



**First-tier Tribunal
Property Chamber
(Residential Property)**

Case reference : CAM/22UB/LDC/2014/0006

Property : 35 Pevensey Close,
Pitsea,
Basildon,
Essex SS13 3RQ

Applicant : Basildon Borough Council

Respondent : Ms. Tina Brown

Date of Application : 29th January 2014

Type of Application : for permission to dispense with
consultation requirements in respect
of qualifying works (Section 20ZA
Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (“the
1985 Act”))

Tribunal : Bruce Edgington (lawyer chair)
Roland Thomas MRICS
Cheryl St. Clair MBE BA

DECISION

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1. The Applicant is granted dispensation from the consultation requirements in respect of works to replace the cladding at the property **upon condition** that the Respondent lessee is not charged for any of the legal and other costs of the Applicant of and occasioned by this application.

Reasons

Introduction

2. This application has been made for dispensation from the consultation requirements in respect of ‘qualifying works’. The Applicant served a section 20 (of the 1985 Act) notice on the 14th May 2013 indicating a desire to undertake replacement of ‘communal windows, soffits, fascias, guttering, cladding, external painting including scaffolding’ at an estimated cost of £2,200 plus ‘replacement of individual residential windows’ at an estimated costs of £2,400 making £4,600 in all.
3. The intention was not to replace all of the cladding but mainly elements to communal stairwells. However, during the course of the works it

was decided by the Applicant that it was necessary to replace all of the cladding because, amongst other things, the existing cladding did not have sufficient fixings. It was decided to use the same contractor and deal with the work whilst the scaffolding was still there. There was insufficient time for a full consultation for those works.

4. The Respondent has been written to by the Applicant and has been told that the costs of the communal works will be £3,401.17 which will be invoiced in July 2014.
5. A procedural chair issued a directions order on the 6th February 2014 timetabling this case to its conclusion. One of the directions said that depending on evidence filed by the Applicant and any representations from the Respondent, this case may be dealt with on the papers taking into account any written representations made by the parties. It was made clear by letter dated 24th March 2014 that if any party wanted an oral hearing, then that would be arranged. No request for a hearing was received. By subsequent letter, dated 24th April 2014, the Tribunal informed the parties that a determination would be made based on written representations on 6th June 2014.
6. The Tribunal has asked the Respondent if she wanted to make any representations – written or otherwise – and she has declined to make any.

The Law

7. Section 20 of the 1985 Act limits the amount which lessees can be charged for major works unless the consultation requirements have been either complied with, or dispensed with by a leasehold valuation tribunal (now called a First-tier Tribunal, Property Chamber). The detailed consultation requirements are set out in Schedule 3 to the **Service Charges (Consultation Requirements) (England) Regulations 2003**. These require a fairly complicated and time consuming consultation process which give the lessees an opportunity to be told exactly what is going on and the landlord must give its response to those observations and take them into account.
8. Section 20ZA of the Act allows this Tribunal to make a determination to dispense with the consultation requirements if it is satisfied that it is reasonable.

Conclusions

9. All the Tribunal has to determine is whether dispensation should be granted from the full consultation requirements under Section 20ZA of the 1985 Act. There has been much litigation over the years about the issues to be determined by a Tribunal dealing with this sort of case which culminated with the recent Supreme Court decision of **Daejan Investments Ltd. v Benson** [2013] UKSC 14.
10. That decision made it clear that a Tribunal is only really concerned with any actual prejudice which may have been suffered by the lessees or, perhaps put another way, what would they have done in the circumstances? In this case, for example, the work was proceeding

and it was found that the fixings on the cladding which was not to be replaced were insufficient. Faced with that problem, the question then is what should have been done?

11. The Tribunal finds that the fixings were inadequate and agrees, on balance, that replacement of those parts of the cladding will be cheaper in the long run than repairs. The delay which would have been caused by undertaking the full consultation exercise would probably have resulted in substantial additional cost to the lessees. There is no evidence that the full consultation process would have resulted in different works or a lower cost. The Tribunal therefore finds that there has been no prejudice to the lessees from the lack of consultation. Dispensation is therefore granted.

12. However, the Tribunal notes the comments of the Applicant that this was not the 'fault' of either the contractor or the council. With respect to them, if a full assessment of the requirement for work to the common parts was being undertaken and a positive decision was being made not to replace certain parts of the cladding, one would have expected that some effort would have been made to ensure that the remaining fixings were adequate. It is also noted that the Applicant does not seem to have written to the long lessees at the time explaining about the problem. For those reasons, the Tribunal is making this dispensation conditional as stated above.

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Bruce Edgington
Regional Judge
11th June 2014