

Leaseholder Alterations and Improvement Information Sheet

As a leaseholder or shared owner, you may wish to carry out alterations and improvements to your home, and this information pack aims to provide you with guidance as to how to obtain permission and what you should request permission for.

Your lease will give you an indication of what you need permission for and what you are responsible for and should be the document you check before carrying out works or requesting permission.

What is a Lease?: Your lease is a contract that you will have signed when you purchased your leasehold or shared ownership property. If you do not have a copy you may be able to obtain a copy from either your solicitor who dealt with your purchase or by going direct to Land Registry : www.landregistry.gov.uk. If you wish Metropolitan to provide you with a copy you will need to pay the relevant fee (Please see the document '*Leaseholder Alterations & Improvement Request for Consent Form & Fees*') to cover our costs in obtaining a copy and passing on to you.

How do I know whether I need to request permission?: The lease for your property will state if you require permission for structural and or non structural alterations and improvements. Some leases are silent and do not state whether permission is required, in such instance you should contact us to check whether you need to apply to us for consideration in respect of your plans.

My Lease does not permit alterations: your lease may specifically state that no structural and or non structural alterations externally or internally to the premises are permitted in which case you will not be permitted to carry out these works.

Please do contact us if your works would involve a grant for aids and adaptations – these will be considered as an exception and any resultant permission will be at the absolute discretion of Metropolitan.

Does Metropolitan always grant permission? – each request will be assessed individually including a lease check by your Housing Officer and technical consideration, plus where required an inspection by an appropriate technical inspector from our Asset Management, Repairs or Mechanical and Electrical Team. In some cases we may need to involve an external specialist such as an engineer to assist with the consideration to your request. Additional charges will apply for any visits by officers or Metropolitan's external agents.

The granting of any permission will be based on the information you provide and the findings of the aforementioned officers.

Accounts with service charge or rent arrears? Metropolitan may not consider your request if you have service charge or rent arrears. If this applies to you, you will need to contact the Income Team to discuss clearing your arrears first. If you are withholding your service charges please ensure you contact the service charge team to discuss your dispute. Both teams can be contacted on 020 3535 3535.

If you are in financial difficulties and the works are in respect of essential aids and adaptations or health and safety works please contact Metropolitan's Leasehold Manager on 020 3535 3535 to discuss your situation.

I pay a management fee why do I need to pay for consideration to my request? The annual management fee covers for example general management items such as service charge accounts, overseeing cleaning and gardening queries, Income Collection, Metropolitan's costs in managing your block/property/estate, this list is not exclusive. For one off items that do not occur on an annual basis and are not shared in common by others in your block or estate, such as a request for consent, your lease permits your landlord to recover costs.

Please note additional fees maybe payable to any Superior Landlord/ Managing Agent (if any) with an interest over Metropolitan in your property in addition to the fee for consent you are required to pay Metropolitan.

I am a Shared Owner, will my alterations affect the value of my remaining shares should I wish to staircase to 100% ownership? Only structural improvements will be considered for deduction when Staircasing, for example a loft conversion or a single storey extension. Cosmetic improvements and general maintenance such as a new bathroom, or double glazed windows will not be considered, since these improvements are required to maintain the property to a reasonable standard under the terms of the lease.

Changing the use of a room: Generally, we will not consent to changing the use of a room i.e. converting a bedroom to a bathroom. This is because most purpose built flats have a similar layout; bedrooms above bedrooms and living rooms above living rooms, which helps minimise noise nuisance. Having a living room, kitchen or bathroom above a bedroom may create noise disturbance to other residents. You should also consider that if you reduce the number of bedrooms in your property, the market value may be affected.

Local Authority Approval: Any consent granted for alterations will be conditional on you obtaining any relevant permission from your local council planning team. Consent from Metropolitan does not exempt you from obtaining the local authority permissions.

Depending on the works you intend to carry out you may also need a Building Notice which will be signed off by your Building Control officer on completion of the works. A copy of the certificate will need to be forwarded on to Metropolitan once it is received as set out in your Licence to Alter consent.

Local Authority permissions may include Fire Regulation Compliance, Building Control and Planning Permission.

What Should I request permission for?: The type of work that requires Landlords consent are, but not limited to (please note fees will vary depending on whether Minor or Technical):

Examples of Minor Works	Examples of Technical Works
Renewing boundaries to your demised property such as fences, hedges or trees	Removing walls or creating new openings.
Changing your front door or the doors colour - this is particularly relevant where the appearance of the property, block or estate is currently in keeping with an agreed design. This will also be relevant in blocks of flats where it is important to ensure the doors meet fire regulation requirements.	Replacing boilers and changing pipe works or flues
Installing a door bell	Extensions and loft conversions Loft Conversion – no consent if loft or area for extension is not part of your demise.
Replacing your kitchen using existing unit lay out	Building garages, creating driveways or additional parking on your demised land
Installation of timber or hard surface flooring in place of carpets – no consent if lease states ‘floors to be covered with carpets’ Where consent granted - conditional that if validated noise nuisance occurs the flooring will need to be reinstated as before. Manufacturers installation guide must be followed.	Disabled adaptations with or without grant funding and or Occupational Therapist recommendations to your property or the block your property forms part of. This will include adaptations for access requirements
Pruning trees	The installation of a satellite dish – will only be permitted if the lease and local authority permit.
Erecting a shed	Installing gas, new cabling, air conditioning or ventilation to your property.
	Installing new windows no consent will be granted if Metropolitan are responsible for repairing, maintaining, improving and or renewing.
	Removal of Asbestos
	Affixing Items to the exterior of your property.
	Installing CCTV – live or dummy
	Changing the existing internal layout of your flat including changing the use of your rooms
	Replacing Kitchen and Bathrooms where you plan to change layouts and rearrange services such as water/gas pipes and electrics.
	Replacing a boiler or central heating system – no consent will be permitted if currently on a communal system.

What will happen if I don't apply for all permissions required? If you carry out any alterations or improvements without first getting our consent you may be breaking the terms of your lease.

We may if your lease permits alterations with consent request that you apply for retrospective consent. You will need to follow the same process as requesting consent in advance including the payment of any fees (Please see the document '*Leaseholder Alterations & Improvement Request for Consent Form & Fees*'). Consent will only be granted if the works do not compromise the safety and integrity of the block/property and do not present any health and safety issues or any evidenced and justified nuisance to your neighbours. You must provide all relevant certificates for the works including where applicable local authority certificates for building control, fire regulations and planning.

If we are not satisfied with the works carried out we may request further works/modifications for you to bring the property back to a safe standard before we can grant consent.

If we are unable to grant consent we will tell you why and will request that you make good the property returning it to the layout/state prior to the works having been carried out. Failure to make good the property to the agreed standard could result in Metropolitan pursuing legal action to stop any further works and to make you reinstate the property as it was. This could prove extremely costly for you as you would have to pay not only our legal costs and associated fees but also the additional cost of any re-instatement works.

What is a licence to alter? The formal consent given for Leaseholder Alterations and or Improvements is known as a Licence to Alter.

This is written consent, such as a letter setting out the terms and conditions under which the alteration can be carried out. The intention is to minimise unexpected complications or conflicts during or following the works and will set criteria such as providing certificates of compliance and where required a variation of the lease plan on completion of the works.

Extensions, Conservatories and Loft conversions: If your plans involve building an extension, installing a conservatory or the conversion of the loft space, you must ensure that you own the space you want to alter. Your lease should have a plan attached that will highlight your demise, in addition your lease will state a definition of your demised property. Permission will not be granted for conversions or extensions to areas of the property or building not within your demise.

If you do not have a copy you may be able to obtain a copy from either your solicitor who dealt with your purchase or by going direct to Land Registry :www.landregistry.gov.uk. If you wish Metropolitan to provide you with a copy you will need to pay the relevant fee to cover our costs in obtaining a copy and passing on to you.

Solar Panels

These will only be considered on leasehold houses where their lease permits structural alterations and planning permission is granted by local authority. Please note companies offer deals for free installation and these deals can be tied in for a number of years and maintenance and servicing will be required on a periodic or annual basis.

What is a Deed of Variation? A Deed of Variation is required when you build for example an extension, change layouts or convert a loft space or basement. The Deed of Variation makes you responsible for all future repair, renewal and maintenance work. You will also need to apply for a Deed of Variation to redraw your lease plans reflecting any changes in the layout of the property. You will be responsible for payment of the costs involved with the Deed of Variation, this will include both your costs and those for Metropolitan and any superior Landlord noted in your lease. To discuss a potential variation to the lease plan please contact Metropolitan Home Ownership Aftersales Team on 020 3535 3535.

What if Metropolitan aren't the freeholder of my block? If Metropolitan are not the freehold owner of your property a separate request will have to be made to the freeholder to obtain their approval for the proposed works. We will submit all applications to the freeholder on your behalf and will advise you of the associated costs the freeholder demands.

Asbestos: Please be aware Asbestos can be found in any building built before the year 2000 (houses, factories, offices, schools, hospitals etc) and causes around 5000 deaths every year.

Carrying out works in your flat may uncover or disturb asbestos. You will be responsible for ensuring the situation is managed and if there is a disturbance that you take the necessary precautions to safeguard yourself, your contractors and the other residents and users of the building. Any removal and disposal of asbestos must be managed and carried out in the correct way.

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 - Regulation 4 places a duty on owners and occupiers of premises to assess the premises for the presence of asbestos containing materials (ACMs), ensure the risks associated with the asbestos are assessed, keep a register showing where the ACMs are situated, and manage the ACMs.

The Health and Safety Executives website has further information on asbestos: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos

Metropolitan will usually agree to improvements being carried out as long as:

- The work does not break any conditions in the Lease and Head Lease
- The work is carried out by an appropriately qualified and insured contractor
- The leaseholder has supplied Metropolitan with details of the work
- The leaseholder has received planning and building control permissions (where applicable)
- The structure of the property or neighbouring properties will not be endangered or damaged by the planned works
- Metropolitan can inspect the property and the works
- The required fee is paid to Metropolitan and any other superior landlord as per the terms of the leases
- Permission is received from superior landlord if any
- The lessee indemnifies Metropolitan as per terms of the lease
- The works will not invalidate any warranty or policy of insurance
- Submission of satisfactory Method Statement
- There are no outstanding arrears.

Any permission granted by Metropolitan will be valid for 18 Months from the date of consent.

How to apply for consent to carry out Alterations and Improvements?

In order to get permission to carry out works to your property, you will first need to complete the Request for Consent form and provide us with any supporting documentation necessary along with payment of the initial fee before your request for consent will be progressed for consideration. The Request for Consent Form and Details of the fees and payment methods can be downloaded

[:www.Metropolitan.org.uk/customers/leaseholders](http://www.Metropolitan.org.uk/customers/leaseholders) – see document titled ‘*Leaseholder Alterations & Improvement Request for Consent Form & Fees*’.

Alternatively contact Customer Services on 020 3535 3535 to request a copy.

You will need to send in your request for consent to the following address

Metropolitan - Leaseholder Alterations, PO BOX 10262, Nottingham, NG8 9LE

Alternatively you can email to [:contactus@metropolitan.org.uk](mailto:contactus@metropolitan.org.uk) - please mark your email – ‘*Leaseholder Alterations*’ Please ensure you mail in your payment cheque or contact customer services to discuss other available payment methods on Tel: 020 3535 3535.

Requests sent to any other address or handed in person to an officer with or without payment may be delayed. Once we have received details of what you intend to do, we will assess whether or not permission can be granted. If permission is granted, for all structural and some other complex building work you will also need a legal document called a Licence to Alter to be prepared and signed before work can start. In some cases, you may also need a Deed of Variation.

Who can apply?: Metropolitan will only accept applications from the leaseholder named on the lease, or a named person with power of attorney for the leaseholder can apply for alterations and improvements.