



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

Case reference : **LON/00AW/LDC/2025/0826**

Property : **Derwent House, 57a Cromwell Road,
South Kensington, London, SW7 5BJ**

Applicant : **Derwent House Freehold Limited**

Representative : **TLC Real Estate Services Ltd (Managing
Agent)**

Respondent : **Leaseholders listed in the application**

Representative : **None Provided**

Type of application : **Application for dispensation from the
consultation requirements of s20 under
section 20ZA of the Landlord and
Tenant Act 1985**

Tribunal member : **Mr A Harris LLM FRICS FCI Arb**

Venue : **10 Alfred Place, London WC1E 7LR**

Date of decision : **28 October 2025**

DECISION

Decision of the tribunal

1. The tribunal exercises its discretion to grant dispensation from the consultation requirements of s20ZA following a failure of the heat exchanger in the communal heating and hot water system boiler for replacing the heat exchanger and commissioning a back up boiler while the parts are obtained.

The application

2. The Applicant seeks dispensation from the consultation requirements under section 20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (“the 1985 Act”) following the breakdown of the heat exchanger in the primary communal boiler which was found to be beyond repair. A replacement part would take 8-10 weeks to procure. A back up boiler system was commissioned as residents had been without hot water for almost three weeks. Works have been carried out. The cost of the temporary boiler was £27799.80 and the estimate for the replacement heat exchanger is £24724.02.
3. The repairs cannot wait for a three-month consultation period as no hot water was being provided to residents. No formal notice was given under s20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 but leaseholders have been notified of the works and that this application would be made. In view of the urgency of the it was not proposed formally consult. No representations have been received from the Respondents. The likely cost of the works is above the threshold for consultation under section 20 of the 1985 Act.
4. Directions were made on 16 September 2025 for a paper determination in the week commencing 27 October 2025. The only issue for the tribunal is whether it is reasonable to dispense with the statutory consultation requirements.
5. **This decision does not concern the issue of whether any service charge costs will be reasonable or payable.**

The hearing

6. A written application was made by the freeholder.
7. A copy lease has been provided. The case was decided on paper and no appearances were made. The tribunal considered the written application form, copy letters to the leaseholders, and the specimen lease included in the bundle.
8. The copy lease is a poorly scanned copy of the registered lease but which was sufficiently legible to establish the landlords obligation to

provide hot water. Better copies should be provided for any future applications

The background

9. The property consists of a 6 storey plus basement purpose built block dating from the 1950's beneath a flat roof. There are 24 flats. Hot water and heating is provided by a communal boiler in the basement.
10. Each flat is held on long lease which requires the landlord to provide services and the tenant to contribute towards their costs by way of a variable service charge.
11. An inspection was not requested and the tribunal did not consider that one was necessary, nor would it have been proportionate to the issues.
12. The lease shows the scope of the works is within the service charge provisions of the lease. The tribunal directed the applicant to provide copies of the application and directions to the lessees. Confirmation was sent to the tribunal that the application had been provided to the leaseholders. No representations have been received objecting to the application as to the scope of the works or appropriateness of the application. Reasonableness and payability of the service charge is not within the scope of this application.

The Law

s20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985

Service charges

20ZA Consultation requirements: supplementary

(1) 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 long term agreement, the tribunal may make the determination if satisfied that it is reasonable to dispense with the requirements.

(2) In section 20 and this section—

“qualifying works” means works on a building or any other premises, and

“qualifying long term agreement” means (subject to subsection (3)) an agreement entered into, by or on behalf of the landlord or a superior landlord, for a term of more than twelve months.

(3)The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that an agreement is not a qualifying long term agreement—

(a)if it is an agreement of a description prescribed by the regulations, or

(b)in any circumstances so prescribed.

(4)In section 20 and this section “the consultation requirements” means requirements prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.

(5)Regulations under subsection (4) may in particular include provision requiring the landlord—

(a)to provide details of proposed works or agreements to tenants or the recognised tenants’ association representing them,

(b)to obtain estimates for proposed works or agreements,

(c)to invite tenants or the recognised tenants’ association to propose the names of persons from whom the landlord should try to obtain other estimates,

(d)to have regard to observations made by tenants or the recognised tenants’ association in relation to proposed works or agreements and estimates, and

(e)to give reasons in prescribed circumstances for carrying out works or entering into agreements.

(5A)And in the case of works to which section 20D applies, regulations under subsection (4) may also include provision requiring the landlord—

(a)to give details of the steps taken or to be taken under section 20D(2),

(b)to give reasons about prescribed matters, and any other prescribed information, relating to the taking of such steps, and

(c)to have regard to observations made by tenants or the recognised tenants’ association in relation to the taking of such steps.

(6)Regulations under section 20 or this section—

(a)may make provision generally or only in relation to specific cases, and

(b)may make different provision for different purposes.

(7) Regulations under section 20 or this section shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

13. The applicable case law is *Daejan Investments Ltd v Benson* [2013] UKSC 14, 1 WLR 854 where the Supreme Court held that the relevant test is whether the leaseholders have suffered prejudice by the failure to consult. Where the extent, quality and cost of the works were unaffected by the landlord's failure to comply with the consultation requirements, an unconditional dispensation should normally be granted.

The tribunal's decision

14. The tribunal exercises its discretion to grant dispensation from the consultation requirements of under s20 ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and the Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003

Reasons for the tribunal's decision

15. The works were necessary to provide hot water to residents who would otherwise have been without for a period in excess of 10 weeks.
16. The tribunal is satisfied that the leaseholders were aware of the proposal and they have not objected.
17. The Tribunal is being asked to exercise its discretion under s.20ZA of the Act. The wording of s.20ZA is significant. Subs. (1) 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*" (emphasis added).
18. The Tribunal understands that the purpose of the consultation requirements is to ensure that leaseholders are given the fullest possible opportunity to make observations about expenditure of money for which they will in part be liable. The test laid down by the Supreme Court in *Daejan v Benson* is whether the leaseholders would suffer prejudice if the application were to be granted and a full consultation not carried out.
19. The tribunal considers that there is no prejudice to the leaseholders in granting dispensation as the works were urgently required to reinstate hot water in a block with elderly residents and families with children. The tribunal is satisfied that the risk of delay outweighs any possible prejudice arising from a failure to carry out the full consultation process.

20. The tribunal is satisfied the works were urgent and that dispensation should be granted.

21. The granting of dispensation is not concerned with the cost and recoverability of service charges for the works which are dealt with under section 27A of the Act.

Name: A Harris

Date: 28 October 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 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).