

# Practice Note: Determining the construction date of a building

## Purpose

This practice note provides a checklist to assist private certifiers, consultants and development application applicants to establish the construction date of a traditional character building.

## Context – Protecting Brisbane’s traditional building character

To protect Brisbane’s past and maintain the architectural character of our city and suburbs, *Brisbane City Plan 2014* (City Plan) provides requirements for appropriate development in Brisbane’s older suburbs, and for renovating, demolishing or removing traditional character buildings.

These requirements provide for:

- buildings built before 1947 to be retained and any extensions or alterations to complement the traditional building style
- buildings built before 1911 are to be retained and extensions or alterations should not alter or remove pre-1911 parts of the building.

Establishing the construction date of a building informs what provisions required under City Plan apply to development proposals on character buildings constructed prior to 1947.

## Using this practice note

This practice note provides a step by step research checklist to assist determining the construction date of a building. The checklist includes actions, tasks, useful research sources and systematic recording of evidence uncovered during the research process.

Completing the checklist will establish a record of research to determine the date of construction of a building. Completed checklists can be submitted with a development application to inform and support the proposal.

This practice note provides two checklists based on the potential construction date of a building and what relevant Traditional building overlay code provisions would subsequently apply:

- Research [Checklist 1 - buildings substantially constructed before 1 January 1947](#)
- Research [Checklist 2 - buildings substantially constructed before 1 January 1911](#)

This practice note provides general advice and guidance only. Researching a building to identify its construction date can be challenging - the type and detail of historical sources relating to a place can vary and interpreting historical information can require specialist knowledge and skills.

If you would like further advice on determining the construction date of a building, it is recommended you engage the services of an appropriately qualified historian or heritage consultant. Appropriately qualified consultants may be found by:

- searching the Australian Council of Professional Historians Associations Inc. register of consulting historians on the Association’s web page
- contacting the Australian Institute of Architects for advice on practicing architects who specialise in Heritage
- searching Yellow Pages – Heritage & History Consultants Qld

## Research checklist 1 – Buildings substantially constructed before 1 January 1947

Establishing the construction date of a building informs what provisions and code requirements in *Brisbane City Plan 2014* apply to the redevelopment of a traditional character building. *Brisbane City Plan 2014* provisions ensure development:

- **protects residential buildings substantially constructed in 1946 or earlier that individually or collectively contribute to giving the areas in the Traditional building character overlay their traditional character and traditional building character**
- *protects buildings substantially constructed prior to 1911 and limits their demolition, removal or removal of original parts of the building*

Use this checklist to establish a record of research to determine the date of construction of a building. Completed checklists can be submitted with a development application to inform and support the proposal.

Action	Task	Record of research
Tick	<b>STEP 1 - RESEARCH HISTORICAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check all available aerial photographic imagery to confirm the building was present prior to 1947	<b>Search Brisbane City Council's 1946 Aerial Imagery via <a href="#">City Plan online</a></b> <i>Research tip:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1946 Aerial imagery was taken between 31 May to 10 June 1946.</li> <li>▪ There will be instances of buildings constructed after this time but before the end of 1946, that will not appear on the 1946 Aerial photograph.</li> <li>▪ Additional steps are provided to assist in establishing the likely construction date for this period.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Refer additional action "Check Rates Registers/Ledgers".</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>Search the property on the Queensland Government's <a href="#">QImagery</a> site</b> <i>Research tip:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ QImagery provides Aerial photograph across a range of timeframes, before and after mid 1946.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Check historical building records	<b>Search <a href="#">Brisbane City Council Archives</a> (<a href="#">Building registers</a> and <a href="#">Building cards</a>)</b> <i>Research tip:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some building records are not available online and copies may incur a fee.</li> <li>▪ Historical building records do not often include a street number – so it is useful to have established the owner's name (at the time relevant to the record period). This can be found on Queensland Government <a href="#">historical land titles</a> (<a href="#">research</a> and copies will incur a fee).</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Locate the property on the Detail plans	<b>Check the <a href="#">Detail Plans</a> to establish the date the plans were originally drawn up (and later updated)</b>

Action	Task	Record of research
	<p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detail plans were drawn up following surveys associated with the planned installation of sewerage pipes across the city. After 1911, they provide a dated record of the built environment at the time of survey.</li> <li>Detail plans were sometimes later updated. Check for later updates by searching <a href="#">Detail Plan Index Registers</a></li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Check the rates registers/ledgers</p> <p><b>Check Rates registers/ledgers (rates cards) at <a href="#">Brisbane City Council Archives</a> (not available online)</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rates records for post 1940 construction as entries will state whether land was "improved" (i.e. had dwelling) or vacant. (VL) .</li> </ul>	
Tick	<b>STEP 2 – BUILDING STYLE / TYPOLOGY</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Identify the building style / typology</p> <p><b>Check the style of the building against examples shown in published sources</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <p>The following sources may be of assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brisbane City Council's "<a href="#">Traditional housing design guide</a>" (Know your home: introduction to traditional housing styles)</li> <li><a href="#">Brisbane house styles 1880 to 1940: a guide to the affordable house</a> by Judy Rechner (Brisbane History Group, 1998). Copies available from <a href="#">Brisbane City Council Libraries</a></li> <li><a href="#">Brisbane Images</a> and <a href="#">Queensland Homes</a></li> <li>See also "<a href="#">Additional sources</a>"</li> </ul>	
Tick	<b>STEP 3 – CONTEXT OF THE SITE (WITHIN THE AREA)</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Gain an understanding of the context of the site</p> <p><b>Check historical street maps</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Library of Queensland may have historical street maps/street directories</li> <li>Brisbane and suburbs street and road map -1943 by S.C. Glover (State Library).</li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Check any historical Estate maps (historical advertising for subdivisions)</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Library of Queensland have a number of digitised Estate Maps, some available through <a href="#">HISTORYPin</a> and others via their <a href="#">OneSearch</a> catalogue</li> </ul>	

Action	Task	Record of research
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brisbane City Council Archives also hold some <a href="#">maps and plans</a></li> </ul>	
Tick	<b>STEP 4 – OCCUPATION OF THE BUILDING</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Identify the building's occupant/s at the time</p> <p><b>Check historical <a href="#">Electoral Rolls</a></b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Ancestry.com has online historical Electoral Rolls</i></li> <li><i>Brisbane City Council libraries have <a href="#">library subscription to Ancestry and findmypast</a> available for Brisbane City Council library members (can only be used within BCC libraries).</i></li> <li><i><a href="#">Electoral Rolls</a> are also available at State Library of Queensland</i></li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Check historical <a href="#">Post Office Directories</a></b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Ancestry.com has online historical Post Office Directories</i></li> <li><i>Brisbane City Council libraries have <a href="#">library subscription to Ancestry and findmypast</a> available for Brisbane City Council library members (can only be used within BCC libraries).</i></li> <li><i><a href="#">Post Office Directories</a> are also available on CD / DVD at State Library of Queensland.</i></li> </ul>	

## Research checklist 2 – Buildings substantially constructed before 1 January 1911

Establishing the construction date of a building informs what provisions and code requirements in *Brisbane City Plan 2014* apply to the redevelopment of a traditional character building. *Brisbane City Plan 2014* provisions ensure development:

- *protects residential buildings substantially constructed in 1946 or earlier that individually or collectively contribute to giving the areas in the Traditional building character overlay their traditional character and traditional building character*
- ***protects buildings substantially constructed prior to 1911 and limits their demolition, removal or removal of original parts of the building***

Use this checklist to establish a record of research to determine the date of construction of a building. Completed checklists can be submitted with a development application to inform and support the proposal.

	Action	Task	Record of research
Tick	<b>STEP 1 - BUILDING STYLE / TYPOLOGY</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify the building style / typology	<p><b>Check the style of the building against examples shown in published sources</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i>  <i>The following sources may be of assistance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Brisbane City Council's "<a href="#">Traditional housing design guide</a>" (Know your home: introduction to traditional housing styles)</i></li> <li>▪ <i><a href="#">Brisbane house styles 1880 to 1940: a guide to the affordable house</a> by Judy Rechner (Brisbane History Group, 1998). Copies available from <a href="#">Brisbane City Council Libraries</a></i></li> <li>▪ <i><a href="#">Brisbane Images</a> and <a href="#">Queensland Homes</a></i></li> <li>▪ <i>See also <a href="#">Additional research sources and information</a> section in this Practice note for links to various digitised building plans and designs.</i></li> </ul>	

Action	Task	Record of research
Tick	STEP 2 - RESEARCH HISTORICAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Check the 1911 Contour Survey</p> <p>This survey was undertaken between April 26 1910 and 28 March 1911. It was the first survey undertaken in connection with the designing of a sewerage scheme for Brisbane. Areas of dense housing occupation are shaded</p> <p>These maps can be used as a tool to help indicate pre-1911 houses. However not all pre-1911 dwellings are shown on the maps.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>CAN'T FIND YOUR STREET?</p> <p>Names of some streets in Brisbane have changed over time.</p> <p>Visit the Brisbane City Archives "<a href="#">Brisbane Street Names</a>" page for more information.</p> </div> <p>Check the <a href="#">Metropolitan Board of Water Supply &amp; Sewerage 1911 Contour Survey – 8 chain maps</a></p> <p>Is the site in an area of dense housing occupation? (i.e. within an area shaded/hatched on the 1911 contour survey).</p> <p>NOTE: Brisbane CBD and immediate surrounds such as Petrie Terrace &amp; Spring Hill, South Brisbane, West End, Kangaroo Point, Woolloongabba, are default 'densely' occupied in 1911</p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The 1911 Contour Survey is an <b>indicative tool</b> only</li> <li>▪ Not all pre-1911 dwellings are shown on these maps</li> <li>▪ Some areas of Brisbane were not included in the 1911 contour survey (e.g. Sandgate, Brighton, Nundah, Stafford, parts of Enoggera, Manly, Lota, parts of Wynnum etc) but were well-settled by 1911.</li> </ul>	

Action	Task	Record of research
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Check historical cadastral maps (e.g. the 1895 McKellar Survey maps) to locate the lot</p> <p><b>What are the 1895 McKellar Maps?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveyor Alexander Robertson McKellar undertook a cadastral survey of Brisbane, published by the Surveyor-General's Office in 1895.</li> <li>Published in black and white, they show property boundaries and property descriptions.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>CAN'T FIND YOUR STREET?</p> <p>Names of some streets in Brisbane have changed over time.</p> <p>Visit the Brisbane City Archives "<a href="#">Brisbane Street Names</a>" page for more information.</p> </div>	<p><b>Check historical cadastral maps to locate the lot</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In some instances, the lot may not exist in its current 'configuration'. Confirmation of historical lot configurations can be tracked back can be located via <a href="#">historical land titles (research)</a> and copies will incur a fee</li> <li><a href="#">1895 McKellar survey maps</a> can be accessed via Queensland Government's Open data area</li> <li>The Queensland Government's Museum of Lands, Mapping and Surveying webpage contains information and some digitised maps on their "<a href="#">Historical maps and plans</a>" page.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Check all available aerial photographic imagery to confirm the building was present prior to 1947</p>	<p><b>Search the property on the Queensland Government's <a href="#">QImagery</a> site</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QImagery provides Aerial photograph across a range of timeframes, before and after mid-1946.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Check historical building records</p>	<p><b>Search <a href="#">Brisbane City Council Archives (Building registers and Building cards)</a></b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some building records are not available online and copies may incur a fee.</li> </ul>

Action	Task	Record of research
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historical building records do not often include a street number – so it is useful to have established the owner’s name (at the time relevant to the record period).</li> <li>Owners names can be located via <a href="#">historical land titles</a> (<a href="#">research</a> and copies will incur a fee).</li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Locate the property on the Detail plans</p> <p><b>Check the <a href="#">Detail Plans</a> to establish the date the plans were originally drawn up (and later updated)</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detail plans were drawn up following surveys associated with the planned installation of sewerage pipes across the city. After 1911, they provide a dated record of the built environment at the time of survey.</li> <li>Detail plans were sometimes later updated. Check for later updates by searching <a href="#">Detail Plan Index Registers</a></li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Source the Surveyor’s Fieldbooks to view the original survey notes</p> <p><b>Check the <a href="#">Detail Plan Indexes</a> City Archives hold the original surveyor field books which accompany the Detail plans</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The surveyors field notebooks for these plans generally contain more information than the published Detail plans and are often dated earlier. The notebooks can be viewed at the City Archives.</li> </ul>	
Tick	<b>STEP 3 – CONTEXT OF THE SITE (WITHIN THE AREA)</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Gain an understanding of the context of the site</p> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> <p><b>CAN’T FIND YOUR STREET?</b></p> <p>Names of some streets in Brisbane have changed over time.</p> <p>Visit the Brisbane City Archives “<a href="#">Brisbane Street Names</a>” page for more information.</p> </div> <p><b>Check historical street maps</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">State Library of Queensland</a> may have historical street maps/street directories including:</li> <li><a href="#">Harris’ street and road directory</a> (1916-1917; State Library)</li> <li><a href="#">Map of Brisbane and suburbs 1889 (streets)</a></li> <li><a href="#">1878 Street Map of Brisbane</a></li> <li><a href="#">Slater’s Pocket Map of the City of Brisbane 1865</a></li> <li><a href="#">National Library of Australia</a> may have some historical and digitised maps and directories, for example:</li> <li><a href="#">‘Brisbane and environs’ map. Watson, Ferguson &amp; Co Publishers – 1886</a></li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Check any historical Estate maps (historical advertising for subdivisions)</b>	



Action	Task	Record of research
	<p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ State Library of Queensland have a number of <a href="#">digitised Estate Maps</a>, some available through <a href="#">HistoryPin</a> and others via their <a href="#">OneSearch catalogue</a></li> <li>▪ Brisbane City Council Archives also hold some <a href="#">maps and plans</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Historical land research</a> (Queensland Government).</li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Check if the house has been moved to the current site from elsewhere</p>	<p><b>In some instances, a house constructed prior to 1911 may have been relocated to the site from elsewhere</b></p> <p>Any research will need to consider this and then aim to determine and further research the 'original' site, in order to assist in establishing the date of the house.</p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check <a href="#">Development.i</a> for any Development Approvals involving relocation onto the site since mid-2014.</li> <li>▪ To check for earlier relocation approvals (from 1946), lodge a <a href="#">building section search online</a>.</li> </ul>
Tick	<b>STEP 4 – OWNERSHIP &amp; OCCUPATION OF THE BUILDING</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Identify the building's occupant/s over time</p> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>RENTAL PROPERTIES</b></p> <p>Even before 1911, investors were buying houses to gain rental income. These instances often require more detailed research of the occupation of the building over time.</p> </div>	<p><b>Undertake <a href="#">Historical Titles</a> searches, to establish ownership over time and other transactions on the historical title that may contribute to understanding</b></p> <p>Copies of historical titles will incur a fee.</p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Queensland Government Title information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Historical title details</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Historical research resources</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p>Workers Dwelling Board house</p>	<p><b>Check historical title for evidence of a Workers dwelling loan (mortgage)</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check <a href="#">Workers' dwelling loan registers</a> at the Queensland State Archives</li> <li>▪ You may need to visit the <a href="#">Queensland State Archives</a> to view the registers, if they have not been digitised and published online.</li> </ul>

Action	Task	Record of research
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Check historical <a href="#">Electoral Rolls</a> to establish occupation of the building</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Ancestry.com and findmypast have online historical Electoral Rolls.</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Brisbane City Council libraries have <a href="#">library subscription to Ancestry and findmypast</a> available for Brisbane City Council library members (can only be used within BCC libraries).</i></li> <li>▪ <i><a href="#">Electoral Rolls</a> are also available at State Library of Queensland</i></li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Check historical <a href="#">Post Office Directories</a> to establish occupation of the building</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Ancestry.com and findmypast have online historical Post Office Directories</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Brisbane City Council libraries have <a href="#">library subscription to Ancestry and findmypast</a> available for Brisbane City Council library members (can only be used within BCC libraries).</i></li> <li>▪ <i><a href="#">Post Office Directories</a> are also available on CD / DVD at State Library of Queensland.</i></li> </ul>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Check <a href="#">historical newspapers, gazettes and other older documents</a> to further evidence ownership or occupation over time</b></p> <p><i>Research tip:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Search <a href="#">Trove</a> for access to multiple online sources, including newspapers and gazettes or newspapers.</i></li> </ul>	

## Additional research sources and information

[Brisbane City Council Archives](#) have a range of records that can assist in determining the age of building, including a [guide](#) to assist people researching the history of their house. The [Queensland State Library](#) also has a range of records that may assist, including information and instructional videos about [researching the history of a house](#) and a webpage with information about [built heritage](#).

### Building Style/Typology Sources

The following links contain a range of designs/plans/images of various buildings in Queensland over time.

- [State Advances Corporation - Designs - January 1945](#)
- [Queensland Bungalows \(compiled by J.V.D. Coutts\) - 1937](#)
- [Queensland Homemaker's Book – Brisbane Timber Merchants' Association & Brisbane & District Joinery Association - 1936](#)
- [State Advances Corporation - Designs of Dwellings - January 1935](#)
- [The Campbell home modernising service \(James Campbell & Sons\) - 1933](#)
- [War Services Homes Commission - Queensland Branch - May 1927](#)
- [Workers Dwellings - "The State Advances Act of 1916"\) October - 1925](#)
- [The Salon – Queensland Section – Workers Dwelling Act. – 11 April 1914](#)

Further information and guidance on *Brisbane City Plan 2014* requirements for traditional character buildings is available at [www.brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au)

### DISCLAIMER

This document has been prepared with all due diligence and care, based on best available information at time of publication. Regard must be had to the full *Brisbane City Plan 2014* via [City Plan online](#), for context of this information. Council gives no warranty in relation to the information within this document and accepts no liability for any decisions made by other parties based on the use of this information.