



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

Case Reference : **LON/00AM/LDC/2020/0095**

HMCTS Code : **P:PAPERREMOTE**

Property : **13 Atkins Square, Dalston Lane
London E8 1FA**

Applicant : **Peabody Trust**

Respondents : **58 Leaseholders at 13 Atkins
Square, London E8**

Type of Application : **Application under section 20ZA to
dispense with consultation
requirements for installing fire
alarm and detection system**

Tribunal Member : **Mrs A Rawlence MRICS**

**Date and venue of
Paper Determination** : **8 December 2020, decided on the
papers.**

Date of Decision :

DECISION

Covid-19 pandemic: description of hearing:

This has been a remote hearing on the papers which has been not objected to by the parties. The form of remote hearing was P:PAPERREMOTE. A face-to-face hearing was not held because it was not practicable, and all issues could be determined on paper.

Decision of the tribunal

- I. The tribunal grants dispensation in respect of the installation of fire alarm and detection system to the premises known as 13 Atkins Square, Dalston Lane, London E8 1FA**

- II. The Tribunal orders that details of the cost together with an estimate of the service charges payable by the leaseholders shall be provided to the leaseholders within 28 days, if not already done so.**

The Application

1. Peabody Trust (“The Applicant”) by an application dated 20 July 2020 sought dispensation under section 20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (“The Act”) from all of the consultation requirements imposed on the landlord by section 20 of the 1985 Act¹.

2. 13 Atkins Square, Dalston Lane, London E8 1FA (“The Property”), which is the subject of the application, is a purpose built block of 58 flats.

The Background

3. Directions were given in writing on 23 July 2020, for the progress of this case.

4. By 10 August 2020 the Applicant

Was to notify each leaseholder of the application

Provide a copy of the application plus additional documents outlined in the directions

¹ See Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI2003/1987)

If feasible, make a copy of the documents available on the Applicant's website and any further documentation

Notify all leaseholders that any response to the application should be made by 31 August 2020.

5. The Applicant was to provide a digital, indexed and paginated PDF bundle for the Tribunal and any leaseholder who had opposed the application or requested a copy of the bundle.
6. The Directions also provided that the application could be determined on the basis of written representations. However, both parties were given the option of making a request for a hearing by 11 September 2020. Neither the Applicant nor the Respondents have requested a hearing, and the Tribunal are satisfied that there is sufficient information before it to enable it to decide this matter without injustice to any party without a hearing.
7. The Directions further stated that the Tribunal would not inspect the Property but, where necessary, will rely upon any plan and photographs provided by the parties.
8. Following issues raised in August and September 2020, a Case Management Conference was held on 30 September 2020 between the parties.
9. Further directions were given in writing on 30 September 2020.
10. By 10 November 2020 the Applicant was to confirm to the leaseholders:

That the Applicant did not rely upon any supplementary statement other than the material in the Application dated 20 July 2020

That no other pre-works consultation is relied upon other than the section 20 notice dated 27 July 2020

That the reasons relied upon by the Applicant were as contained in the Application

That at date of 10 August 2020 the Applicant did not have any quotations for the works

11. A revised date for the receipt of the bundle was made and the matter would be determined in the week beginning 7 December 2020.

The Applicant's case

12. The Applicant is the freeholder of the subject property, a purpose built block of flats.
13. The Respondents are the lessees of the 58 flats in the property.
14. In June 2020 concerns were raised about the cladding of the property.
15. A temporary simultaneous evacuation strategy was put in place. This would no longer be required when a fire alarm and detection system was in operation.
16. On 20 July the Applicant informed the Respondents of the intention to install such a system and works were due to start on 27 July 2020.
17. On 27 July 2020 a Section 20 notice was sent to every leaseholder. However, it had also been necessary to apply for dispensation because of the length of time involved in the consultation process. This was the subject of this application.
18. Following the Case Management Conference and the revised directions, the Applicant on 4 November 2020 had provided the assurances sought in the Directions and all information including two quotations, the re-organised paginated bundle and a specimen lease had been made available online with access details to every leaseholder.
19. Works were due to start on 30 October 2020 for the installation of a fire alarm and detection system.

The Respondents' Position

20. The Tribunal notes that by e-mail dated 2 December Mr Knight of the Residents' Association states:

The Applicant's bundle appears to contain the necessary material for the final hearing. The Residents' Association's bundle was relevant to case management, not to the final hearing. The Residents' Association does not intend to file any further material and has not taken a position in these proceedings as to whether the application should be allowed.

21. The Tribunal notes that there have been no other written representations or objections.

The Tribunal's decision

22. The Tribunal has decided that it is reasonable to dispense with the statutory consultation requirements of section 20 of the Act in relation to the replacement steps at The Property in 2020.

Reasons for the decision

23. The Tribunal, in reaching its decision, had to consider whether it was reasonable to grant dispensation. The relevant statutory provisions are found in subsection 20ZA (1) of the 1985 Act under heading "Consultation Requirements: Supplementary". That subsection reads as follows: "*Where as 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 it is reasonable to dispense with the requirements*".
24. The Tribunal find that the Applicant was unable to consult fully under section 20 due to the urgent nature of the work and the time need to carry out a full, section 20 consultation exercise.
25. Accordingly, the Tribunal is satisfied the consultation procedure ought to be dispensed with. This decision of the Tribunal is limited to the need to consult under section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 for this work. **Given this, the parties attention is drawn to the fact that the Tribunal have not made a determination on the reasonableness and payability of the service charges under Section 27 A of the 1985 Act for this work.**
26. The Respondents will, of course, enjoy the protection of section 27A of the 1985 Act so that if they consider the costs of the work are not reasonable (on the grounds set out above or any other ground) they may make an application to the tribunal for a determination of their liability to pay the resultant service charge.

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.

Anthea J Rawlence
Chair

Appendix of relevant legislation

Landlord and Tenant Act 1985

Section 27A

- (1) An application may be made to a leasehold valuation tribunal for a determination whether a service charge is payable and, if it is, as to -
 - (a) the person by whom it is payable,
 - (b) the person to whom it is payable,
 - (c) the amount which is payable,
 - (d) the date at or by which it is payable, and
 - (e) the manner in which it is payable.
- (2) Subsection (1) applies whether or not any payment has been made.
- (3) An application may also be made to a leasehold valuation tribunal for a determination whether, if costs were incurred for services, repairs, maintenance, improvements, insurance or management of any specified description, a service charge would be payable for the costs and, if it would, as to -
 - (a) the person by whom it would be payable,
 - (b) the person to whom it would be payable,
 - (c) the amount which would be payable,
 - (d) the date at or by which it would be payable, and
 - (e) the manner in which it would be payable.
- (4) No application under subsection (1) or (3) may be made in respect of a matter which -
 - (a) has been agreed or admitted by the tenant,
 - (b) has been, or is to be, referred to arbitration pursuant to a post-dispute arbitration agreement to which the tenant is a party,
 - (c) has been the subject of determination by a court, or
 - (d) has been the subject of determination by an arbitral tribunal pursuant to a post-dispute arbitration agreement.
- (5) But the tenant is not to be taken to have agreed or admitted any matter by reason only of having made any payment.

Section 20

- (1) Where this section applies to any qualifying works or qualifying long term agreement, the relevant contributions of tenants are limited in accordance with subsection (6) or (7) (or both) unless the consultation requirements have been either—
 - (a) complied with in relation to the works or agreement, or
 - (b) dispensed with in relation to the works or agreement by (or on appeal from) a leasehold valuation tribunal.

- (2) In this section "relevant contribution", in relation to a tenant and any works or agreement, is the amount which he may be required under the terms of his lease to contribute (by the payment of service charges) to relevant costs incurred on carrying out the works or under the agreement.
- (3) This section applies to qualifying works if relevant costs incurred on carrying out the works exceed an appropriate amount.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that this section applies to a qualifying long term agreement—
 - (a) if relevant costs incurred under the agreement exceed an appropriate amount, or
 - (b) if relevant costs incurred under the agreement during a period prescribed by the regulations exceed an appropriate amount.
- (5) An appropriate amount is an amount set by regulations made by the Secretary of State; and the regulations may make provision for either or both of the following to be an appropriate amount—
 - (a) an amount prescribed by, or determined in accordance with, the regulations, and
 - (b) an amount which results in the relevant contribution of any one or more tenants being an amount prescribed by, or determined in accordance with, the regulations.
- (6) Where an appropriate amount is set by virtue of paragraph (a) of subsection (5), the amount of the relevant costs incurred on carrying out the works or under the agreement which may be taken into account in determining the relevant contributions of tenants is limited to the appropriate amount.
- (7) Where an appropriate amount is set by virtue of paragraph (b) of that subsection, the amount of the relevant contribution of the tenant, or each of the tenants, whose relevant contribution would otherwise exceed the amount prescribed by, or determined in accordance with, the regulations is limited to the amount so prescribed or determined.]

1. S20ZA Consultation requirements: supplementary

- (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.
- (3) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that an agreement is not a qualifying long term agreement—
 - (a) if it is an agreement of a description prescribed by the regulations, or
 - (b) in any circumstances so prescribed.
 - (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.
 - (6) Regulations under section 20 or this section—
 - (a) may make provision generally or only in relation to specific cases, and
 - (b) may make different provision for different purposes.
 - (7) Regulations under section 20 or this section shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament. [...]
2. The relevant Regulations referred to in section 20 are those set out in Part 2 of Schedule 4 of the Service Charge (Consultation etc) (England) Regulations 2003.