



What is a building consent and why do I need one for ground improvement?

A building consent is a requirement of the Building Act 2004, which aims to ensure that construction, alteration, demolition and maintenance of new and existing buildings is of a suitable standard. Because ground improvement is related to building foundations, a building consent or a building consent exemption is required, to ensure that the ground improvement works are suitable for the structure that is intended for the site.

Who can grant building consents?

It is recommended to apply for a building consent for the construction of the ground improvement and for a new house.

In Christchurch city, a building consent must be granted by the Christchurch City Council (CCC) prior to undertaking ground improvement. If ground improvement is intended to be constructed prior to planning the construction of a new house, CCC may grant a building consent exemption. This exemption may only be granted as long as the planned ground improvement is in accordance with the April 2015 update of the MBIE guidance on Repairing and rebuilding houses affected by the Canterbury earthquakes.

Waimakariri District Council (WDC) and Selwyn District Council (SDC) do not require building consents prior to undertaking ground improvement works. The constructed ground improvement and house plans are assessed to ensure that the ground improvement and house foundations are compatible with the Building Act 2004.

To ensure compatibility, it is recommended that ground improvement and the new house design be done prior to the application for building consent and any construction works begin on site.

How do I get a building consent?

Application for a building consent can be made to the local council. For a building consent to be granted for ground improvement, a Chartered Professional Geotechnical Engineer will need to provide the local council with site investigation information and a suitable design of the proposed ground improvement.

The design may be in accordance with the MBIE guidance, or may be a bespoke design that the engineer can show to be suitable for the ground conditions on the property. The ground improvement design must also be compatible with the proposed new house foundations (an engineer and/or licenced building practitioner will provide the details).

Other consents and approvals

It is important to note that additional consents and approvals may be required before undertaking the works.