



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

**Case reference** : **LON/00BE/LDC/2024/0031**

**Property** : **Charlotte Court, 68B Old Kent Road, London, SE1 4NU**

**Applicant** : **The Charlotte Court (London) RTM Company Limited**

**Representative** : **Hurford Salvi Carr, Managing Agents, Ref: H360**

**Respondents** : **(1) Mr L Sherwood (Flat 1)  
(2) The Lessees of Charlotte Court**

**Representative** : **N/A**

**Type of application** : **For dispensation under section 20ZA of the Landlord & Tenant Act 1985**

**Tribunal member** : **Tribunal Judge I Mohabir**

**Date of decision** : **16 April 2024**

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**DECISION**

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## ***Introduction***

1. The Applicant seeks an order pursuant to s.20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (“the Act”) for *retrospective* dispensation with the consultation requirements in respect of the installation of a fire detection system and heat and combined sounders for all of the 30 residential flats at Charlotte court, 68B Old Kent Road, London, SE1 4NU (“the property”).
2. The Applicant is the Right to Manage company that is responsible for the overall management of the property and the Respondents are the long leaseholders. It is not known why the only Respondent named in the application is Mr Sherwood of Flat 1. This is clearly incorrect, because the statutory duty to carry out statutory consultation applies to all of the leaseholders. Therefore, dispensation can only be granted in relation to all of the leaseholders and not any particular leaseholder.
3. The property is described as being a former school building (late Victorian) that has been converted into 30 residential flats in late 1990's comprised of 3 blocks, 5 floors, with roof access across all three blocks.
4. On 22 January 2024, the London fire Brigade carried out an inspection of the property and advised that a Waking Watch be implemented with immediate effect until a fire alarm can be installed. The cost of the Waking Watch to leaseholders is £4,000 per week. The fire alarm would be installed in the week commencing 5 February 2024 as, these works were deemed to be emergency work.
5. On 29 January 2024, the managing agent on behalf of the Applicant served a Notice of Intention on the Respondents setting out the need to carry out the installation of a fire alarm and associated works. The stated time limit for observations to be made by the leaseholders was 4 February 2024.
6. On 31 January 2024, a Notice of Estimates was served on the Respondents setting out the two estimates that had been obtained for the proposed works. These were from Firemain Group in the sum of £32,295.36 excluding VAT and Firetechnics Systems in the sum of £44,684.21 excluding VAT respectively. The stated time limit for the leaseholders to make any observations was 8 April 2024.
7. On 21 February 2024, the Applicant advised the Respondents that the fire alarm and associated works had been completed at a cost of the estimate provided by Fireman Group.
8. By an application dated 31 January 2024, the Applicant made this application seeking retrospective dispensation from the requirement to carry out statutory in relation to the installation of the fire alarm system at the property.

9. On 19 February 2024, the Tribunal issued Directions. The Respondents were directed to respond to the application stating whether they objected to it in any way.
10. None of the Respondents have objected to the application.

### ***Relevant Law***

11. This is set out in the Appendix annexed hereto.

### ***Decision***

12. As directed, the Tribunal's determination "on the papers" took place on 16 April 2024 and was based solely on the documentary evidence filed by the Applicant. As stated earlier, no objections had been received from any of the Respondents nor had they filed any evidence.
13. The relevant test to be applied in an application such as this has been set out in the Supreme Court decision in ***Daejan Investments Ltd v Benson & Ors*** [2013] UKSC 14 where it was held that the purpose of the consultation requirements imposed by section 20 of the Act was to ensure that tenants were protected from paying for inappropriate works or paying more than was appropriate. In other words, a tenant should suffer no prejudice in this way.
14. The issue before the Tribunal was whether dispensation should be granted in relation to the requirement to carry out statutory consultation with the leaseholders regarding the fire compartmentation works. As stated in the directions order, the Tribunal is not concerned about the actual cost that has been incurred.
15. It should be noted that the attempt by the Applicant's managing agent, Hurford Salvi Carr, is invalid because insufficient time had been allowed for the leaseholders to make observations both in relation to the Notice of Intention and Estimates. However, this is of no effect because the Applicant is seeking retrospective dispensation from the requirement to carry out statutory consultation under section 20 of the Act.
16. The Tribunal granted the application for the following reasons:
  - (a) the Tribunal was satisfied that the absence of any or adequate fire alarm system in the property presented an urgent and immediate fire safety risk to all of the leaseholders.
  - (b) the installation of the fire alarm system was carried out on the advice of the London Fire Brigade.
  - (c) had the Applicant carried out statutory consultation, the delay of approximately 2 or 3 months would have financially prejudiced the leaseholders by incurring a cost of £4,000 per week for the

implementation of the Waking Watch system with the overall resulting cost being far higher by reason of that delay.

- (d) at all material times, the Tribunal was satisfied that the Respondents have been kept informed of the need, scope and estimated cost of the proposed works.
  - (e) the Tribunal was satisfied that the Respondents have been served with the application and the evidence in support and there has been no objection from any of them.
  - (f) importantly, the real prejudice to the Respondents would be in the cost of the works and they have the statutory protection of section 19 of the Act, which preserves their right to challenge the actual costs incurred by making a separate service charge application under section 27A of the Act.
17. The Tribunal, therefore, concluded that the Respondents were not being prejudiced by the Applicant's failure to consult and the application was granted as sought.
18. It should be noted that in granting this part of the application, the Tribunal makes no finding that the scope and estimated cost of the repairs are reasonable.

**Name:** Tribunal Judge I  
Mohabir

**Date:** 16 April 2024

### **Rights of appeal**

By rule 36(2) of the Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) Rules 2013, the tribunal is required to notify the parties about any right of appeal they may have.

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.

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.

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.

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.

If the tribunal refuses to grant permission to appeal, a further application for permission may be made to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber).

## **Appendix of relevant legislation**

### **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended)**

#### **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) the appropriate 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.

**Section 20ZA**

- (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.