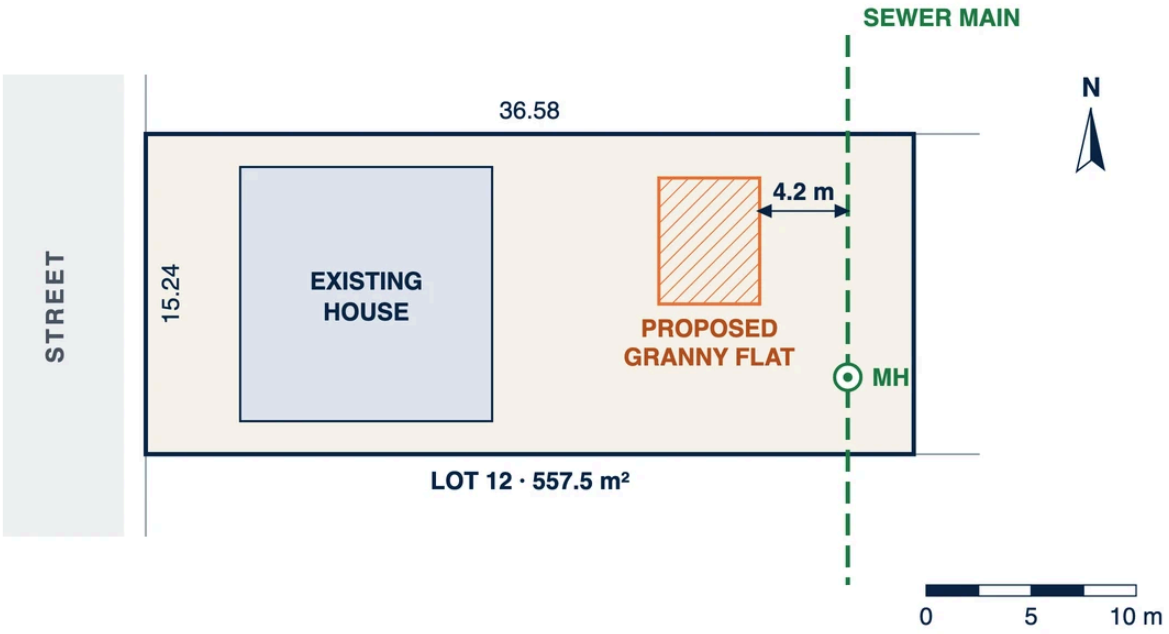


By Sydney Surveyor Solutions | 10 November 2026

Sydney Water Tap in: finding the pipes on your block before your plans go in

If your extension, granny flat, pool or new house needs approval from council or a certifier, it needs Sydney Water's approval too. You apply online through Sydney Water Tap in, and your plans have to show where your works sit against Sydney Water's pipes. The catch is that Sydney Water's own diagram of those pipes, in its words, "doesn't pinpoint the exact physical location".

It is general information, not plumbing, engineering or legal advice.

Key takeaways

- Sydney Water says that if you need building approval from a council or certifier, you need its approval too, and that anyone planning to build or excavate needs its approval before work starts. You apply through Tap in.
- Its approval list covers houses, granny flats, pools, sheds, decks, fences, driveways, landscaping and retaining walls, plus excavation, demolition and

ground changes.

- A service location diagram shows that pipes are there, not exactly where. Only a Sydney Water listed Service Protection Reporter can prepare a service protection report, which pegs out its pipes on site.
- Your building plans must show your works and the location of Sydney Water's pipes. A survey of your block gives the designer the boundaries, levels and visible covers to draw against.
- Sydney Water says it approves around 70% of building plans automatically. Plans that affect its pipes are referred to a water servicing coordinator.

Does your project need Sydney Water approval?

Yes, if council or a certifier is involved, and also for the other works on Sydney Water's list. Sydney Water's Tap in page says: "If you need building approval from a council or certifier, you need to get our approval too." Its building plan approval page goes further: "If you're planning to build or excavate, you need us to approve your project before work starts."

That page lists the kinds of work that need it:

- houses, granny flats and commercial buildings
- pools, sheds, decks and fences
- driveways, landscaping and retaining walls
- excavation, demolition and changes to the ground

Sydney Water's approval is about protecting its pipes, so it is a separate step from the council or certifier approval. Its approval page warns that if you start work without its approval and damage its assets, "you may face fines and repair costs".



For complex projects, a listed Service Protection Reporter can peg out the pipe before the plans are finalised.

Four documents that show the pipes on your block, and what each cannot tell you

Sydney Water and Before You Dig Australia (BYDA) offer several documents. They answer different questions. Only the last one, the service protection report, fixes where the pipe actually sits on your block.

Document	What it shows	Where to get it	What it cannot tell you
BYDA plans	Sydney Water's assets in the area, as colour PDF plans	Free, by lodging an enquiry with Before You Dig Australia	Exact positions and depths: Sydney Water says locations and depths on its plans "should be taken as a guide only"
Service location diagram or print	Sydney Water's pipes and structures on the property and the point of connection to its wastewater system, which may be on another property	Bought in Tap in, through a Property Link broker, or through BYDA	Sydney Water says it "only indicates the presence of our pipes. It doesn't pinpoint the exact physical location."
Sewer service diagram	The private wastewater pipes on the property, with buildings and pipes shown	Bought in Tap in or through a Property Link broker	Pools are not shown, and it covers your private pipes, not the

Document	What it shows	Where to get it	What it cannot tell you
			location of Sydney Water's main
Service protection report	Sydney Water's assets identified and pegged out on site, so they can be plotted accurately onto your plans	From a listed Service Protection Reporter, or through a water servicing coordinator	It covers Sydney Water's assets, not your boundaries or ground levels

Sydney Water's pages use both names, diagram and print, for the document bought in Tap in. The descriptions come from its Before You Dig guide, its certificates, documents and diagrams page, its building plan approval page and its technical guidelines for building over and adjacent to pipe assets (October 2025, sections 1.7 and 1.8).

If your property has a registered easement for Sydney Water, it may also appear on the title. Our guide to Section 88B instruments explains how easements are recorded.

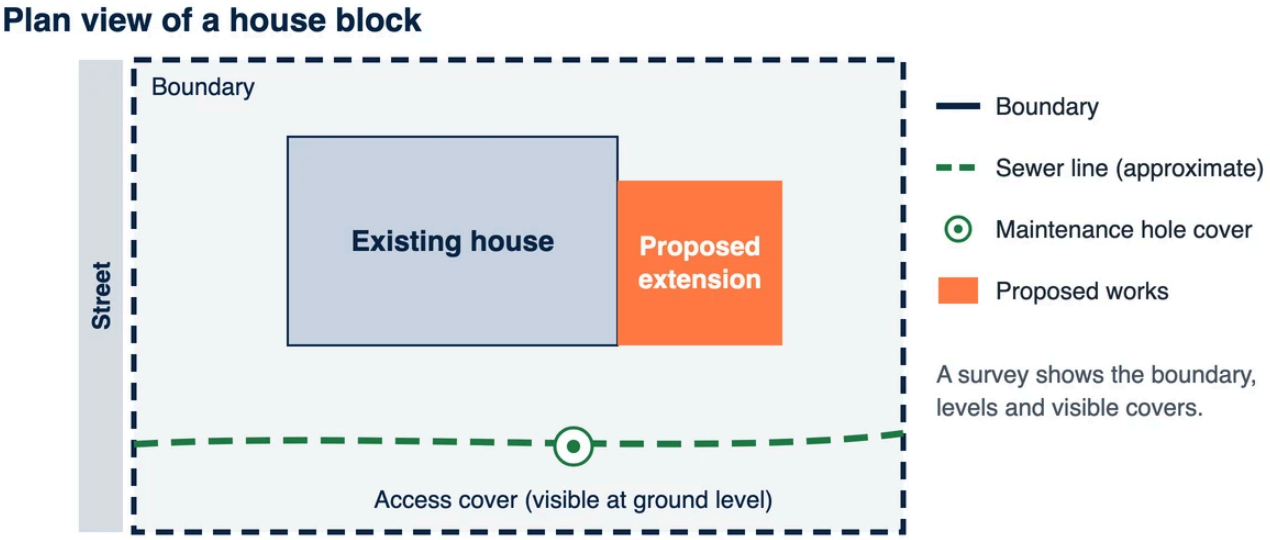
Getting the pipes onto your plans

Sydney Water's technical guidelines say your building plans "must describe in detail your proposed works and the location of Sydney Water pipe assets" (section 1.9). Two different things go into that.

For complex projects, Sydney Water points to a service protection report. In its words, the report "identifies and pegs out on-site Sydney Water assets", and "Only Sydney Water listed Service Protection Reporters can prepare these reports." Sydney Water publishes the list on its listed providers page. You can go to a listed reporter, or get the report through a water servicing coordinator. We are not on that list and do not prepare these reports.

The block itself is a separate job. Your designer draws your works against the boundaries, the ground levels and what can be seen on the ground. Sydney Water's maintenance structures, the maintenance holes and shafts it uses to reach its pipes, "usually have an access cover at ground level" (section 1.3.1). A survey of your block's levels, pits and structures records the visible covers and pits within the agreed scope, along with the levels and existing buildings. It does not locate a buried pipe; that is the reporter's job. For where the boundaries sit, see our boundary survey service.

For example, a granny flat is planned near a maintenance hole cover in the back yard. The BYDA plans and the service location diagram show that a sewer crosses the rear of the block, but not exactly where. The survey records the cover, the levels and the existing buildings, within its agreed scope. If the coordinator asks for a service protection report, a listed reporter pegs out the sewer. The designer then draws the granny flat against both.



Once the plans are approved, the same levels guide the set-out of the new work on site. If you are adding a granny flat, our granny flat survey guide covers the other site checks.

Drawing up plans for Sydney Water and council? Send us the address and a short note about your project. We will tell you which survey your designer needs and send a free quote.

GET A FREE SITE SURVEY QUOTE · **CALL (02) 5114 2551**

You can upload your plans or service location diagram on the form. Rated 5.0 on **Google** from 32 reviews.

What happens when you apply in Tap in

Tap in is Sydney Water's online service, where you can "Purchase service and wastewater diagrams, request building plan approvals, apply for water connections and

disconnections". You lodge your plans there, and the Tap in page says Sydney Water approves "around 70% of building plans automatically".

Sydney Water's building plan approval page sets out what happens next:

1. **Your plans do not affect Sydney Water's assets.** You get "immediate on-screen approval in Tap in".
2. **Your plans affect its assets.** Sydney Water refers you to a water servicing coordinator "to assess and approve your plans". The coordinator tells you how long this will take.
3. **Your plans need a detailed review.** The coordinator may submit an "out of scope" application, and Sydney Water says "We generally send our conditions for approval within 42 days."

Sydney Water also warns that you may need to pay for plan checks, inspections and service connections on top of the approval fee.

Building near or over a sewer

Sydney Water's technical guidelines set the limits, and Sydney Water or the coordinator decides each case.

- **Small sewers:** Sydney Water will "consider allowing you to build certain structures over" its reticulation sewers with diameters of 300 mm and smaller, unless a specific diagram in the guidelines says otherwise (section 1.5). Larger sewers up to 750 mm are covered only in specific cases, such as very deep sewers (diagram 22), so ask your coordinator early.
- **Large sewers:** the guidelines do not allow permanent structures over or next to sewers wider than 750 mm. Sydney Water says anyone who still wants to build over one should talk to it early, expect substantial restrictions and get a specialist engineering assessment (section 1.5).
- **Not allowed:** Sydney Water won't allow building over pressure pipes, sewer property connection points and maintenance structures, or other critical assets such as tunnels (section 1.5.1).

If you build next to a pipe, Sydney Water says you must satisfy it that the pipe is protected and that your works will not stop it reaching the pipe for maintenance (section 1.6). The guidelines include diagrams for specific situations, so ask your coordinator which applies rather than relying on a general rule.

Frequently asked questions

What is Sydney Water Tap in?

Tap in is Sydney Water's online service where you can purchase service and wastewater diagrams, request building plan approvals, and apply for water connections and disconnections. You lodge your building plans there.

Does the service location diagram show exactly where the pipe is?

No. Sydney Water's technical guidelines say the diagram "only indicates the presence of our pipes. It doesn't pinpoint the exact physical location." Where the exact position matters, a listed Service Protection Reporter pegs the pipe out on site.

What is the difference between a service location print and a sewer service diagram?

The service location print shows Sydney Water's pipes and structures on the property and the point of connection to its wastewater system. The sewer service diagram shows the private wastewater pipes on the property, with buildings and pipes but not pools. Both are bought in Tap in or through a Property Link broker.

How much does Sydney Water building plan approval cost?

Sydney Water's developer pricing page lists the building plan approval charge as $24.15 for 2026-27 ($23.20 in 2025-26). Plan checks, inspections, service connections and the fee for an out-of-scope review can be extra.

What if my fence, deck or shed is already built?

Sydney Water's approval list includes fences, decks and sheds. If work is already done, ask Sydney Water or a water servicing coordinator what it needs. Sydney Water says unapproved work that damages its assets may bring fines and repair costs.

How much does the survey cost and how long does it take?

It depends on the block and what your designer needs. Send us the address and a note about your plans for a free quote.

Before you lodge

- If your project is on Sydney Water's list, or needs council or certifier approval, plan for Sydney Water approval.
- Get the free BYDA plans and, if you need them, the service location diagram from Tap in.
- If a pipe or maintenance hole is near your works, ask a water servicing coordinator or a listed reporter about a service protection report.
- Have the block surveyed so your designer can draw against the real boundaries, levels and covers.
- Lodge in Tap in and keep the approval with your council or certifier paperwork.

Get the block right before the plans go in. Tell us the address and what you are building. We will tell you which survey you need and send a free quote.

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You can upload your plans or service location diagram on the form. Rated 5.0 on **Google** from 32 reviews. More **about Sydney Surveyor Solutions**.

Sources checked 10 November 2026: Sydney Water, Sydney Water Tap in; Sydney Water, Building plan approval; Sydney Water, Technical guidelines: Building over and adjacent to pipe assets (October 2025); Sydney Water, Certificates, documents and diagrams; Sydney Water, Listed providers; Sydney Water, Developer pricing; Sydney Water, Before You Dig: avoid damaging our pipes; Before You Dig Australia. General information only, not plumbing, engineering or legal advice.