



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

**Case Reference** : **LON/OOAB/LDC/2019/0024**

**Property** : **1 – 99 Rennie Court and 1 – 87  
River Court Upper Ground London  
SE1 9LP**

**Applicant** : **Kings Reach Flats Management  
Limited**

**Representatives** : **-**

**Respondents** : **The leaseholders of 1 – 99 Rennie  
Court and 1 – 87 River Court Upper  
Ground London SE1 9LP named on  
the schedule attached to the  
application**

**Objecting tenant** : **-**

**Type of Application** : **Application for the dispensation of  
consultation requirements  
pursuant to S. 20ZA of the  
Landlord and Tenant Act 1985**

**Tribunal Members** : **Judge Professor Robert M Abbey  
Sue Coughlin MCIEH**

**Venue of Paper Based  
Hearing** : **10 Alfred Place, London WC1E 7LR**

**Date of Decision** : **25<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

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**DECISION**

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## **Decisions of the Tribunal**

- (1) The Tribunal grants the application for the dispensation of all or any of the consultation requirements provided for by section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Section 20ZA of the same Act).
- (2) The reasons for our decisions are set out below.

## **The background to the application**

1. The property comprises two apartment blocks containing numerous residential properties along with communal areas. The Applicant seeks dispensation under section 20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (“the 1985 Act”) from all the consultation requirements imposed on the landlord by section 20 of the 1985 Act, (see the Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI2003/1987), Schedule 4.) The request for dispensation concerns health and safety works dealing with various electrical works highlighted in electrical installation condition reports dated 31 May 2018. The works include urgent remedial action as well as works of improvement. The reports identified potentially dangerous issues such as wrong sized fuses and accessible live parts as well as recommended improvements such as dealing with the lack of warning labels or the absence of RCD (residual current protection) devices.
2. Section 20ZA relates to consultation requirements and provides as follows:

*“(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.*

*(2)In section 20 and this section—*

*“qualifying works” means works on a building or any other premises, and “qualifying long term agreement” means (subject to subsection (3)) an agreement entered into, by or on behalf of the landlord or a superior landlord, for a term of more than twelve months.*

*....*

*(4)In section 20 and this section “the consultation requirements” means requirements prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.*

*(5)Regulations under subsection (4) may in particular include provision requiring the landlord—*

- (a) to provide details of proposed works or agreements to tenants or the recognised tenants' association representing them,*
- (b) to obtain estimates for proposed works or agreements,*
- (c) to invite tenants or the recognised tenants' association to propose the names of persons from whom the landlord should try to obtain other estimates,*
- (d) to have regard to observations made by tenants or the recognised tenants' association in relation to proposed works or agreements and estimates, and*
- (e) to give reasons in prescribed circumstances for carrying out works or entering into agreements.*

3. At the time of a hearing for Directions on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019 Mrs E Flint FRICS required tenants who opposed the application to make their objections known on the reply form produced with the Directions. No objections were received by the Tribunal or sent to the Tribunal via the applicant.
4. In essence, the works mentioned above are required to action health and safety works dealing with electrical works. The works include urgent remedial action as well as works of improvement. The reports identified potentially dangerous issues/defects. These were extensive and covered complex as well as straightforward issues, from the lack of appropriate warning labels right up to accessible live parts within the electrical system.

### **The decision**

5. By Directions of the tribunal dated 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019 it was decided that the application be determined without a hearing.
6. The tribunal had before it a small bundle of documents prepared by the applicant that contained the application, grounds for making the application including electrical installation condition reports, copy correspondence, tender invitations, a specimen copy lease and copy Tribunal Directions.

### **The issues**

7. The only issue for the Tribunal to decide is whether or not it is reasonable to dispense with the statutory consultation requirements. **This application does not concern the issue of whether or not service charges will be reasonable or payable.**
8. Having read the evidence and submissions from the Applicant and having considered all of the copy deeds, reports, documents and

grounds for making the application provided by the applicant, the Tribunal determines the dispensation issues as follows.

9. Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended) and the Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003 require a landlord planning to undertake major works, where a leaseholder will be required to contribute over £250 towards those works, to consult the leaseholders in a specified form.
10. Should a landlord not comply with the correct consultation procedure, it is possible to obtain dispensation from compliance with these requirements by such an application as is this one before the Tribunal. Essentially the Tribunal have to be satisfied that it is reasonable to do so.
11. In the case of *Daejan Investments Limited v Benson* [2013] UKSC 14 by a majority decision (3-2), the Supreme Court considered the dispensation provisions and set out guidelines as to how they should be applied.
12. The Supreme Court came to the following conclusions:
  - a. The correct legal test on an application to the Tribunal for dispensation is:

“Would the flat owners suffer any relevant prejudice, and if so, what relevant prejudice, as a result of the landlord’s failure to comply with the requirements?”
  - b. The purpose of the consultation procedure is to ensure leaseholders are protected from paying for inappropriate works or paying more than would be appropriate.
  - c. In considering applications for dispensation the Tribunal should focus on whether the leaseholders were prejudiced in either respect by the landlord’s failure to comply.
  - d. The Tribunal has the power to grant dispensation on appropriate terms and can impose conditions.
  - e. The factual burden of identifying some relevant prejudice is on the leaseholders. Once they have shown a credible case for prejudice, the Tribunal should look to the landlord to rebut it.
  - f. The onus is on the leaseholders to establish:
    - i. what steps they would have taken had the breach not happened and

- ii. in what way their rights under (b) above have been prejudiced as a consequence.
13. Accordingly, the Tribunal had to consider whether there was any prejudice that may have arisen out of the conduct of the lessor/applicant and whether it was reasonable for the Tribunal to grant dispensation following the guidance set out above. It should also be remembered that no leaseholder has indicated that they actually oppose the application.
14. The tribunal is of the view that, in the absence of any written objections from any of the leaseholders, it could not find prejudice to any of the tenants of the properties by the electrical works required to address the health and safety concerns expressed in the electrical installation condition reports. The Tribunal was mindful of the fact that electrical supply defects are clearly such that they will give rise to the need for urgent works. It is these works that will require dispensation.
15. The applicant believes that the electrical works are vital given the nature of the problems reported to the agents acting for the applicant. The applicant also says that in effect the tenants of the properties have not suffered any prejudice by the failure to consult. On the evidence before it the Tribunal agrees with this conclusion and believes that it is reasonable to allow dispensation in relation to the subject matter of the application. However, the Tribunal did note that the electrical installation condition reports were dated 31 May 2018 and yet this dispensation application was only submitted to the Tribunal on 1 February 2019, some eight months later.
16. Rights of appeal made available to parties to this dispute are set out in an Annex to this decision. The applicant shall be responsible for serving a copy of the tribunal's decision on all leaseholders. Furthermore, the applicant shall place a copy of the tribunal's decision on dispensation together with an explanation of the leaseholders' appeal rights on its website within 7 days of receipt and shall maintain it there for at least 3 months, with a sufficiently prominent link to both on its home page. In this way, leaseholders who have not returned the reply form may view the tribunal's eventual decision on dispensation and their appeal rights on the applicant's website.

**Name:** Judge Professor Robert  
M. Abbey

**Date:** 25 March 2019

## **ANNEX - RIGHTS OF APPEAL**

1. If a party wishes to appeal this decision to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) then a written application for permission must be made to the First-tier Tribunal at the Regional office which has been dealing with the case.
2. The application for permission to appeal must arrive at the Regional office within 28 days after the Tribunal sends written reasons for the decision to the person making the application.
3. If the application is not made within the 28 day time limit, such application must include a request for an extension of time and the reason for not complying with the 28 day time limit; the Tribunal will then look at such reason(s) and decide whether to allow the application for permission to appeal to proceed despite not being within the time limit.
4. The application for permission to appeal must identify the decision of the Tribunal to which it relates (i.e. give the date, the property and the case number), state the grounds of appeal, and state the result the party making the application is seeking.