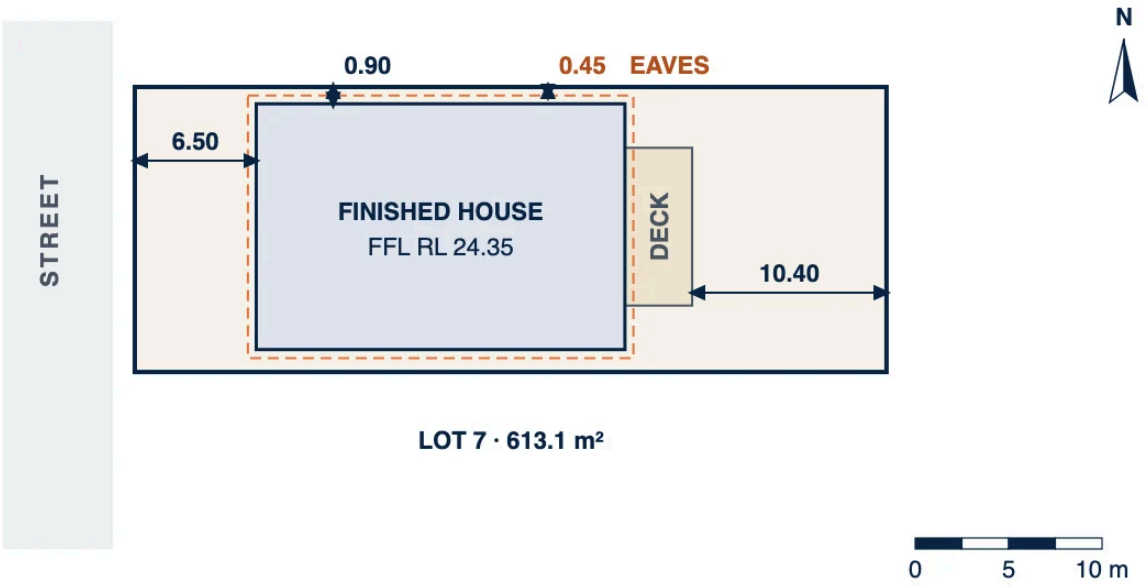


By Sydney Surveyor Solutions | 19 November 2026

Occupation certificate in NSW: the survey your certifier may ask for before you move in

An occupation certificate (OC) in NSW is the approval that lets you move into, or start using, a new building or a new part of one. Your principal certifier issues it at the end of the job, and before signing they need to be satisfied the building is consistent with your approval, which can mean a registered surveyor's measurements. The condition asking for that survey sits in your own development consent or complying development certificate, and it is often pages away from the word "occupation".

This is general information about the NSW process, not legal advice.

> **Key takeaways**
>
> - The OC is issued by your principal certifier, which is either the council or a registered certifier. You apply through the NSW Planning Portal.

> - Before issuing it, the certifier must be satisfied that the building is not inconsistent with your consent and that any preconditions in the consent are met.
> - Survey requirements come from your consent or CDC conditions and from the certifier, not from one fixed OC list. They differ from job to job.
> - The NSW standard residential condition asks for the footings to be measured and marked by a registered surveyor against the boundaries and easements while the work is under way.
> - Read your conditions before the slab goes in, so each survey is booked at the stage it is needed and the last one does not hold up the OC.

What an occupation certificate is, and who issues it

The NSW Government's Stage 6 guide says the OC "authorises the occupation and use of a new building or building section", and calls the final OC "the last step in the formal DA and construction process". Service NSW says that if you want to use, live or work in a new building, you must get one.

It is issued by your principal certifier. That is the council or a private registered certifier you appointed. You apply on the NSW Planning Portal, either at the same time as your DA or CDC, or later as a standalone application.

The Stage 6 guide lists what the certifier generally has to be satisfied about before signing:

- a development consent is in force
- the design and construction of the building is not inconsistent with the consent
- any preconditions in the consent, or in a planning agreement, have been met
- a construction certificate has been issued
- the building is suitable to occupy for its building class

The second and third points are where surveys come in. A certifier can see that a wall is straight. They cannot see, without measurements, whether it sits the distance from the side boundary that the approved plans show, or whether the ridge is under the approved height. Those measurements are what a building survey records.

The certifier also carries out a final inspection after the building work is finished. The Building Commission's practice advice for certifiers says this final inspection cannot be

handed to another certifier, and that if work carries on past an inspection that was needed, the OC may not be able to be issued.

Where a survey requirement comes from

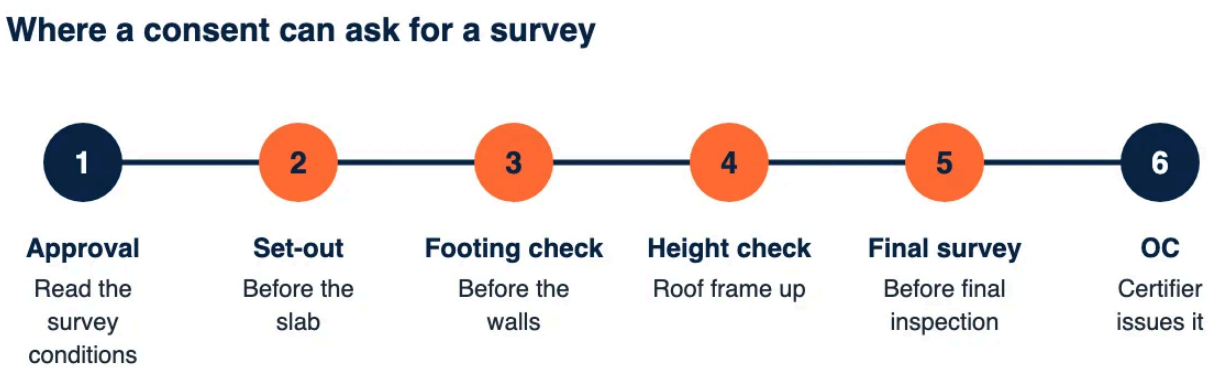
It comes from your approval, not from the OC itself. Councils and certifiers write survey conditions into the consent, and the certifier may ask for marks at other stages. Two published documents show the kind of wording to look for: the NSW Government's template conditions and a City of Sydney example.

The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's standard conditions of consent for residential development (November 2024) has a condition titled "Surveys by a registered surveyor". It says that while building work is being carried out, the positions of "all footings / foundations in relation to the site boundaries and any registered and proposed easements" must be measured and marked by a registered surveyor and provided to the principal certifier, along with "any marks that are required by the principal certifier" at other stages. Its stated reason is "to ensure buildings are sited and positioned in the approved location".

The same document has a section headed "Before the issue of an Occupation Certificate". Depending on the consent, it can include works-as-executed plans for the stormwater system, and a statement from a registered surveyor that no survey marks were removed or damaged during the work, or that any that were have been put back.

Larger Sydney developments can go further. The City of Sydney's recommended conditions of consent for a Green Square development (D/2023/849) say: "Prior to an Occupation Certificate being issued, a Registered Surveyor must provide certification that the height of the building accords with" the approved levels. Similar conditions in that document cover floor area and ceiling heights.

A house consent is usually simpler, but the pattern is the same: the condition names the measurement, the stage, and who it goes to.

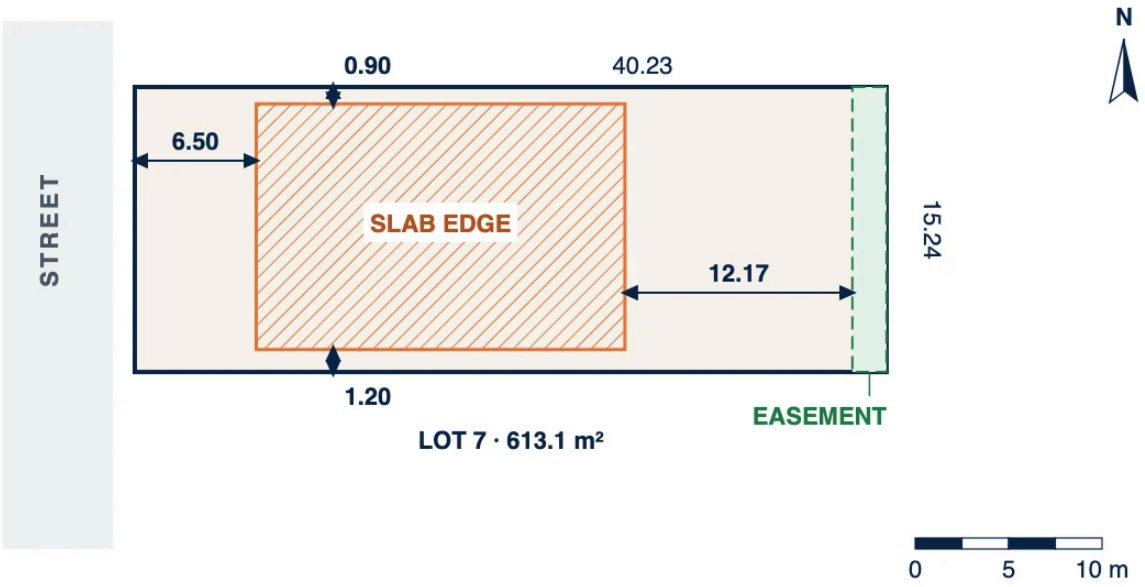


Which condition asks for which survey

Conditions use different words for similar things. This table matches the common ones to the survey that answers them and the stage to book it.

What the condition asks for	The survey that answers it	When to book it
Building positioned in the approved location, or set out by a registered surveyor	A construction set-out survey: the surveyor marks the building corners or gridlines on site from the approved plans	Before excavation or the slab pour
Footings or foundations measured and marked against the boundaries and easements	A position check of the footings or slab edge, with distances to each boundary given to the certifier	Once the footings or slab edge are in, before the walls go up
Building height or floor levels certified against the approved levels	A level check of the floor, ridge or parapet, reported against the approved figures	When the roof frame is up, or as the condition says
A survey of the finished building's position before the OC	A final survey showing the walls against the boundaries. Our building survey service covers this kind of position and height record	After external walls and roof are complete, before the final inspection
No survey marks disturbed, or disturbed marks re-established	A registered surveyor's statement on the survey marks near the site. Our guide to survey pegs and marks explains what these are	Before the OC, or the stage the consent names

What the condition asks for	The survey that answers it	When to book it
Works-as-executed plans for stormwater	Plans of the drainage as built, prepared to the council's requirements	Before the OC



Our guide to set-out survey costs covers the set-out stage in more detail. The standard condition also lets the certifier ask for marks at other stages. If your consent only refers to the approved plans, ask your certifier early whether they will want a survey before the final inspection.

How to find these conditions in your own consent

Your consent or CDC is usually a long document. The survey conditions are often in the "during building work" or "before occupation" parts. A short check before work starts saves a scramble at the end.

1. Open the notice of determination for your DA, or your CDC, and the stamped plans that go with it.
2. Search the document for "surveyor", "survey", "set out", "setback", "height", "RL" (reduced level, a height measured on the survey datum) and "occupation certificate".
3. For each condition you find, note the stage it applies to and who it goes to, usually the principal certifier.

4. Send the list to your builder and certifier, and ask the certifier which surveys they will want before the final inspection.
5. Book the set-out survey before the slab, and the final survey for when the external walls and roof are finished.

If a condition is unclear, note it and ask your certifier what they need to see.

Not sure which survey your consent asks for? Send us the address and your consent or stamped plans, and we will send a free quote for the surveys it mentions.

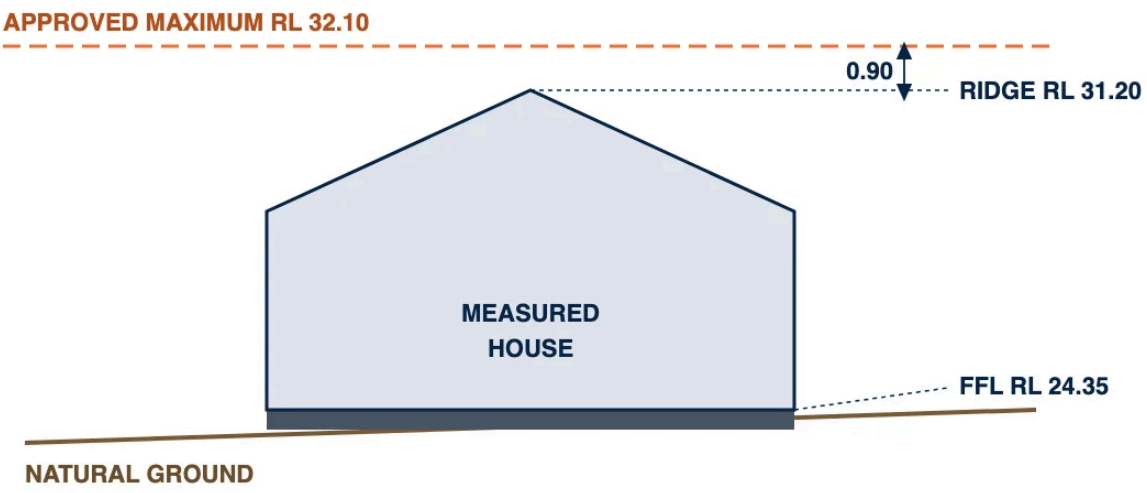
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You can upload your consent or plans on the form. Rated 5.0 on **Google** from 27 reviews.

If the survey shows the building is not where the plans say

Sometimes a final survey shows a wall a little closer to the boundary than approved, or a level a little higher. The survey does not decide whether that matters; the certifier does, against your consent.

The Building Commission's practice advice is clear on one point: a building information certificate "can't be used to approve unauthorised work for the purpose of getting an occupation certificate". Work that does not match the approval has to be dealt with through the proper amendment process. That takes time, which is why the earlier checks matter. A set-out before the slab and a position check at footing stage catch a problem while it can still be fixed on site.



What it costs and when to book it

Our guide price for a building survey is $1,200 to $2,500 per building, depending on the building and what the certifier wants recorded. A set-out depends on the number of points and visits. Your quote will be based on the address and your consent conditions.

On timing, the useful rule is to book each survey for the stage the condition names, and to book the final one before you book the certifier's final inspection. The OC application itself goes through the Planning Portal, and the certifier's fees must be paid before it is issued.

Frequently asked questions

Who issues an occupation certificate in NSW?

Your principal certifier. That is either the council or the registered certifier you appointed for the work. You apply for it on the NSW Planning Portal.

Can I move in before the occupation certificate is issued?

No. Service NSW says you must get an occupation certificate if you want to use, live in or work in a new building or change the use of an existing one.

What is the difference between an interim, partial and final occupation certificate?

Interim and partial are two names for an OC that covers part of a building. The NSW Government's Stage 6 guide says interim, while Service NSW and the Building Commission say partial. It lets you use a finished part of a staged job. The final OC covers the whole building, and the Building Commission says it must be obtained within five years of a partial one.

How much does an occupation certificate cost?

There is no single NSW price. Your certifier sets their own fee, whether that is the council or a private certifier. On top of that, the NSW Planning Portal charges an Occupation Certificate Portal Fee of $47 for the 2026/27 financial year, which it says is separate from the fees charged by councils and private certifiers. Ask your certifier what their fee covers.

Does every occupation certificate need a survey?

No. It depends on your consent or CDC conditions and on what the certifier needs to be satisfied the building is consistent with the approval. The NSW standard residential conditions include a survey of the footings during the build, so check yours early.

What if my certifier asks for a survey I did not plan for?

Ask them exactly what they need measured and at what stage. Then send us the address and the request, and we will quote for that survey.

How much does the final survey cost?

Our guide for a building survey is $1,200 to $2,500 per building. The price depends on the building and what the certifier wants recorded.

Before your final inspection

- Find every survey condition in your consent or CDC, and note its stage.
- Book the set-out survey before the slab is poured.
- Get the footing or slab position check done before the walls go up, if your consent asks for it.
- Book the final survey for when the external walls and roof are finished.
- Give each survey report to your principal certifier as soon as you have it.

Getting close to the end of your build? Send us the address and your consent conditions, and we will send a free quote for the final survey your certifier has asked for.

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You can upload your consent or plans on the form. Rated 5.0 on **Google** from 27 reviews. More **about Sydney Surveyor Solutions**.

Sources checked 19 November 2026: NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Stage 6: Get your Occupation Certificate; Service NSW, Apply for an occupation certificate; Building Commission NSW, Frequently asked questions for building certifiers; NSW Planning Portal, NSW Planning Portal service fees; NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Standard conditions of consent: Residential (November 2024); City of Sydney, Recommended Conditions of Consent, D/2023/849. General information only, not legal advice.