



Section 4



Do your research



Before you agree to buy a block of land, you should find out as much as possible about it. This includes the conditions associated with the block and any rules you must follow.

Suburban Land Agency resources

The following documents can help with your research. They are especially important for potential buyers to review. You'll find these for each Suburban Land Agency community on our website at suburbanland.act.gov.au.

Development Specific Requirements

This outlines the requirements that apply to a particular community.

Estate Plan

This is a plan of a whole Suburban Land Agency community. It shows the location of different blocks of land in relation to major roads, open spaces and future shops and schools.

Block Fill Plan

This plan shows the amount of 'cut' and 'fill' (measured in metres) for different blocks of land. This is important for understanding what is in the ground on your block (for details see 'Geotechnical information' on page 9').

Block Details Plan

This plan shows levels, slope, easements and other information related to specific blocks of land. Each block has a 'block number' and a 'section number', which allows it to be uniquely identified compared to all the other blocks in the suburb. Your block number is not the same as your street number.

Block Details Table

This table summarises the information shown on the Block Details Plan so you can compare blocks of land.

Get to know your block



No two blocks of land are the same. Before you buy, you must have a good understanding of its features, both above and below the ground. This will help you create a home that makes the most of the block's size, location and attributes.

What's nearby?

New communities often include open spaces, shops or schools, parks, playgrounds, pathways and public transport stops. Look at the Estate Plan so you can understand what is included in your new community and how close your preferred block is to these features.

The Single Dwelling Housing Development Code

The most important document is the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code which is part of the Territory Plan. This is the key statutory planning document in the ACT.

Your design, building and landscaping professionals will be familiar with the requirements under the plan, but you can also find it at legislation.act.gov.au.

Geotechnical information

The types of soils on your block will affect how you build your home. This is sometimes known as the geotechnical information. It's important to understand this information before you start construction.

When new suburbs are developed, there will be earthworks to create the roads, footpaths and blocks. In some sections, land may be 'cut' away to create a more level area. In others, soil may be added to create a more level area. When extra soil is added it is known as 'fill'. When earthworks like this take place, the fill is controlled to make sure it is of good quality. All the works are carefully managed to ensure no contaminated materials are used.

A high-level geotechnical report and site classification certificate will be available for your block once the earthworks are complete. This will include:

- ▶ a description of the site;
- ▶ the status of any fill (including controlled fill added by the Suburban Land Agency);
- ▶ a summary of the soil layers;
- ▶ groundwater observations; and
- ▶ site classifications.

A Block Fill Plan is also prepared for each Suburban Land Agency community. You can find this on our website at suburbanland.act.gov.au. You should review this plan to check the status of fill on your

block before you start construction.

As there may be historic fill on your block (for instance, fill added before we began our suburb development), it's wise to seek independent professional advice — from your builder or an engineer — before starting construction.

Orientation

Orientation refers to the direction (north, south, east or west) your block faces compared to your street. This is also known as the 'bearing of address street boundary'.

You can work out the orientation of your block by looking at the Estate Plan and the Block Details Plan for your community.

Sloping land

Is your block flat or does it have a slope? This will affect how you design and build your home.

The contour lines on the Block Details Plan show the slope across the area. If you need help understanding contour lines, talk to a professional such as your builder, building designer, architect or engineer.

For more information about building on sloping land see *Section 6: Designing your home*.

Block Size

Is your block considered compact, mid-sized or large?

Compact

a block of land with an area of 250m² or less

Mid-sized

a block of land with an area more than 250m² but less than or equal to 500m²

Large

a block of land with an area more than 500m²

And if it's over 500m² but less than 550m² and identified in a precinct code, it is subject to Rule 21 of the Single Dwelling Housing Development

Code in the Territory Plan. These blocks are indicated in the Block Details Table for your community.



Setbacks

A setback is the required distance between your block boundary and the outside face of your home. It also applies to other structures on your block such as balconies, decks, verandas and walls. Setbacks determine how far back your home needs to be from the street and from your neighbours.

Battle-axe blocks

A battle-axe block is a block of land not located directly on a street. It has a long driveway and is behind other blocks that face the street. Blocks listed as 'battle-axe blocks' are included in the Block Details Table for your community.

Corner blocks

This is a block of land that fronts onto two different streets. Corner blocks are subject to different rules and requirements, especially in relation to the front yard. You'll find blocks listed as 'corner blocks' in the Block Details Table for your community.

For more information about building on corner blocks see *Section 6: Designing your home*.

Surveillance Blocks

Some blocks of land are near rear laneways or pathways. To help promote safe communities, some blocks are identified as 'surveillance blocks'. These blocks should include a liveable room above the garage, with windows overlooking the rear line. Blocks listed as 'surveillance blocks' are included in the Block Details Table for your community. You can find out more about 'surveillance blocks' in Rule 19 of the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code in the Territory Plan.

Limited Development Potential Blocks

As you browse the Block Details Table for your community, you may notice some blocks described as 'limited development potential'. This isn't as alarming as it sounds. In fact, these blocks DO present potential. The potential to design a unique home that makes the most of the block's size, slope and orientation. As always, seek professional advice to ensure your home meets the conditions in the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code in the Territory Plan.



Did you know?

Did you know some blocks are identified as 'surveillance blocks'? They are often near laneways or pathways and play a key role in helping promote safe communities.

Other block requirements

There are also other requirements which apply to certain blocks of land. These are included in the Block Details Plan and Block Details Table for your Suburban Land Agency community, so be sure to look out for the conditions below.

Bushfire

Some blocks of land, such as those next to a nature reserve or open space, may be classified as being in a Bushfire Prone Area. If a bushfire were to start in these areas, these blocks are more likely to be affected. This information can be found at actmapi.act.gov.au. If your block is located in a Bushfire Prone Area, your home and garden will need to meet certain standards. This is to reduce the risk of your property being damaged.

You can find out more about building in a Bushfire Prone Area in the ACT by contacting Access Canberra at accesscanberra.act.gov.au or phone 13 22 81.

Noise

Some blocks are in areas where there will be noise from nearby roads or venues. This means your building should be designed to reduce the noise impact. This is under Rule 42 of the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code in the Territory Plan.

Light

Some blocks have certain conditions about the type of lighting they use. For example, you may need to ensure your lights do not point up into the sky or into nearby nature reserves.

Active Travel Streets

Some blocks of land are next to Active Travel Streets. These streets have slower speeds to make them safer for walking and cycling. The street entry and signs will inform vehicles of the slower speeds.

Fencing facing public areas

If your block is next to a major road or an open space such as a park, your boundary fence may need to meet certain requirements, and you'll need to cover the cost.

For more details on fencing see *Section 8: Tips for your garden and landscape*.

Remember, the Block Details Plan and Block Details Table for your community will identify the blocks where special conditions apply. You'll find these on our website at suburbanland.act.gov.au.

Off-the plan vs land-ready

'Off-the-plan' means there is an approved plan for the estate, but the roads and services are still under construction. You won't be able to visit your block until construction is complete. This also means there will be a longer time between exchange and settlement.

If you buy land that is 'land-ready', it means construction of the new development is complete and approved. There will be a shorter time between exchange and settlement, because your block is ready for you to start building your house.