



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

Case Reference	:	CHI/00HA/LDC/2023/0078
Property	:	17-32 Hillside Road, Moorfields, Bath, BA2 3NU
Applicant	:	Curo Places Ltd
Representative	:	
Respondent	:	Ken Pearson – Flat 19 James Roberts – Flat 24 Zoe Gelard – Flat 29
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	:	D Banfield FRICS, Regional Surveyor
Date of Decision	:	26 October 2023

DECISION

The Tribunal grants dispensation from the consultation requirements of S.20 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 in respect of the roof replacement works.

In granting dispensation, the Tribunal makes no determination as to whether any service charge costs are reasonable or payable.

The Applicant must send copies of this determination to the lessees.

Background

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 10 July 2023.

2. The property is described as a

“Block consisting of 15, 1 - 2 bedroom flats, in a purpose built block from 1968. The block consists of 4 storeys with a flat roof.”

3. The Applicant explains that the

“Roof of property needs replacing, following failed attempts at patch repairs. One property has had to find alternative accommodation due to the ceiling is unsafe. If no action is taken urgently, this risks further damage to flats in the block, as well as the main structure of the building. Some tenants are unable to live in their properties due to damage.”

4. And further

“Curo instructed Garland to carry out an independent condition survey (Appendix A). The inspection report give details on the current roof state and for it's need to be replaced.

All leaseholders have been contacted via letter (Appendix B) which was hand delivered on Thursday 29th June 2023, explaining what works needs to be carried out and why. Witin (sic) the letter it provides tender information for roof replacments (sic) carried out at blocks similar. Leaseholder have been offered a meeting to discuss the works on 4th July on site, so that the surveyor can attend to explain the scope of works. There has been email corespondance with the leaseholder regarding the works, offering further meetings (Appendix C)

On 22nd May Rob Llewelyn, Project Surveyor employed by Curo attended the property, whilst he was attending the property a tenant reported a leak in his flat. This customer has a number of mental health difficulties and therefore did not report the leak. The bedroom (1 bed flat) was unhabitual and he is currently sleeping in his front room. Curo have offered to move him, however it has decided due to his mental health he would not be able to cope with being decanted elsewhere.

Previosu (sic) attempts have been made to repair the roof, however the roof is no longer fit for repair and needs replacement. This has been confrimed by an indepedant (sic) contractor who had provided their report.

Curo have recently had to carry out simmilar (sic) works on 2 blocks of the same structure, where we carried out a tendering process and received several quotations. These works were appointed to the contractors with the lowest quote and we have been pleased with the standard of works carried out by the appointed contractor. These tender quotes were received on 05/09/22 and the works were

completed to these blocks on 31st May 23, therefore it is Curo's intention to use the same contractor to carry out the works.”

5. The Tribunal made Directions on 28 September 2023 and sent them to the parties setting out a timetable for the disposal together with a form for the lessees to indicate to the Tribunal whether they agreed with or opposed the application and whether they requested an oral hearing. If the Leaseholders agreed with the application or failed to return the form they would be removed as a Respondent although they would remain bound by the Tribunal's Decision.
6. No replies were received by the Tribunal and the Applicant confirmed that none had been received by them. No requests for an oral hearing were made and the matter is therefore determined on the papers in accordance with Rule 31 of the Tribunal's Procedural Rules.
7. Before making this determination, the papers received were examined to determine whether the issues remained capable of determination without an oral hearing and it was decided that they were, given that the application remained unchallenged.

The Law

8. The relevant section of the Act reads as follows:

S.20 ZA Consultation requirements:
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.
9. 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.
 - a. The main question for the Tribunal when considering how to exercise its jurisdiction in accordance with section 20ZA is the real prejudice to the tenants flowing from the landlord's breach of the consultation requirements.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Dispensation should not be refused solely because the landlord seriously breached, or departed from, the consultation requirements.
 - d. The Tribunal has power to grant a dispensation as it thinks fit, provided that any terms are appropriate.

- e. 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).
- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- h. 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.
- i. Once the tenants had shown a credible case for prejudice, the Tribunal should look to the landlord to rebut it.

Evidence

- 10. The Applicant's case is set out in paragraph 2,3 and 4 above.

Determination

- 11. Dispensation from the consultation requirements of S.20 of the Act may be given where the Tribunal is satisfied that it is reasonable to dispense with those requirements. Guidance on how such power may be exercised is provided by the leading case of Daejan v Benson referred to above.
- 12. No objections have been received from the lessees and in these circumstances I am prepared to grant dispensation.
- 13. **The Tribunal therefore grants dispensation from the consultation requirements of S.20 Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 in respect of the roof replacement works.**
- 14. In granting dispensation, the Tribunal makes no determination as to whether any service charge costs are reasonable or payable.
- 15. The Applicant must send copies of this determination to the lessees.

D Banfield FRICS
26 October 2023

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.