



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

Case reference : LON/00BE/LDC/2024/0097

HMCTS code : P: PAPERREMOTE

Property : Conway Court, 543/545 Lordship Lane,
London, SE22 8LB

Applicant : Conway Court Residents' Association
Company Limited

Representative : Prime Property Management

Respondent : The leaseholders of Conway Court,
543/545 Lordship Lane, London, SE22
8LB

Representative : Not represented

Type of application : Section 20ZA of the Landlord and
Tenant Act 1985

Tribunal members : Judge Tueje

Venue : 10 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7LR

Date of decision : 30th October 2024

DECISION

Description of hearing

This has been a remote hearing on the papers which has been consented to by the Applicant and not objected to by any Respondent. The form of the remote hearing was P:PAPERREMOTE. A face-to-face hearing was not held because no-one requested a hearing and all issues could be determined on paper.

Decision of the Tribunal

In this determination, statutory references relate to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 unless otherwise stated.

- (1) The Tribunal grants unconditional dispensation pursuant to section 20ZA in respect of the installation of a fire alarm at Conway Court, 543/545 Lordship Lane, London, SE22 8LB (the “Property”). The cost of which amounted to £18,604.57 including VAT.
- (2) This decision does not affect the Tribunal’s jurisdiction upon any future application to make a determination under section 27A in respect of liability to pay, for a reason other than non-consultation in respect of the subject works, and the reasonableness and/or cost of the subject works.

The Application

1. This Application under section 20ZA, is dated 3rd April 2024, and seeks dispensation from the statutory consultation requirements in respect of the above-mentioned works carried out at the Property.

Background

2. The Applicant is the landlord of the Property, and the Respondents are the leasehold owners of the flats within the Property.
3. The Application relates to a fire alarm that was installed in or around 14th March 2024.
4. The Applicant submitted an electronic bundle which contained a number of seemingly unrelated documents regarding roof repairs. Insofar as is relevant to the current application, the bundle included the following:
 - 4.1 The application form requesting dispensation;
 - 4.2 The Tribunal’s directions order dated 8th August 2024 requiring, amongst other things, that the Applicant does the following;
 - (i) Send a copy of the directions order to the Respondents;
 - (ii) Send a copy of the Application to the Respondents; and
 - (iii) Display a copy of both of the above documents in a prominent place in the common parts of the Property.
 - 4.3 An e-mail from the Applicant sent to leaseholders on 20th August 2024 attaching the documents referred to at paragraphs 5.2(i) to 5.2(ii).
 - 4.4 An invoice from Triple Star Fire and Security Limited dated 28th March 2024 for installing a fire alarm amounting to £18, 604.57 including VAT;

- 4.5 An undated summary of application;
 - 4.6 An undated Applicant's statement;
 - 4.7 E-mails exchanged by the Applicant's representative on 7th October 2024 stating it had received no response from the Respondents to the Application; and
 - 4.8 A sample lease.
5. The grounds for the Application, as set out in the form, state as follows:
- Following a meeting with the London Fire Brigade on 13th March, they advised the building requires an urgent fire alarm installed which will be interlinked into the flats, this is due to the evacuation policy being changed from stay put 2 simultaneous we have not placed any interim measures as the work is being completed this week due to the urgency. We currently hold enough funds in the bank to have these works completed, so we're not seeking payments from leaseholders.*
6. As stated, it appears from the Applicant's e-mail sent on 20th August 2024 (see paragraph 4.3 above), that the leaseholders are aware of the Application, and that the Tribunal's directions provide an opportunity for them to raise any objections to the Application.
7. It also seems from Applicant's e-mail sent to the Tribunal on 7th October 2024 that none of the leaseholders have raised any objections to the Application.

The Legal Framework

8. So far as is relevant, section 20 states:
- (1) *Where this section applies to any qualifying works or qualifying long term agreement, the relevant contributions of tenants are limited in accordance with subsections (6) or (7) (or both) unless the consultation have been either-*
 - (a) *Complied with in relation to the works or agreement, or*
 - (b) *Except in the case of works to which section 20D applies, 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 payment of service charges) to relevant costs incurred on carrying out the works under the agreement.*
 - (3) *This section applies to qualifying works if relevant costs incurred or on carrying out the works exceed an appropriate amount.*

9. Section 20ZA(1) continues:

Where an application is made to the appropriate tribunal for a determination to dispense with all or any of the consultation requirements in relation to any qualifying works or qualifying agreement, the tribunal may make the determination if satisfied that it is reasonable to dispense with the requirements.

The Determination

10. In making its decision, the Tribunal took into account the information provided by the Applicant in the bundle, as set out above.
11. In ***Daejan Investments Limited v Benson and others [2013] UKSC 14*** the Supreme Court provided the following guidance when dealing with section 20ZA applications for dispensation of the statutory consultation requirements:
- 11.1 The purpose of sections 19 to 20ZA is to ensure leaseholders are not required to pay any more than is necessary for services provided, and that they are not required to pay for unnecessary or unsatisfactory services.
- 11.2 The Tribunal is to focus on the extent to which leaseholders have been prejudiced by a landlord's failure to comply with the requirements under section 20.
- 11.3 Ordinarily, where the failure to comply with section 20 had not affected the extent, quality and costs of the works carried out, dispensation is more likely to be granted.
- 11.4 The Tribunal's main focus on such applications is what prejudice, if any, have leaseholders suffered.
- 11.5 The leaseholders bear a factual burden of identifying some relevant prejudice that they would or might suffer.
- 11.6 Where leaseholders make a credible case regarding prejudice, the landlord bears the legal burden to rebut this.
- 11.7 If appropriate, the Tribunal may grant conditional dispensation.

The Tribunal's Approach to the Evidence

12. The Tribunal reached its decision after considering the documents in the bundle, and taking into account its assessment of that evidence.
13. This determination does not refer to every matter raised, or every document the Tribunal reviewed or took into account in reaching its decision. However, this doesn't imply that any points raised or documents

not specifically mentioned were disregarded. If a point or document was relevant to a specific issue, it was considered by the Tribunal.

The Tribunal's Decision

14. The Tribunal grants dispensation pursuant to section 20ZA in respect of the cost of installing a fire alarm at the Property as set out in the invoice from Triple Star Fire and Security Limited dated 28th March 2024 amounting to £18,604.57 including VAT.

The Tribunal's Reasons

15. The Tribunal has had regard to the nature of the works and finds these were necessary. The Application, the witness statement and summary of application indicate that the London Fire Brigade required a fire alarm is installed urgently. If this was not done, the Fire Brigade required a waking watch be arranged, which would be expensive and not a permanent solution to the fire safety issues. Therefore, particularly in light of the information provided regarding the London Fire Brigade's view as to the urgency of these works, the Tribunal considers the works were necessary and urgent, and this is the primary reason for granting dispensation.
16. Additionally, the Tribunal takes into account that leaseholders were notified about the Application, and by paragraph 2 of the directions order, leaseholders were afforded an opportunity to object to this application, yet they raised no objections. Therefore, the Tribunal proceeds on the basis that the leaseholders have no objections to the application, and that there has been no relevant prejudice to the leaseholders, because it's likely they would have objected to the application if they considered they would be prejudiced.
17. The Tribunal has balanced the requirement to consult leaseholders against the need to urgently install the fire alarm. On balance, the Tribunal concludes that the need to install the fire alarm in accordance with the Fire Brigade's advice justifies granting dispensation.
18. For the reasons stated at paragraphs 15 to 17 above, the Tribunal is satisfied that it is appropriate to grant dispensation from the consultation requirements bearing in mind the Supreme Court decision in ***Daejan Investments Limited v Benson and others [2013] UKSC 14***.

Name: Judge Tueje

Date: 30th October 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).