

Residential Property Alterations and Improvements Procedure

For Leaseholders and Tenants (secure and introductory in certain circumstances)

We recognise that tenants may wish to carry out small scale improvements and alterations to their homes at their own cost, to better suit their needs and lifestyle.

Under the Landlord & Tenant Act 1927 and the Housing Act 1985, tenants are entitled to make these alterations if they have gained written consent. Alterations are always made at the expense of the tenant and are responsible for undertaking this work themselves or appointing a competent tradesperson. Certain work such as gas and electrical, must always be carried out by a competent tradesperson.

This procedure aims to provide a framework to granting permission for reasonable alterations and improvements, and does not apply to interior decoration or minor wear and tear. Tenants currently within the introductory period of their tenancy are not permitted to carry out improvement or alteration works to their property, except in certain circumstances.

Before carrying out any works you must obtain our written permission. Once you have read this document, please complete your request using our [Online Application Form](#), including all requested information. If you are unable to access this document or require any further support please contact your Housing Officer in Resident and Estates Services.

Definitions

An 'alteration' is where the resident:

- removes or alters any fixture or fitting associated with the property
- replaces a fixture or fitting with one of approximately similar quality
- removes an existing fixture or fitting

An 'improvement' is where the resident:

- replaces a fixture or fitting with their own which is of a similar or higher standard;
- installs an item where there is none currently; or
- extends the floor area of the property in any way.

References to 'Alterations' should be deemed to include 'Improvements' throughout this document.

Band 1 Alterations: an application for alterations which can be decided without specialist technical input.
Examples include changing kitchen worktops and unit faces and minor improvements to the garden area.

Band 2 Alterations: an application which requires some technical input.
Examples include applications to erect a fence involving boundary lines, major improvements to the garden, moving units in bathrooms and kitchens and internal non-structural fixtures and fittings.

Band 3 Alterations: an application which requires specialist technical input before it can be fully assessed.
Examples include applications requiring structural alterations to the property such as changes in layout, electrical and plumbing, removal of load-bearing walls, alterations to the floor, beams or ceiling joists.

Please see [Appendix 1](#) for a summary of our Alteration and Improvement Bands.



Residential Property Alterations and Improvements Procedure

Application Process

We will endeavour to process any applications within 28 days of receipt. Where further information is required, this may delay the decision beyond 28 days. The processing time will only commence on submission of all required documents and not from the initial request.

For the health and safety of all residents, under no circumstances should residents undertake any structural alterations or changes without prior written consent.

All requests will be considered on an individual basis, but only after full details, plans and/or drawings have been provided and where any necessary building approval consent or other relevant consents have been provided. In considering applications, we will not unreasonably withhold consent. Tenants will be required to provide full details of the proposed work and asked to submit relevant paperwork including:

- Specification for the full work that is planned
- Details of the contractor chosen to carry out the work (as all works must be undertaken by appropriately qualified and professionally accredited tradespeople)
- Full details including plans, specifications, catalogue illustrations for supplies and materials

Residents will be advised of any further requirements when their application is being considered.

In some cases, an alteration will require building control or planning permission. If this is the case, the tenant or leaseholder will be responsible for obtaining these and will need to provide us with the original copies before approval can be given for works to start. Any costs that are incurred from making these enquiries will be met by the tenant requesting the works, even if the works are refused at any stage. An asbestos survey may also need to be carried out before any works take place.

For Band 3 Alterations, we ask that you include some additional information:

1. Architectural-type drawings of existing and proposed layouts
2. Full specification for the works (including materials)
3. Structural calculations associated with works where required
4. Risk assessment and method statement for the works
5. Evidence that you have sought Building Control advice as to whether your project will require a building control application to be submitted
6. Evidence that you have sought Planning Advice as to whether your project would be subject to a planning application

Conditions of Consent

It is likely that we will detail other reasonable conditions to any consent given. These may include:

- Clarified estimate on timescales for works to be completed e.g., in accordance with guidance provided by the Planning Department.
- Allowing access to the property for a post-inspection (within 20 working days) after completing the works
- A description of the quality of materials that must be used in accordance with agreed specifications
- Works must be carried out by a suitably qualified person/contractor, holding relevant insurances (public liability etc.)
- Where requested by certificates/guarantees or warranties must be provided e.g. FENSA certificate, GAS Safe registration details, etc.
- Complying with ALL relevant regulations for carrying out the proposed works
- Seeking planning advice when erecting structures in gardens as a precaution
- Carrying out the work in a timely manner to minimise disruption to neighbours and ensuring that the property does not remain in an untidy state for any lengthy period of time



Residential Property Alterations and Improvements Procedure

Responsibility for Future Maintenance

We will not be responsible for maintaining items that have been installed by tenants. At the end of the tenancy, tenants will not be permitted to remove fixtures that are an essential feature of the structure or installations. If you remove or damage any fittings including any alterations, we may hold you responsible for; any costs incurred by us for the damage, the cost of reinstallation and any loss in rent while carrying out the required works.

In some circumstances you may be required to reinstate the property to its original condition at your own cost at the end of your tenancy, which we will confirm to you at any pre-void inspection. In cases where the work has not been completed, we will recharge our costs in addition to any other necessary works identified as the outgoing tenant's responsibility. For leaseholders, we assume no further responsibility in addition to wording of your individual lease agreement.

Refusing Permission

In some cases we may need to refuse permission for an alteration or improvement.

We will refuse permission where one or more of the following apply:

- The proposed works are considered to be detrimental to the structure and/or long-term maintenance of the property
- There would be any additional cost to the Council
- The works may decrease the overall value of the property
- The proposal will breach planning, building regulations or any other relevant legislation
- The environmental impact of the proposal is considered to be detrimental to the surrounding area
- The works will impact the health and safety of those living in or visiting the property or block

Whilst we will treat each application and circumstance individually, we may not consider or give approval for the following alterations:

- Removing or altering walls
- Closing or opening up new openings for windows and/or doors
- Removal of chimney breasts
- Laying hard flooring other than on the ground floor
- Extensions to flats such as loft conversions of the communal roof void
- Large scale extensions and loft conversions

Where permission has been refused, the tenant may submit revised proposals for consideration at their own cost. Please refer to our Complaints Policy if you are unsatisfied with a decision made.

We may also refuse an application due to tenancy issues which are still being investigated to regularise the tenancy. Other instances may include, but not limited to:

- Rent arrears and or antisocial behaviour cases where possession action has been initiated through a Notice of Seeking Possession or where a possession order is currently in place
- A history of previous alterations being made without consent

Unauthorised Alterations or Improvements

A tenant who does not apply for permission before carrying out alteration or improvement works on their property is in breach of their Conditions of Tenancy and will have to apply for permission retrospectively. There are charges attached to this work, which can be viewed on our [website](#).

For more information or general enquiries, please contact your Housing Officer in Resident and Estates Services at residentservices@stevenage.gov.uk



Residential Property Alterations and Improvements Procedure

Appendix 1 – Alteration and Improvement Bands

The list below is not exhaustive and is for guidance only. All requests will be considered on an individual basis, but only after full details, plans and/or drawings have been provided and where any necessary building approval consent or other relevant consents have been provided.

Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
Non-Technical	Standard Alterations	Complex Alterations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minor garden works including<ul style="list-style-type: none">- ponds- outside taps• Replacing sheds and fences (where like for like)• Replacing kitchen worktops/unit faces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional fencing• Shower installation• Changes to kitchen/bathroom units• Driveways and hardstanding• Large sheds• Install plumbing, washing machines and other appliances• Fitting satellite dishes• Adding or moving electrical points/switches• Felling of trees• Decoration of external walls• Major garden works including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- conservatories- outbuildings- patios or decking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removal of walls• Extensions• Garage conversions• Conservatories• Larger scale projects involving various different works• Any Gas/Electric works• Enclosing porches• Fitting a gas fire or building feature fireplace• Installing windows, doors

