



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

Case Reference : **CAM/21UC/LDC/2025/0627**

Property : **12 Gore Lane, Braintree,
Essex CM77 6TU**

Applicant : **Saffron Housing Trust Ltd.**

Representative : **None**

Respondents : **David John Chandler, Joan
Margaret Chandler
(Representative) Thomas Edward
Chandler (Representative) liable to
contribute at the Property**

Representative : **None**

Landlord : **Saffron Housing Trust Ltd.**

Type of Application : **S20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant
Act 1985 - dispensation of
consultation requirements**

Tribunal : **N. Martindale FRICS**

Hearing Centre : **First tier Tribunal (Property
Chamber) Cambridge County
Court, 197 East Road,
Cambridge CB1 1BA**

Date of Decision : **3 June 2025**

DECISION

Decision

1. The Tribunal grants dispensation from the requirements on the applicant to consult all leaseholders under S.20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, in respect of the qualifying works referred to, only.
2. At the date of application it was stated that construction work had not started. It was understood that the landlord was able to recharge costs under the service charge provisions to all leaseholders in the Property.

Background

3. The landlord, applied to the Tribunal under S20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (“the Act”) for the dispensation from all or any of the consultation requirements contained in S20 of the Act.
4. The application dated 7 April 2025 related to the commissioning of works at the Property which appeared to concern works involving the repair and/or replacement of a fixed water and or space heating installation at the Property.

Directions

5. Directions dated 24 April 2025 were issued by Laura Lawless, without an oral hearing. They identified that the respondents were the leaseholder or representatives of the leaseholder of the Property. The Directions provided for the Tribunal to determine the application on or after 5 June 2025, unless a party applied before 15 May 2025 for a hearing.
6. The applicant was to send to each of the leaseholders at the Property; a copy of the application form, brief description of the works, an estimate of the costs of the works including any professional fees and VAT and anything else relied upon, with a copy of the Directions.
7. The applicant was to file with the Tribunal a letter by 1 May 2025, confirming how and when it had been done.
8. Leaseholders who objected to the application were to send a reply form and statement to the Tribunal and applicant, by 15 May 2025. The applicant was to prepare a bundle of documents including the application form, Directions, sample lease and all other documents on which they wanted to rely; all responses from leaseholders, a certificate of compliance referred to above; with two copies to the Tribunal and one to each respondent leaseholder and do so by 22 May 2025.

9. In the event, the Tribunal did not receive any requests for a hearing, nor did it receive any forms in support of or objection to respondents either directly or indirectly via the bundle.
10. The Tribunal determined the case on the application form and of the lease of the Property, received from the applicant only, with copy documents sent to the leaseholder or their representative.

Applicant's Case

11. The application, at box 4 confirms that the Building was a: *"...a two-bedroomed semi-detached house. It is part of Saffron Housing Trust Ltd's HOLD (Home Ownership for Lifelong Disabilities) portfolio."*
12. The application at box 7 confirms that these are to be qualifying works and had not been carried out. They are not part of a long term contract.
13. At box 9 the applicant was content for paper determination and at box 10, indicated the 'Fast Track' preference: However no reason was given.
14. The application at 'Grounds for seeking dispensation', box 1. stated in addition: *"...The boiler has now stopped working entirely and is beyond repair... a full boiler replacement is required for long-term provision of heating... The existing combination boiler will be removed and anew combination boiler installed. The heating controls will be upgraded and replacement radiators installed... The work is anticipated to take two days and the quote from the approved contractor is currently £3,435.47 plus VAT at 20%.. plus 10% administration fees.."*
15. The application at box 2. below this, described the consultation that had been carried out or is proposed to be carried out. *"...to dispense the full Section 20 consultation due to the urgency of the matter and the need to replace the sole source of heating and not water for vulnerable residents as soon as possible. We have served the enclosed Notice of Intention and will now send the enclosed letter to the respondents..."*
16. The application at box 3. below this stated: The application is *"...due to the urgent need to replace the sole source of heating and hot water for residents who are identified as vulnerable.... There is no other source of heating or hot water at the property... The boiler has been serviced regularly and no faults identified. It was last serviced on 14th March 2024 and no issues were identified with the applicant during the service or the gas safety inspection."*
17. The applicant provided one document headed: *"Description of Relevant Works"*. It appeared to the Tribunal that the works required would all be carried out by the in-house team within the landlord's organisation.

18. The undated document referred to the following: 1. Flush heating system including all pipework and radiators. 2. Drain down existing heating system and remove gas combination boiler. 3. Install new replacement combination boiler in same location adjust pipework and electrical connections to suit. 4. Commission and test Installation. 5. Instruct occupants. Estimated cost of the works to the property including VAT at 20%. £3,435.47 + £687.09 VAT = £4,112.56. With admin fees (no VAT) the total cost would be £4,523.82.
19. The landlord's agent copied in to the Tribunal the letter to the leaseholder respondents about the application and sent copies of the documents per the Directions, on 7 April 2025.

Respondent's Case

20. The applicant had identified the residential leaseholders of the house to the Tribunal from whom the service charge would eventually be recovered and had been identified as the potential respondents. The applicant confirmed that there had been no objections from any leaseholder.
21. The Tribunal did not receive any objections or other representations from the leaseholders, either through the applicant, or directly.

The Law

22. S.18 (1) of the Act provides that a service charge is an amount payable by a tenant of a dwelling as part of or in addition to the rent, which is payable for services, repairs, maintenance, improvements or insurance or landlord's costs of management, and the whole or part of which varies or may vary according to the costs incurred by the landlord. S.20 provides for the limitation of service charges in the event that the statutory consultation requirements are not met. The consultation requirements apply where the works are qualifying works (as in this case) and only £250 can be recovered from a tenant for such works unless consultation requirements have either been complied with or dispensed with.
23. Dispensation is dealt with by S.20 ZA of the Act which provides:-
“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.”

24. The consultation requirements for qualifying works under qualifying long term agreements are set out in Schedule 3 of the Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003 as follows:-

1(1) The landlord shall give notice in writing of his intention to carry out qualifying works –

- (a) to each tenant; and**
- (b) where a recognised tenants' association represents some or all of the tenants, to the association.**

(2) The notice shall –

- (a) describe, in general terms, the works proposed to be carried out or specify the place and hours at which a description of the proposed works may be inspected;**
- (b) state the landlord's reasons for considering it necessary to carry out the proposed works;**
- (c) contain a statement of the total amount of the expenditure estimated by the landlord as likely to be incurred by him on and in connection with the proposed works;**
- (d) invite the making, in writing, of observations in relation to the proposed works or the landlord's estimated expenditure**
- (e) specify-**
 - (i) the address to which such observations may be sent;**
 - (ii) that they must be delivered within the relevant period; and**
 - (iii) the period on which the relevant period ends.**

2(1) where a notice under paragraph 1 specifies a place and hours for inspection-

- (a) the place and hours so specified must be reasonable; and**
- (b) a description of the proposed works must be available for inspection, free of charge, at that place and during those hours.**

(2) If facilities to enable copies to be taken are not made available at the times at which the description may be inspected, the landlord shall provide to any tenant, on request and free of charge, a copy of the description.

3. Where, within the relevant period, observations are made in relation to the proposed works or the landlord's estimated expenditure by any tenant or the recognised tenants' association, the landlord shall have regard to those observations.

4. Where the landlord receives observations to which (in accordance with paragraph 3) he is required to have regard, he

shall, within 21 days of their receipt, by notice in writing to the person by whom the observations were made state his response to the observations.

Tribunal's Decision

25. The scheme of the provisions is designed to protect the interests of leaseholders and whether it is reasonable to dispense with any particular requirements in an individual case must be considered in relation to the scheme of the provisions and its purpose.
26. The Tribunal must have a cogent reason for dispensing with the consultation requirements, the purpose of which is that leaseholders who may ultimately pay the bill are fully aware of what works are being proposed, the cost thereof and have the opportunity to nominate contractors where there is no public procurement. The correspondence showed that the applicant complied generally with Directions.
- 27. The terms of this Dispensation from the requirements of Section 20, are:**
28. That this only covers the work set out in the application form. No other documents detailing the extent, quality, or price of the works being carried out and/or to be undertaken in respect of these works at the Property other than any quote and matching invoice from one and the same contractor, as provided to the Tribunal.
29. No dispensation for any prior report, nor ancillary work before or after whichever quote or estimate was accepted by the applicant, is included in this dispensation. In this case only one contractor was contacted by the applicant and provided the work specifications and the price. This cost still remains subject to potential subsequent challenge by any respondent leaseholder, both of the item itself and/or the amount reasonably payable, in the usual way. Other than this no other items are included given dispensation because they were not specifically sought. Those other costs including any professional fees associated with the work will be subject to the annual cap of £250 per leaseholder for a contract for works rechargeable under a service charge or to a further application for dispensation if required. This is because they do not form part of this application for dispensation.
30. The applicant will meet all of its costs arising from the making and determination of this application. However these costs may be recovered from any leaseholder as service charge and/ or as an administrative charge if the lease of each unit allows for it, subject to the usual scope for leaseholder challenge to its reasonableness and payability.

31. In making its determination of this application, it does not concern the issue of whether any service charge costs are reasonable or indeed payable by the leaseholders. The Tribunal's determination is limited to this application for dispensation of consultation requirements under S20ZA of the Act; in this case, on terms.

N Martindale FRICS

3 June 2025

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 either party is dissatisfied with this decision, they may apply for permission to appeal to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) on any point of law arising from this Decision.

Prior to making such an appeal, an application must be made, in writing, to this Tribunal for permission to appeal. Any such application must be made within 28 days of the issue of this decision to the person making the application (regulation 52 (2) of The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) Rule 2013).

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).