being subject to the building being built according to the approved above-floor-level design. To reliably confirm compliance with recession planes, the surveyor may need to measure ground levels along the property boundary lines (if the surveyor cannot rely on the ground level information used for the design).
- The ground levels shown on the DCC Water Services Map (Foul Sewer Node Invert and Stormwater Node Invert) are not sufficiently accurate to use for the establishment of minimum floor levels.
- Heights are to be specified in NZVD2016.
- Building location certificate confirmation of retaining walls will generally be limited to boundary offsets and not include the length of the wall.

### Key information for homeowners

- This document is intended to provide guidance for various professions. If you require clarification on any of the terms used in this guidance, please seek advice from your building professional.
- The homeowner is legally responsible for the building consent and all building work on their land and should remain aware of what is happening with their building process.
- We strongly advise that a topographical survey be undertaken so that information provided for building consent is accurate and achievable.
- The easiest way to identify whether a building location certificate will be required during the build is to check your issued building consent documentation and the 'Record of required site inspections'. Remember to talk to your designer or builder if you have any concerns.
- If a building location certificate is required, the builder may ask you to engage a surveyor when foundation blockwork or boxing is in place (not profiles and string lines). Once the certificate has been produced by the surveyor, it is important the surveyor explains any deviations they have found with you. If everything is in order, an inspector will need to review the certificate on site at the next inspection, so it is important a copy is kept on site.
- The horizontal set-out accuracy for the building location certificate is required to be within the tolerances set out in the Cadastral Survey Rules 2021, which equates to  $\pm 6$ cm in many locations. The tolerance for vertical levels is  $\pm 3$ cm, where this can be achieved in terms of survey accuracy.
- In cases where a Building Location Certificate is not required and set out is confirmed by DCC inspector, the following tolerances will apply:
  - $\pm 6$ cm vertical and horizontal for residential, major facility, commercial, mixed-use and industrial zones
  - $\pm 6$ cm vertical and 100cm horizontal for large rural blocks over 100 ha (1000,000 m<sup>2</sup>)
  - $\pm 6$ cm vertical and 30cm horizontal for other locations including rural residential and smaller rural blocks.

We note that DCC inspectors will only confirm set out in non-critical situations, where any vertical levels are referenced to site benchmarks, rather than national datums such as NZVD 2016.

Zones can be determined using the following Planning Map (Appeals Version) ([arcgis.com](https://arcgis.com))

If the surveyor finds any deviations from the consented plans that are outside of set tolerances, an amendment will be required to the building consent, and/or a resource consent, which will require revised plans to be submitted for approval and payment of any applicable fees.

## Key information for builders

- Construct the building as per the approved (stamped) consented plans.
- Review the consent documentation and 'Record of required site inspections' and make sure that the stages that have been listed by the DCC processing officer are looked at by a surveyor, and that a building location certificate is provided for each stage.
- A DCC site inspector can also request a building location certificate if they are unable to verify location. Hedges, fences, other buildings or datums of unknown accuracy are unlikely to be adequate. The inspector will be clear in their instructions about what needs verification and about what if any, building work may continue while waiting for the certificate.
- The building location certificate survey should take place when foundation blockwork or boxing is in place (not profiles and string lines). The building location certificate must confirm that the construction location and height is as per the approved building consent documents prior to concrete pour. Horizontal setout accuracy must be within the tolerances set in the Cadastral Survey Rules 2021, which equates to  $\pm 6$  cm in many locations. The tolerance for vertical levels is  $\pm 3$  cm, where this can be achieved in terms of survey accuracy. Exceeding tolerances will result in the project being halted while an amendment to the building consent is obtained.
- In cases where a building location certificate is not required and set out is confirmed by DCC inspector, the following tolerances will apply:
  - $\pm 6$  cm vertical and horizontal for residential, major facility, commercial, mixed-use and industrial zones
  - $\pm 6$  cm vertical and 100 cm horizontal for large rural blocks over 100 ha (1000,000 m<sup>2</sup>)
  - $\pm 6$  cm vertical and 30 cm horizontal for other locations including rural residential and smaller rural blocks.

We note that DCC inspectors will only confirm set out in non-critical situations, where any vertical levels are referenced to site benchmarks, rather than national datums such as NZVD 2016.

Zones can be determined using the following Planning Map (Appeals Version) ([arcgis.com](https://arcgis.com))

- Once the building location certificate has been produced by the surveyor, it is important that the surveyor explains any deviations they have found (to the builder). If everything is in order, the DCC site inspector will review the certificate on site at the next inspection, so it is important a copy is kept on site.

If the surveyor finds any deviations from the approved plans in their building location certificate, an amendment will be required to the building consent and/or a resource consent, which will require revised plans to be submitted for approval and payment of any applicable fees.