



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

Case Reference : **CAM/22UB/LDC/2021/0039**

**HMCTS code
(paper, video, audio)** : **P:PAPERREMOTE**

Property : **Ramsden Court, Wickford,
Essex SS12 9FT**

Applicant : **Escala (Wickford) Management
Company Limited**

Representative : **DJC Property Management Limited**

Respondents : **All leaseholders of dwellings at the
property (including any of their sub-
tenants of any such dwelling) who
are liable to contribute to the cost of
the relevant works**

Type of application : **For dispensation from consultation
requirements - Section 20ZA of the
Landlord and Tenant Act 1985**

Tribunal members : **Mary Hardman FRICS IRRV(Hons)**

Date of decision : **25 January 2022**

DECISION

Covid-19 pandemic: description of hearing

This has been a remote determination on the papers which the parties are taken to have consented to, as explained below. The form of determination was P:PAPERREMOTE. A hearing was not held because it was not necessary, and all issues could be determined on paper. The documents that I was referred to are in a bundle of 102 pages from the Applicant. I have noted the contents and my decision is below.

The tribunal's decision

The tribunal determines under section 20ZA of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 to dispense with the consultation requirements in respect of qualifying works to install a wireless fire alarm system. It does not determine to dispense with the consultation requirements in respect of works in relation to missing cavity barriers around the windows of the top floor flats

Reasons for the tribunal's decision

The application

- (1) This is an application to seek dispensation with the statutory consultation requirements in respect of urgent works to install a wireless fire alarm system and works in relation to missing cavity barriers around all windows of the top floor flats
- (2) The matter was said to be urgent as leaseholders have been unable to sell or remortgage their homes due to the work identified by the EWS1 form as required. Remedying the issues would prevent any further additional/heightened costs that the leaseholders are incurring due to being unable to sell or remortgage.
- (3) Two quotations were supplied for the fire alarm installation. One at £17,676 including VAT from PLP Fire Protection and another at £17,988 including VAT from Future Fire Systems.
- (4) However, no further information was available in respect of works to remedy the missing cavity barriers around the windows of the top floor flats.
- (5) The relevant contributions of leaseholders through the service charge towards the costs of these works would be limited to a fixed sum unless the statutory consultation requirements, prescribed by section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (the “**1985 Act**”) and the Service Charges (Consultation etc) (England) Regulations 2003:
 - (i) were complied with; or
 - (ii) are dispensed with by the tribunal.
- (6) In this application, the Applicant seeks a determination from the tribunal, under section 20ZA of the 1985 Act, to dispense with the consultation requirements. The tribunal has jurisdiction to grant such dispensation if satisfied that it is reasonable to do so.

- (7) **The only issue here for the tribunal is whether it is satisfied that it is reasonable to dispense with the consultation requirements**
- (8) **This application does not concern the issue of whether any service charge costs of the relevant works will be reasonable or payable or by whom they are payable.**

The Property and parties

- (9) The Property comprises two purpose built four-storey blocks – Block A and Block C of 33 flats each.
- (10) The application is made by Escala (Wickford) Management Company Limited on behalf of the landlord, Adriatic Land 3 (GR1) Limited. The application was made against the leaseholders of the relevant flats (the “Respondents”)

Procedural history

- (11) The Applicant said that the works were urgent, as explained below.
- (12) Initial case management directions were given on 17 November 2021. The directions included a reply form for any leaseholder who objected to the application to return to the tribunal and the Applicant, also indicating whether they wished to have an oral hearing. Any such objecting leaseholder was required to respond 17 December 2021.
- (13) The directions further provided that this matter would be determined on or after 10 January 2022 based on the documents, without a hearing, unless any party requested an oral hearing
- (14) No leaseholder has responded to the tribunal, and no party has requested an oral hearing.
- (15) On reviewing these documents, the tribunal considered that an inspection of the Property was neither necessary nor proportionate to the issues to be determined and that a hearing was not necessary.

The Applicant’s case

- (16) Documentation provided by the Applicant in a report dated 1 June 2021 supplied by Pyrosafety Fire Risk Management stated that cavity barriers were missing from around the windows on the upper most occupied storey. It was recommended that cavity barriers were installed around all windows on the top floor flats.

- (17) In the interim it was recommended that a temporary fire alarm system be installed in all top floor flats to give simultaneous evacuation in the event of fire.
- (18) The applicants subsequently obtained quotations for the fire alarm installation as set out at paragraph (3) above.
- (19) No quotations for the cavity barriers were included in the bundle and the applicants have confirmed that they have no quotations nor any further scope of the work required

The Respondents' position

- (20) As mentioned above, the directions provided for any Respondent who wished to oppose the application for dispensation to complete the reply form attached to the directions and send it to the tribunal and the Applicant.
- (21) The tribunal has not received any response or statement of case opposing the application, or comments on the Applicant's statements in the application form. In the circumstances, the tribunal concluded that the application was unopposed.

The tribunal's decision

- (22) Following the Supreme Court decision of *Daejan Investments Ltd. v Benson* [2013] UKSC 14, the only issue for the Tribunal is whether the Respondents have suffered prejudice in dispensing with the requirements.
- (23) This application for dispensation from the consultation requirements was not opposed by the Respondents, who have not challenged the information provided by the Applicant in the application form, identified any prejudice which they might suffer because of the non-compliance with the consultation requirements, nor asked to be provided with any other information.
- (24) However, the tribunal is not satisfied that, in view of the lack of any information at this stage in respect of works to address the missing cavity barriers around the first-floor windows, that it would be appropriate to give dispensation in respect of this.
- (25) Therefore , in the circumstances set out in this decision, the tribunal is satisfied that it is reasonable to dispense with the consultation requirements in relation to the installation of the temporary fire alarm system. The applicant will need to submit a further application in respect of the works to address the missing cavity barriers if it wishes to dispense with consultation in respect of these . The tribunal recognises

that such work may be urgent, but little appears to have been done to scope this work at this stage.

- (26) For the purposes of this application, the tribunal determines under section 20ZA of the 1985 Act to dispense with all relevant consultation requirements in relation to works to install the temporary fire alarm system.
- (27) **This is not an application for the tribunal to approve the reasonableness of the works or the reasonableness, apportionment or payability of the service charge demand. I make no finding in that regard and the leaseholders will continue to enjoy the protection of section 27A of the Act.**
- (28) There was no application to the tribunal for an order under section 20C of the 1985 Act.
- (29) The Applicant shall be responsible for serving a copy of this decision on all leaseholders.

Mary Hardman FRICS IRRV(Hons)
25 January 2022

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).