



**FIRST-TIER TRIBUNAL
PROPERTY CHAMBER
(RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY)**

Case Reference : CHI/00MR/LDC/2018/0099

Property : Horizon Building, 66 Goldsmith Avenue,
Southsea, Hampshire PO4 8EW

Applicant : Adriatic Land 4 Limited

Representative : Residential Management Group Ltd

Respondents : -

Representative :

Type of Application : To dispense with the requirement to
consult lessees about major works

Tribunal Member(s) : Mr D Banfield FRICS

Date of Decision 14 February 2019

DECISION

The Tribunal grants dispensation from the consultation requirements of S.20 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 in respect of the fire separation works referred to in the Notice of Intention dated 7 December 2018.

In granting dispensation the Tribunal makes no determination as to whether any service charge costs are reasonable or payable.

1. This is an application for dispensation from the consultation requirements of S.20 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. (the 1985 Act)
2. The Applicant explains that the extension to the fire alarm system, the subject of a previous application to the Tribunal may no longer be necessary subject to compartmentation works being carried out.
3. Works to address fire stopping and upgrading fire doors have been ordered and a letter explaining the position sent to all Lessees on 30 November 2018.
4. The Tribunal made Directions on 7 December 2018 which required the Applicant to send to each Respondent a copy of the application and the Directions together with a form to be returned to the Tribunal indicating whether the application was agreed with, whether a written statement was to be sent to the applicant and whether an oral hearing was required. Those lessees who agreed with the application or failed to respond would be removed as Respondents.
5. One reply was received agreeing to the application and in accordance with the directions the Lessees have been removed as Respondents. There were no requests for an oral hearing and the application is therefore determined on the papers received in accordance with Rule 31 of the Tribunal's procedural rules.
6. The only issue for the Tribunal is if it is reasonable to dispense with any statutory consultation requirements. **This decision does not concern the issue of whether any service charge costs will be reasonable or payable.**

The Law

7. The relevant section of the Act reads as follows:

20ZA Consultation requirements:
 - a. (1) Where an application is made to a Leasehold Valuation Tribunal for a determination to dispense with all or any of the consultation requirements in relation to any qualifying works or qualifying long-term agreement, the Tribunal may make the determination if satisfied that it is reasonable to dispense with the requirements.
8. The matter was examined in some detail by the Supreme Court in the case of Daejan Investments Ltd v Benson. In summary the Supreme Court noted the following
 - b. The main question for the Tribunal when considering how to exercise its jurisdiction in accordance with section 20ZA (1) is the real prejudice to the tenants flowing from the landlord's breach of the consultation requirements.
 - c. The financial consequence to the landlord of not granting a dispensation is not a relevant factor. The nature of the landlord is not a relevant factor.

- d. Dispensation should not be refused solely because the landlord seriously breached, or departed from, the consultation requirements.
- e. The Tribunal has power to grant a dispensation as it thinks fit, provided that any terms are appropriate.
- f. The Tribunal has power to impose a condition that the landlord pays the tenants' reasonable costs (including surveyor and/or legal fees) incurred in connection with the landlord's application under section 20ZA (1).
- g. The legal burden of proof in relation to dispensation applications is on the landlord. The factual burden of identifying some "relevant" prejudice that they would or might have suffered is on the tenants.
- h. The court considered that "relevant" prejudice should be given a narrow definition; it means whether non-compliance with the consultation requirements has led the landlord to incur costs in an unreasonable amount or to incur them in the provision of services, or in the carrying out of works, which fell below a reasonable standard, in other words whether the non-compliance has in that sense caused prejudice to the tenant.
- i. The more serious and/or deliberate the landlord's failure, the more readily a Tribunal would be likely to accept that the tenants had suffered prejudice.
- j. Once the tenants had shown a credible case for prejudice, the Tribunal should look to the landlord to rebut it.

Evidence

9. The Applicant has provided a comprehensive hearing bundle containing a statement of case together with various reports in respect of the fire precautions identified as being required.
10. A letter sent to the lessees dated 30 November 2018 referred to works required following an inspection by the local Fire Authority comprising fire stopping and the replacement of fire doors. A Notice of Intent was served on lessees on 7 December 2018 inviting written observations and the nomination of a contractor.
11. No observations were received and no contractors nominated. By then an application for dispensation had been made to the Tribunal and the consultation procedure was discontinued.

Determination

12. The evidence demonstrates that works are required to improve fire safety the early completion of which is clearly desirable.
13. The only lessee to respond has supported the application and no evidence of the type of prejudice referred to in paragraph 8 above has been identified. In these circumstances, I am prepared to grant the dispensation required.
14. **The Tribunal therefore grants dispensation from the consultation requirements of S.20 Landlord and Tenant Act**

1985 in respect of the fire separation works referred to in the Notice of Intention dated 7 December 2018.

15. In granting dispensation the Tribunal makes no determination as to whether any service charge costs are reasonable or payable.

D Banfield FRICS
14 February 2019

1. A person wishing to appeal this decision to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) must seek permission to do so by making written application to the First-tier Tribunal at the Regional office, which has been dealing with the case. The application must arrive at the Tribunal within 28 days after the Tribunal sends to the person making the application written reasons for the decision.
2. If the person wishing to appeal does not comply with the 28-day time limit, the person shall include with the application for permission to appeal a request for an extension of time and the reason for not complying with the 28-day time limit; the Tribunal will then decide whether to extend time or not to allow the application for permission to appeal to proceed.
3. The application for permission to appeal must identify the decision of the Tribunal to which it relates, state the grounds of appeal and state the result the party making the appeal is seeking.