



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

Case Reference : CHI/43UF/LDC/2022/0117

Property : St Johns House, 1 Springfield Road,
Horsham, West Sussex, RH12 2PJ

Applicant : St Johns House (Horsham) Management
Ltd

Representative : HML Group

Respondents : The Leaseholders

Representative :

Type of Application : To dispense with the requirement to
consult lessees about major works
section 20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant
Act 1985

Tribunal Member(s) : Judge Tildesley OBE

**Date and Venue of
Hearing** : Determination on Papers

Date of Decision : 7 February 2023

DECISION

The Application

1. The Applicant seeks dispensation under Section 20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 from the consultation requirements imposed on the landlord by Section 20 of the 1985 Act. The application was received on 22 December 2022.
2. The property is a purpose built development comprising 11 residential leasehold units over three storeys plus basement level.
3. The Applicant requests dispensation from consultation for urgent repairs to the lift which has already been started. The Applicant stated that the main fault with the lift was the driver unit ceasing to operate. The contractor was only able to identify the fault once the works had started. There were then problems in sourcing the parts. The lift was finally back in operation on 12 September 2022. There were still ongoing minor repairs to the lift. The Applicant said that it did not formally consult the leaseholders because it did not anticipate the replacement of the driver unit.
4. On 4 January 2023 the Tribunal directed the Applicant to serve the application and directions on the Respondents, which the Applicant did on 13 January 2023.
5. The Tribunal required the Respondents to return a pro-forma to the Tribunal and to the Applicant by 27 January 2023 indicating whether they agreed or disagreed with the Application.
6. The Tribunal received forms from two Respondents. One from Nigel Spreadbury of Flat 7 and one from Diane King of Flat 10 who both agreed with the Application and for it to be dealt with on the papers.

Determination

7. The 1985 Act provides leaseholders with safeguards in respect of the recovery of the landlord's costs in connection with qualifying works. Section 19 ensures that the landlord can only recover those costs that are reasonably incurred on works that are carried out to a reasonable standard. Section 20 requires the landlord to consult with leaseholders in a prescribed manner about the qualifying works. If the landlord fails to do this, a leaseholder's contribution is limited to £250, unless the Tribunal dispenses with the requirement to consult.
8. In this case the Tribunal's decision is confined to the dispensation from the consultation requirements in respect of the works under section 20ZA of the 1985 Act. The Tribunal is not making a determination on whether the costs of those works are reasonable or payable. If a leaseholder wishes to challenge the reasonableness of those costs, then a separate application under section 27A of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 would have to be made.

9. Section 20ZA does not elaborate on the circumstances in which it might be reasonable to dispense with the consultation requirements. On the face of the wording, the Tribunal is given a broad discretion on whether to grant or refuse dispensation. The discretion, however, must be exercised in the context of the legal safeguards given to the Applicant under sections 19 and 20 of the 1985 Act. This was the conclusion of the Supreme Court in *Daejan Investments Ltd v Benson and Others* [2013] UKSC 14 & 54 which decided that the Tribunal should focus on the issue of prejudice to the tenant in respect of the statutory safeguards.
10. Lord Neuberger in *Daejan* said at paragraph 44

“Given that the purpose of the Requirements is to ensure that the tenants are protected from (i) paying for inappropriate works or (ii) paying more than would be appropriate, it seems to me that the issue on which the LVT should focus when entertaining an application by a landlord under s 20ZA(1) must be the extent, if any, to which the tenants were prejudiced in either respect by the failure of the landlord to comply with the Requirements”.
11. Thus, the correct approach to an application for dispensation is for the Tribunal to decide whether and if so to what extent the leaseholders would suffer relevant prejudice if unconditional dispensation was granted. The factual burden is on the leaseholders to identify any relevant prejudice which they claim they might have suffered. If the leaseholders show a creditable case for prejudice, the Tribunal should look to the landlord to rebut it, failing which it should, in the absence of good reason to the contrary, require the landlord to reduce the amount claimed as service charges to compensate the leaseholders fully for that prejudice.
12. The Tribunal now turns to the facts. The Tribunal is satisfied that it was necessary to carry out the works to repair the lift and that those works were urgent. The Tribunal accepts the Applicant’s explanation that they did not consult on the works because it was not aware of the scope of them until the repairs had started. The Tribunal takes into account that no leaseholder has objected to the Application. The Tribunal observes that the two leaseholders who responded to the Application agreed with it.
13. The Tribunal is, therefore, satisfied that the leaseholders would suffer no relevant prejudice if dispensation from consultation was granted.

Decision

14. **The Tribunal grants an order dispensing with the consultation requirements in respect of the remedial works to the lift.**
15. The Tribunal directs the Applicant to supply a copy of the decision to the leaseholders and confirm that it has served the decision on them.

RIGHTS OF APPEAL

1. A person wishing to appeal this decision to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) must seek permission to do so by making written application by email to rpsouthern@justice.gov.uk to the First-tier Tribunal at the Regional office which has been dealing with the case.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 application is seeking.