

Permits in Cyprus, without losing a year

The two applications, what each one actually asks for, and the documents that hold a file up.

DRAFT — pending technical review by C.F.L. This guide sets out how the process is structured and what to ask about it, and the practice has not yet signed it off. Read it to know the shape of the thing; confirm anything a decision rests on with us, or with the relevant authority, before you act on it.

THE QUESTION THIS ANSWERS

How do I get a building permit in Cyprus?

Building in Cyprus needs two separate approvals, obtained in order: a Planning Permit, which tests whether what you propose belongs on that plot at all, and then a Building Permit, which tests whether the design is sound and compliant. Most delays are not design problems — they come from documents that were always going to be required but were started late, and from queries that sat unanswered. The plot's own limits (coverage, density, height, setbacks) should be established before anything is designed, because they decide what the land will carry regardless of the brief.

The key facts

- Cyprus requires two separate permits for a new building: a Planning Permit and a Building Permit.
- They are assessed by different people against different questions, and they are obtained in that order.
- A Planning Permit tests the proposal against the plot — use, size, position, effect on neighbours.
- A Building Permit tests the design itself — structure, services, fire, energy, accessibility.

- The plot's coverage, density, height and setback limits decide how much building the land will take, independently of the design.
- Applications more often wait than fail, usually on a document that had to come from a third party.
- A plot sold 'with planning' does not necessarily carry a permit for the building you intend.
- How fast authority queries are answered is usually what decides whether a project keeps its programme.

In more detail

Most delays on a Cyprus project are not design problems. They are file problems — a package submitted before the plot question was settled, a document that was always going to be asked for, a query answered three weeks after it arrived.

This guide sets out the sequence, what each stage is really testing, and the points at which a project either keeps its programme or quietly loses a season.

There are two permissions, and they ask different questions

A Planning Permit and a Building Permit are separate applications, assessed by different people against different questions. Treating them as one step is the most common reason a programme slips.

Planning asks whether what you propose belongs on that plot at all — its use, its size, where it sits, what it does to its neighbours. Building asks whether the thing you have designed is sound and compliant: structure, services, fire, energy, accessibility.

- **Planning is about the plot.** Zone, coverage, density, height, setbacks, access. These are properties of the land, and no amount of design quality changes them.
- **Building is about the building.** Structure, mechanical and electrical services, energy performance, fire strategy. This is where the engineering disciplines have to agree with each other on paper.
- **They are sequential in practice.** Building follows what Planning has approved. Redesigning after a Planning consent means going back, so the expensive decisions belong before the first submission.

What the plot allows is a question, not an assumption

The single most costly mistake is designing to a brief the plot cannot carry, then discovering it at submission. Coverage, density, height and setbacks between them decide how much building the land will take and roughly what shape it can be.

That check is cheap and fast at the start, and it either confirms the brief or changes it while changing it is still free. A plot sold 'with planning' is not the same as a plot with a permit for the building you want — ask precisely what was approved, when, and whether it still stands.

The documents that hold files up

Applications rarely fail. They wait. They wait for a document that was always going to be required, and which nobody started early because it sat outside the design team's own work.

Ownership and title paperwork, plot and survey information, and consents or clearances from bodies outside the planning authority are the usual candidates. None of them is difficult. All of them take calendar time that does not run in parallel with anything if you start them late.

- **Ask for the full list on day one.** Not the drawing list — the document list, including everything that has to come from a third party or from you personally.
- **Start the slow ones first.** Anything that requires another organisation to act is on their clock, not yours. Those are the items to open before the design is finished.
- **Name one person who owns the file.** Queries arrive addressed to nobody in particular. A file with no owner is a file that waits for someone to notice.

Queries are the stage that actually decides your programme

After submission the authority comes back with questions. How fast those are answered, and whether the answer closes the question or opens another, is usually the difference between a project that runs to programme and one that does not.

This is unglamorous work and it is where a permit is won. It is worth establishing, before you appoint anyone, who will be reading and answering that correspondence — and how quickly.

If something is already built and does not match its permit

This surfaces most often at sale, when the buyer's side compares what exists against what was approved. A discrepancy found then is a negotiation problem on somebody else's timetable.

Found early, it is a technical question with known routes. The useful move is to establish the position before you need the answer — particularly before you market a property or agree a price on one.

Common questions

What is the difference between a Planning and a Building Permit?

Planning tests whether the proposal belongs on that plot — use, size, position, effect on neighbours. Building tests whether the design is sound and compliant — structure, services, fire, energy. Two applications, two assessments.

How long does approval take?

It depends on the plot, the size of the building and how quickly the authority responds — and on how fast queries are answered at your end, which is the part you control. Ask for a schedule against your specific project rather than an average.

I bought a plot 'with planning'. Is that a permit?

Not necessarily, and not necessarily for the building you have in mind. Establish exactly what was approved, on what date, and whether it remains valid before you design to it.

Can someone take over an application that has already started?

Usually yes. The practical questions are what state the file is in, what has already been asked and answered, and whether the original package still reflects what you want to build.

Before you submit — the working checklist

Take this to your first meeting with a design team. If any line has no clear answer, that line is your programme risk.

- ☐ ⁰¹ Zone, coverage, density, height and setback figures for this specific plot — written down, not remembered
- ☐ ⁰² Confirmation that the brief fits inside those figures, or a decision to change the brief
- ☐ ⁰³ If sold 'with planning': what exactly was approved, when, and whether it still stands
- ☐ ⁰⁴ The full document list, including everything that must come from a third party
- ☐ ⁰⁵ Which of those documents is slowest, and who started it
- ☐ ⁰⁶ Ownership and title paperwork located and current
- ☐ ⁰⁷ Named person responsible for answering authority queries, and their expected turnaround
- ☐ ⁰⁸ Whether any existing structure on the plot matches its permit
- ☐ ⁰⁹ Agreement on who submits, who corresponds, and who tells you when something changes

Need this checked against a specific property?

C.F.L. Architects, Engineers and Consultants Ltd — Limassol, Cyprus.

<https://cfl.ochi.cy/services/permits-approvals>

This guide is general information about how the process is structured, not advice on a specific property. It states no fees, statutory periods or legal thresholds — those depend on your plot, your authority and the current regulations, and should be confirmed for your case.