SITE CERTIFIED
CERTIFICATORES AEDIFICIORUM

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Complying Development Certificate Checklist

Retaining Walls, Excavation and Fill on a Residential Lot

The documents below are needed before Site Certified can issue your Complying Development Certificate (CDC). Applications are lodged through the NSW Planning Portal with Site Certified Pty Ltd nominated as the certifier.

Items in the first table are the minimum needed to lodge and get your assessment started. The rest can follow, but the CDC cannot be issued until every applicable item is in.

> **Low walls may not need approval.** Under clauses 2.29 and 2.30 of the Codes SEPP, earthworks and retaining walls can be exempt development where, among other things, the cut or fill and the wall are no more than 600 mm high, the work is at least 1 m from each boundary, the wall is at least 1 m from any registered easement, sewer main or water main, and walls are at least 2 m apart. Anything bigger needs a CDC or DA.

Required documents

Minimum to lodge

	Document	Description
☐	**Planning Portal application**	CDC application lodged on the NSW Planning Portal, with Site Certified nominated as certifier. Include the estimated cost of works (materials and labour, incl. GST). Every registered owner must give consent.
☐	**Certification agreement**	Site Certified's signed Agreement for the Performance of Certification Work. This written contract is required under the *Building and Development Certifiers Act 2018* before we can start.
☐	**Plans**	A site plan showing each wall dimensioned to boundaries, buildings, easements and sewer lines; sections or elevations showing wall height, existing and finished ground levels and the depth of cut or fill; and the wall type (for example masonry block, concrete sleeper, crib or timber).
☐	**Survey levels**	Levels to AHD along the line of each wall and at the boundary, by a registered surveyor, so cut and fill depths can be checked.
☐	**Title search, Deposited Plan and 88B instrument**	Confirms ownership and any restrictions, covenants or easements on the lot. Available from NSW Land Registry Services through an information broker, or we can order them for you.
☐	**Section 10.7 Planning Certificate**	A current full certificate (sections 10.7(2) and (5)) from council. Confirms zoning, whether complying development is permitted, and any hazards affecting the lot. Apply to your council, or online through the NSW Planning Portal where your council offers it.

Required before the CDC is issued

	Document	Description
☐	**Structural engineering**	Any wall supporting more than 600 mm of cut or fill must be certified by a professional engineer as structurally sound, including for lateral soil load. Provide the engineer's design to AS 4678, or the engineered specification for a proprietary wall system showing footing depth, post spacing and drainage for the height being built.
☐	**Drainage details**	Subsoil drainage behind the wall, connected to the site stormwater system, designed so surface water and ground water are not redirected onto a neighbouring property.

	Document	Description
☐	**Water authority approval**	Your water authority's building plan approval (for example Sydney Water Tap in), confirming the work does not affect sewer or water assets.
☐	**Long Service Levy receipt**	Charged at 0.25% of the cost of the building work (incl. GST) where that cost is $250,000 or more. Once the application is lodged, we will confirm the amount and send you the payment details. Pay online through Service NSW. The CDC cannot be released until it is paid.

Rules the design must meet

Standard	Requirement (Codes SEPP cl 3.30, Housing Code)
Excavation depth	No deeper than 1 m within 1 m of a boundary, 2 m between 1 m and 1.5 m from a boundary, and 3 m beyond that. Limited to 1 m on Class 3 or 4 acid sulfate soils or within 40 m of a natural waterbody.
Fill height	No more than 1 m for a dwelling or addition, or 600 mm for other work, unless the fill is contained within the building footprint. Fill deeper than 150 mm outside the footprint is limited to 50% of the landscaped area.
Wall height	No higher than the cut or fill it supports.
Spacing	At least 2 m, measured horizontally, from any other retaining wall on the site.
Batters	The toe or top of an embankment or batter must be more than 1 m from side and rear boundaries.
Installation	Built to the engineer's design and any manufacturer's specification.

Site-specific documents

Your certifier may ask for further documents once the application is lodged and assessed. These are the most common, usually triggered by the Section 10.7 Planning Certificate.

	Document	When it applies
☐	**Geotechnical report**	Sloping sites, deep cuts or a lot in a landslip or slip risk area. Sets out any extra design requirements for the wall and its footings.
☐	**Flood certificate**	Lot is a flood control lot. Issued by council or a suitably qualified hydraulic engineer, confirming the part of the lot being built on is not a floodway, flow path, flood storage, high hazard or high risk area and that the work meets the complying development flood requirements (Codes SEPP cl 3.5).
☐	**Arborist report**	Work, including excavation or fill, is within 3 m of a tree on the lot or on a neighbouring lot. Confirms whether the tree is protected and how it will be kept safe (Codes SEPP cl 3.33).
☐	**Engineer's report for adjoining walls**	A wall is to be built within 900 mm of a boundary. A professional engineer's report on how neighbouring walls will be supported must be lodged with the application, and the work built to it (Codes SEPP cl 3.32).
☐	**Barrier details**	A path, driveway, deck or other trafficable surface runs along the top of the wall with a drop of 1 m or more. A barrier is required (ABCB Housing Provisions Part 11.3).
☐	**Tree permit**	A tree or other vegetation that needs council approval is to be removed or pruned. The permit must be held before the CDC is issued (Codes SEPP cl 1.18).
☐	**Subsidence Advisory NSW approval**	Lot is in a mine subsidence district. Approval is required under the *Coal Mine Subsidence Compensation Act 2017* to erect or alter structures, and must be held before the CDC is issued (Codes SEPP cl 1.18).
☐	**Owners corporation or community association approval**	Property is in a strata or community scheme. Prior written approval is required for work to the lot.

Before work starts

We need the items below no later than 2 days before work begins. Anything not supplied with the application becomes a requirement of the CDC to be met before work begins.

	Document	Description
☐	**Principal Certifier appointment**	Site Certified must be appointed as Principal Certifier before any work begins.
☐	**Principal contractor details**	**Licensed builder:** must hold a licence covering the work. Where the contract is over $20,000 (incl. GST), provide the Home Building Compensation (HBC) insurance certificate. More information at SIRA. **OR** **Owner-builder:** a permit is required where the work (materials and labour, incl. GST) is over $10,000. You can apply once the CDC is issued. More information at NSW Government.
☐	**Notice of Commencement**	Lodged on the NSW Planning Portal no later than 2 days before any work begins.
☐	**Notice to neighbours**	Written notice to neighbours within 20 m of the lot. At least 7 days before work starts in metropolitan Sydney, or 2 days in regional, rural and residential release areas. See the Planning Portal.
☐	**Underground services**	Locate sewer, water, gas, electricity and telecommunications lines before excavating (Before You Dig Australia).
☐	**Security bonds**	Some councils charge a refundable bond to cover damage to kerbs, gutters and footpaths. We will tell you during assessment if one applies.

Long service levy, owner-builder, home building compensation, asbestos and demolition licensing thresholds checked against NSW Government sources on 17 November 2026. This checklist is general guidance only; the documents needed for your project are confirmed once your application is assessed. Codes SEPP clause references are to the version in force from 8 July 2026. The Building (Approvals and Practitioners) Act 2026 was assented to on 14 August 2026 but its building approval provisions have not commenced; this checklist will be updated when they do.