

## **Introduction**

The following guidance is intended to support the Portfolio Team who receive applications from shared owners for the alteration or improvement of their homes.

A detailed procedure is not prescribed as each case should be considered individually. Each proposed alteration or improvement may or may not require planning permission or approval under building control regulations.

## **Responsibilities**

The Landlord is not responsible for any repairs to a shared ownership property, outside the normal defects liability period, nor does it have an obligation to provide financial support for improvements.

Shared owners can make improvements to a property only with the consent of their Landlord, usually via the Portfolio Team.

Replacing items on a like for like basis does not require consent, but the Landlord should be informed of any major works.

Generally, permission will not be granted for any external or internal alterations/additions to the structure, walls, timbers, elevations, (faces and sides of the building) or the removal of any main walls, timbers, floors or ceilings.

A Landlord cannot withhold consent for improvements by shared owners unreasonably. In practical terms, this means that where the customer has obtained the appropriate consents from statutory bodies and other freeholders and the works are to be completed professionally, then the Landlord should agree to improvements.

## **Applications**

Any shared owner wishing to carry out alterations or additions to their home must submit full details of the proposed works to the Portfolio Team. All applications to carry out works should be made in writing.

Each request will be looked at on its own merits and will be responded to within a reasonable time-scale, usually an acknowledgment within 5 working days and full or fuller response within 10 working days.

The acknowledgment letter can include initial guidance on seeking advice from the Local Planning Authority for planning or building regulations consents and the timescales for investigation and response.

If a site visit by a surveyor is required, the shared owner should be advised accordingly.

## **Alterations – With consent**

Once all investigations have been completed and the appropriate consents (or independent proof that consents are not required) have been received, then written consent from the Portfolio Team should be provided within 5 working days.

On completion of the works, a surveyor can visit on behalf of the Portfolio Team to ensure that the improvements accord with initial proposals and approvals. Or the customer can arrange a survey by an independent, suitably qualified surveyor to confirm the works have been completed to standard.

Confirmation that the works have been completed to a satisfactory standard should be sent to the shared owner.

## **Alterations – Without consent**

If a shared owner does not obtain consent from the Portfolio Team for alterations/improvements then the Portfolio Team can request that the improvement is removed. This will be a last resort and a practical solution should be sought if improvements are made without consent.

The shared owner should be asked to obtain the appropriate consents and approvals from the Portfolio Team and the relevant statutory bodies.

In these cases, the first consideration should be for the safety of the shared owner and the structural soundness of the property e.g. removal of an internal wall or an unauthorised loft conversion. A surveyor instructed by the Portfolio Team can be used for the assessment. In extreme circumstances, the lease allows the Landlord to enter the property and complete remedial works and then re-charge the customer. Legal advice can be asked for and the lease should be consulted.

If the shared owner does not seek consent within a reasonable timescale then the Portfolio Team should consider steps to take which may include legal action to remove the improvement.

## **Alterations – Refusal**

Any refusal of the proposed alterations or improvements will be accompanied with a full written explanation.

There is no appeals procedure. The terms of the lease will be referred to in all cases.

## **Records**

All letters received and sent must be stored on the Portfolio Team document management system.

Details of all consents and rejections should be recorded by the Portfolio Team.

## **Review**

The procedure will be reviewed every three years. It will be updated to reflect any changes to corporate requirements, targets and legislation.

We will use customer feedback to inform reviews and recommend changes to this procedure.