Latest building consent news from Selwyn

In this newsletter

Topics this time are mainly focussed on what's happening out on site:

- Inspections to flood affected areas
- Site scrape inspections
- Boundary peg removal
- Soak pit size and location
- Sewer laterals
- Truss as built – web (lateral) bracing
- Continuous top plates
- Project information memorandums
- Workload

Inspections to flood affected areas

Due to the recent flood damaged roads and bridges causing disruptions and time delays we won't be able to reach some areas, so we've had to temporarily make some changes to our inspections:

Limited inspections per week

- High country villages on **Wednesdays**
    - Includes Arthurs Pass village, Castle Hill township
    - Doesn't include other high country areas

- South of State Highway 1 and west of Selwyn River on **Tuesdays and Thursday mornings only**
    - Includes Irwell, Doyleston, Leeston, Southbridge, Dunsandel, Rakaia Huts

No inspections until road access improves/re-established

- Area bounded by Waimakariri River, Rakaia River and Kowhai River (encompassing areas north of Springfield township, west of State Highway 73 and north of State Highway 77)
    - Includes Windwhistle, Lake Coleridge, Kowhai Bush, Whitecliffs
    - Doesn't include Coalgate and Glentunnel

Inspections to all other areas continue as normal, including in the area between State Highway 1 and State Highway 77.

Please note that we will review this on a weekly basis – so please keep in touch with our customer services team for updates via 0800 Selwyn or email contactus@selwyn.govt.nz, or sign up for our newsletters here.

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Site scrape inspections

If your building consent has a site scrape listed on the inspection schedule you need to ensure this is carried out.

We appreciate that it is harder to schedule inspections and maintain your project timeframes at present. So short term we will accept site scrape inspection reports from a Chartered Professional Engineer to help the industry get new builds underway.

Note: this only applies to site scrape inspections.

What is involved to make this happen?

- Your chosen Chartered Professional Engineer inspects and signs off your site scrape
- You need to upload a copy of the engineer's site report under required documents in AlphaOne before you booking your next inspection with us.

We will not charge you for inspections that we haven't carried out – only the time taken to review the engineers site notice. So the cost of your site scrape inspection will be credited to you at the end of your project at code compliance reconciliation (as long as you do not incur any other re inspection costs).

If you want a Chartered Professional Engineer to complete your site scrape inspections on a regular basis, you'll need to confirm this clearly in your building consent application documents. We can then confirm on your issued building that construction monitoring is being carried out by the engineer, ensuring all parties are aware of this.

Boundary peg removal

Boundary pegs need to be identified at the time of the first inspection. If these are not visible then a building location certificate (BLC) may be required and requested.

There have been recent issues with correct siting of buildings. The owner and builder are responsible for making sure that buildings are constructed in the correct location

- as indicated on the issued Building Consent, and
- in relation to the survey pegs.

Siting is a Resource Management Act requirement; not a Building Act requirement. This is why our inspectors ask site personnel to verify the siting and that the building is located in the correct position.

We encourage developers to

- discuss with fencing contractors that survey pegs are not tampered with when installing boundary fences, and
- ensure that a suitably qualified registered surveyor re-instates survey pegs if they are moved or damaged during the fencing process.

Only a registered surveyor is allowed to move or re-instate survey pegs.

It is an offence to take, destroy or alter the position or markings of a survey marker under Section 55 of the Cadastral Surveyors Act 2002:

55 Interference with survey marks
(1) Every person commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding $2,000 who knowingly or recklessly takes, destroys, or alters the position of, or markings on, a survey mark that has been placed or set up—
(a) for the control of cadastral surveys; or
(b) for the purposes of any cadastral survey conducted under, or for the purposes of, this Act or another Act.
(2) Every person commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding $500 who (having taken, destroyed, or altered the position of, or markings on, a survey mark) fails to notify the taking, destruction, or alteration to the Surveyor-General as soon as practicable after doing so.
(3) Every person who is convicted of an offence against subsection (1) or subsection (2) is also liable to pay the costs (including any associated cadastral survey costs) of repairing, replacing, or restoring to its proper position, or restoring the markings on, the survey mark concerned.
(4) The costs in subsection (3) are—
(a) the costs as assessed by a District Court Judge; and
(b) recoverable as if they were a fine.
(5) This section does not apply to anything done with the prior written approval of the Surveyor-General.
(6) The Surveyor-General may give approval under subsection (5) subject to any terms and conditions that the Surveyor-General thinks fit relating to—
(a) repairing, replacing, or restoring to its proper position, or restoring the markings on, a survey mark; or
(b) making payment for any of those things to be done.

Soak pit size and location

When we provided information on the location of drains in our newsletter in March 2021 we didn't cover soak pits – so the information below should help clarify.

With smaller sites more common it is becoming more challenging for drainlayers to locate drains and soak pits where they do not affect foundations and/or other property.

We check that your soak pit size is adequate for the catchment area of both the roof and any hardstand area when processing your consent.

If what is installed is different to the approved plan then the drainlayer needs to justify this when they submit their PS3 and as-built drainage by providing

- evidenced of why the size has changed, and
- an updated calculation showing that what has been installed is adequate for the catchment area.

Please also ensure that soak pits are not located inside easements for other services, because this will create problems if the services need to be dug up at a later date.

From this point forward our inspectors will be

- asking for the soak pit size to be included on the drainage as-built,
- verifying it's the same size as what's been consented, and
- checking the proximity to buildings in relation to ground bearing – rule as per NZS3604, 45 degree from underside of footing to the bottom of the soak pit (distance vs depth).

If the soak pit is within the foundation footing area you may be asked to have a Chartered Professional Engineer to check the undermining of the foundation.

Sewer laterals

Make sure that sewer lateral connections are located and the depth confirmed before laying drains. Information on the location of cables, pipes and other utility assets can be checked online at BeforeUDig.

You need to confirm the supplied site **lateral depth** on site – don't assume that Council supplied plan depths are correct.

This should be done via site excavation by the proposed installer (certifying drainlayer) before any under floor drainage works is installed or detailed in design.

You may not be able to achieve the required grade without physical confirmation of depth before installing the wastepipes.

Where the grade can't be achieved the underfloor wastepipe connections will be null and void or a need a pump chamber installed at the owners additional cost.

Truss as-built – web (lateral) bracing

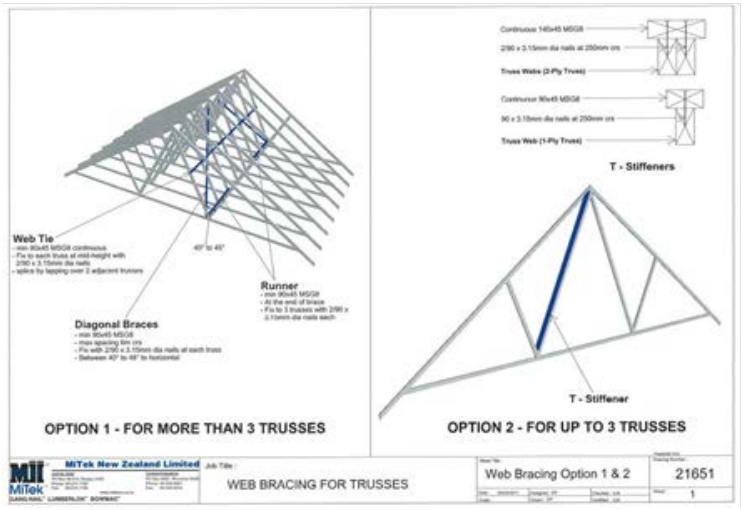
When truss designers/fabricators specific the type of lateral bracing (noted as LB on the truss list) for the trusses based on the number of trusses in the run that need the webs strengthened they should be

- adding the lateral bracing detail on as-built for use on site, and
- ensuring these details are detailed on a job by job basis.

When this detail is added to truss as-builts it implies that some webs are too long under compression loads and may buckle sideways. So the long web needs lateral bracing to prevent buckling – which may be

- a 'T-stiffener' nailed to web edge for a few trusses, or
- a web tie (at mid-length of affected webs) with diagonal braces at each end for a run of trusses.

See MiTek drawing 21651 Web Bracing for Trusses.



Continuous top plates

Check that isolated bracing elements are connected at top plate level to an external wall – see BRANZ Build 162 - Design right: Isolated Brace Elements.

We are finding that this is not consistently carried out on site.

The figures below provide some options on how to achieve this.

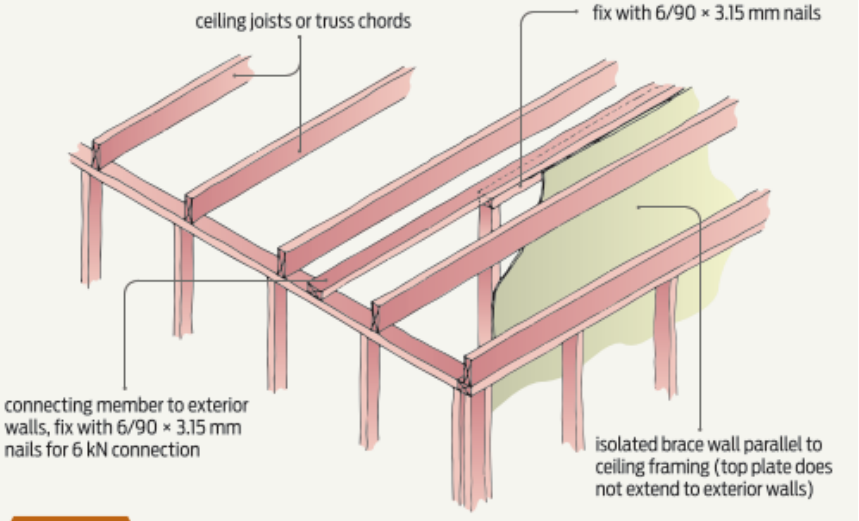


Figure 1 **Brace wall connection when wall is parallel to ceiling framing.**

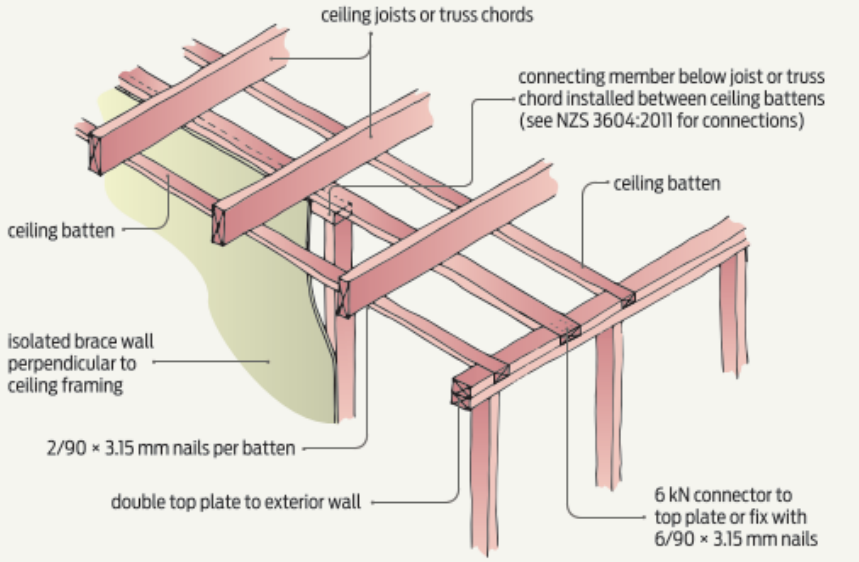


Figure 2 **Brace wall connection below ceiling framing when wall is perpendicular to ceiling framing.**

Also to do with bracing

- Calculation of wall bracing – see BRANZ Build 133 – Wall bracing
- Use of dragon ties for bracing – see BRANZ Build 169 – Sloped dragon ties.

Project information memorandums

Are you getting the value you or your customer needs from these? In many cases we don't think so.

PIMs are voluntary and may not be needed for your project, yet we're continuing to see a rise in requests for them.

Some questions to think about when you're thinking of applying for a project information memorandum (PIM) or a BC with a PIM

- If you're applying for one at the same time as your building consent then there is likely to be very little information in the PIM that you don't already know
- If the subdivision development doesn't have s224 yet then the information on the PIM isn't going to be of much benefit, with information such as services and site fill not yet available and PIM content based on information council holds on the underlying allotment.

PIMs can however be helpful at the design phase of complex projects. In those instances the best time to apply for one is **before** you start the developed design process. If you wait until you submit your building consent this could lead to more cost and delays if the PIM shows items you have not considered in your design.

More information on PIMs is available on our website here.

Update on workload

We'd like to thank everyone for their patience with the challenges we're facing with granting consents on time, and carrying out inspections.

The situation is still very fluid for us, with impacts like the flooding event not helping with us having to divert people to assist with this.

We'd love to make things happen faster for everyone; we just don't have the resources available currently to do the work any quicker than we are at the moment. Our people are already working overtime to help get through the work. The industry is stretched across the country, with a lack of qualified people available nationally to process building consents and inspect building work.

What's the current situation?

- Consent numbers received on a month by month basis continues at high levels and adding to our backlog
- Processing is extending well over the 20 working day statutory timeframe, sitting at double currently – so plan ahead and allow a large buffer in your planning
- We are receiving high volumes of required documents – you can help your inspections and CCC by uploading these before booking each inspection, allowing our inspectors to check them off at the inspection rather than after the inspection
- Inspection bookings have been limited lately due to public holidays and the flooding event

What are we doing to help?

- We've been trying to recruit experienced people since last year with limited success due to there not being a pool of qualified and trained people available
- The good news is that we're taking on 6 new cadets in July and putting them through an intensive training programme – and although you won't see an immediate impact, you'll slowly start to see some changes as they come up to speed
- We're continuing to try to source new contractors, however are finding that they are also at maximum capacity
- Our professional partnership programme is being trialled, with a number of partners already on board, allowing us to process their consents in a faster timeframe – noting that they don't jump the queue

Why the difference in timeframes for consents submitted around the same time?

- The BCA guidelines are that the queue is formed based on statutory working days and staff pick up a building consent to process from the top of the list (highest working days) within their established competency level
- Our staff have different skill levels/competency and take different amounts of time to process consents
- Equally the content and quality of each building consent can vary greatly from the next so this is not an exact science
- Our intent is to process consents as close to the highest statutory day count as possible at all times.

We can only assure you that we're trying the best we can to work through applications as quickly and efficiently as we can, and apologise for the delays.