



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

Case Reference : **LON/OOBA/LDC/2020/0008**

Property : **18 Denmark Avenue
London SW19 4HF**

Applicant : **Southern Land Securities Ltd.**

Representative : **Together Property Management Ltd.
(Agent)**

Respondents : **Leaseholders of the 4 flats at the
Property**

Representative : **None**

Type of Application : **S20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant
Act 1985 - dispensation of
consultation requirements**

Tribunal : **Mr. N. Martindale FRICS**

**Date and venue of
Hearing** : **10 Alfred Place, London WC1E 7LR**

Date of Decision : **18 February 2020**

DECISION

Decision

1. **The Tribunal grants dispensation from the requirements on the Applicant to consult the Respondents under S.20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, in respect of the application.**

Background

2. The applicant, Southern Land Securities Ltd. has through its representative Together Property Management Ltd.. applied to the Tribunal under S.20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (“the Act”) for the dispensation from all or any of the consultation requirements contained in S.20 of the Act.
3. The application was dated 3 January 2020. The proposal was that a contract for provision of essential and urgent repairs to the communal front steps to the Property. Their condition was such that they badly affected the use of the bathroom to a flat located underneath. Consultation had not been started as the applicant needed to be able to commence works immediately and not be delayed by the need to complete all stages of the process.

Directions

4. Directions dated 13 January 2020 were issued by Tribunal Judge Naomi Hawkes without an oral hearing. They provided for the Tribunal to determine the application during the week commencing 17 February 2020 and that if an oral hearing were requested by a party it had to be by 27 January 2020. It was not requested.
5. They noted that a copy of the application had already been provided by the applicant to each leaseholder. There were only 4 leaseholders.
6. Any leaseholders who opposed the application had, until 27 January 2020 to notify the Tribunal with any statement and supporting documentation. The landlord had until 7 February 2020 to provide 3 copies of the bundle to the Tribunal and 1 copy to each leaseholder.

Applicant’s Case

7. The Property is described as “...a converted detached house which now has four flats set over four floors.” into 3 flats on 3 floors (including basement). Ground First and Second floors.” There being no evidence to the contrary, the Tribunal assumed that all the residential leases are in essentially the same form.

8. The application stated further in box 7 that the “Dispensation Sought” concerned “qualifying works”, being a contract where individual contributions sought would be in excess of £250 from each leaseholder.
9. The dispensation sought could be dealt with on paper as at box 9 and otherwise on ‘standard track’, box 10. The works had started. The application was not described as urgent.
10. On page 8 of the Application and under “Grounds for Seeking Dispensation”; *“The steps leading to the communal front door have been leaking in to the bathroom below the steps, the leak was not showing itself until; the ceiling in the bathroom collapsed. We had contractors attend and they confirmed the above work is required. We manage(d) to obtain two quotations for this work, unfortunately both were over what we could spend without consulting Leaseholders. Although the ceiling within the bathroom below has been boarded up water is still getting through, it is extremely cold in the bathroom and it is almost unuseable.”*
11. The Tribunal did not consider that an inspection of the Property would be of assistance and would be a disproportionate burden on the public purse.

Respondents’ Case

12. Of the Respondent leaseholders the Tribunal did not receive any written responses in favour or against any aspect of the dispensation application.

Law

13. S.18 (1) of the Act provides that a service charge is an amount payable by a tenant of a dwelling as part of or in addition to the rent, which is payable for services, repairs, maintenance, improvements or insurance or landlord’s costs of management, and the whole or part of which varies or may vary according to the costs incurred by the landlord. S.20 provides for the limitation of service charges in the event that the statutory consultation requirements are not met. The consultation requirements apply where the works are qualifying works or where a contract is for a period in excess of 12 months. In such cases where timely consultation is inadequate or non-existent, only £250 or £100 respectively can be recovered from a tenant in respect of such works or long-term contracts unless the consultation requirements have either been complied with or dispensed with.
14. Dispensation is dealt with by S.20 ZA of the Act, which provides:-
“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.”

15. The consultation requirements for qualifying works under qualifying long term agreements are set out in Schedule 3 of the Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003 as follows:-

1(1) The landlord shall give notice in writing of his intention to carry out qualifying works –

(a) to each tenant; and

(b) where a recognised tenants’ association represents some or all of the tenants, to the association.

(2) The notice shall –

(a) describe, in general terms, the works proposed to be carried out or specify the place and hours at which a description of the proposed works may be inspected;

(b) state the landlord’s reasons for considering it necessary to carry out the proposed works;

(c) contain a statement of the total amount of the expenditure estimated by the landlord as likely to be incurred by him on and in connection with the proposed works;

(d) invite the making, in writing, of observations in relation to the proposed works or the landlord’s estimated expenditure

(e) specify-

(i) the address to which such observations may be sent;

(ii) that they must be delivered within the relevant period; and

(iii) the period on which the relevant period ends.

2(1) where a notice under paragraph 1 specifies a place and hours for inspection-

(a) the place and hours so specified must be reasonable; and

(b) a description of the proposed works must be available for inspection, free of charge, at that place and during those hours.

(2) If facilities to enable copies to be taken are not made available at the times at which the description may be inspected, the landlord shall provide to any tenant, on request and free of charge, a copy of the description.

3. Where, within the relevant period, observations are made in relation to the proposed works or the landlord’s estimated expenditure by any tenant or the recognised tenants’ association, the landlord shall have regard to those observations.

4. Where the landlord receives observations to which (in accordance with paragraph 3) he is required to have regard, he shall, within 21 days of their receipt, by notice in writing to the person by whom the observations were made state his response to the observations.

Decision

19. The scheme of the provisions is designed to protect the interests of tenants. Whether it is reasonable to dispense with any particular requirements in an individual case must be considered in relation to the scheme of the provisions and its purpose.
20. The Tribunal must have a cogent reason for dispensing with the consultation requirements, the purpose of which is that leaseholders who may ultimately pay the bill are fully aware of what works are being proposed, the cost thereof and have the opportunity to nominate contractors.
21. This application is for dispensation from consultation of leaseholders over the selection and appointment of a contractor to the landlord for provision of urgent remedial works to the front steps of the Property. The applicant complied with the Tribunal directions and the Tribunal received no response for or against the proposal.
22. On this basis, the Tribunal is satisfied that it is reasonable to dispense with requirements and determines that those parts of the consultation process under the Act as set out in The Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003 which have not been complied with may be dispensed with on this occasion.
- 24. It should be noted that in making its determination of this application, it does not concern the issue of whether any service charge costs are reasonable or indeed payable by the leaseholders. The Tribunal's determination is limited to this application for dispensation of consultation requirements under S20ZA of the Act.**
- 25. Such costs may be the subject of a separate challenge in a subsequent application brought by a leaseholder at a later date under S.27A of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.**

N Martindale FRICS

18 February 2020