



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

Case Reference : CHI/00MS/LDC/2018/0100

Property : Leonards Court, Test Lane, Redbridge,
Southampton SO16 9JP

Applicant : The Executors of Alan Matthey deceased

Representative : Bridgeford & Co managing agents

Respondents : Ms R J Fulker (Flat 15)

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 : 17 January 2019

DECISION

The Tribunal grants dispensation from the consultation requirements of S.20 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 in respect of the replacement of the tile hanging to the front façade.

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

1. The Applicant seeks dispensation under Section 20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (the 1985 Act) from the consultation requirements required by Section 20 of the 1985 Act.
2. The Applicant stated that urgent works were required to the front of the property as the tiles “have slid off due to rotten batons” (sic). There is said to be a safety risk to persons below from falling tiles.
3. Directions were made on 7 December 2018 requiring the Applicants to send a copy of the application and the Directions to each Lessee. Attached to the Directions was a form for the lessees to return 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.
4. The Directions noted that those parties not returning the form and those agreeing to the application would be removed as Respondents
5. Replies were received from two lessees one in favour one against. Neither requested 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 Application refers to the need to carry out works to replace the tile hanging to the front facades to the blocks. The work is said to be urgent due to risks to persons below.
- 10. Two quotations have been obtained both of which refer to the erection of scaffolding, the replacement of the battens and the refixing of existing tiles. One quotation also refers to replacing windows although this work is not included within this application.
- 11. The lessee who objected to the application referred to scaffolding having already been erected, talks to manage blocks A and B separately, the need to replenish the reserve fund before outstanding essential works are completed that Block B residents have to pay for repairs to Block A and if maintained regularly costs would have been less.
- 12. In reply the Applicant said that works had not commenced although scaffolding had been erected to prevent tiles blowing off and injuring residents, that Blocks A and B are scheduled for decorations to be carried out in 2019, that the reserve account is for expenditure such as this and all leaseholders are billed in accordance with their leases.

Determination

- 13. The works are required to avoid danger to persons beneath. Two quotations have been obtained and the evidence submitted does not identify the type of prejudice referred to in paragraph 8 above. 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 replacement of the tile hanging to the front façade.**
- 15. In granting dispensation in respect of part of the Application the Tribunal makes no determination as to whether any service charge costs are reasonable or payable.**

D Banfield FRICS
17 January 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.