

Leaseholders guide to making improvements to your home



This information is to help you decide whether you are eligible under your leasehold agreement to carry out improvements to your home. It also gives guidance about how to identify improvements, which may be subject to certain conditions, local authority planning permission or other regulatory standards.

You must complete an application form and receive written permission from us before you make any arrangements for work to begin.

Where can I find an application form?

Application forms can be obtained either online, at one of our hubs or through OneCALL.

Where do I send my completed application form?

Completed application forms can be handed in at either of our hubs point or posted to WDH Survey team. Remember to attach any plans or drawings so your application can be processed without delay.

WDH Survey team
Merefield House
Whistler Drive
Castleford
WF10 5HX

Phone: 01977 788248

Email: hsgassetssurveying@wdh.co.uk

This document is for guidance only and does not give a legal interpretation or a summary of all the rules and regulations, which may apply to any improvements you wish to carry out in your home.

If I am a leaseholder, why do I need written permission from WDH?

Leasehold apartments – We still own the building you live in and the estate and land on which it stands. Permission for alterations and improvements forms part of your lease agreement. We manage and consider all applications for alterations or improvements affecting the building you live in and the surrounding areas, including communal areas, gardens, roof and loft space. This guarantees the structure of the building remains safe for all occupants and ensures any changes made, do not adversely affect the rights of other individuals who live in the building.

Leasehold houses – We own part of the house you have purchased on shared ownership terms. You need to receive written permission from us for any alterations or improvements until you own 100% of the property.

Will making improvements affect my lease agreement?

For most home improvements the answer is no. However, if the improvements are major ones, this may affect your lease. Any legal costs incurred to make the necessary changes will be your responsibility. We will advise you if this is the case and the costs involved before your application is processed any further.

If the alterations are significant, you may also need the permission of the bank or building society who lent you the money to buy your home.

Will there be any costs I have to pay when applying to make improvements to my home?

Yes, there is a standard administration fee of £33.33 inclusive of VAT to cover the cost of processing your application. This needs paying before we can deal with your request.

In a few exceptional cases, the improvements may need your lease agreement to be updated, the plans of the property amended, or additional work to amend your current service charges. If this is the case, we will advise you what the costs will be, so you can decide if you still wish to continue. Such costs would need to be paid before written permission for the works will be granted.

What if I have already carried out improvements without first receiving written permission?

If you carry out improvements without our written permission, there is a charge of £72 inclusive of VAT to apply for approval retrospectively. You will need to apply for approval for the unauthorised work immediately. You are breaking the terms of your lease if you do work without our permission. Any costs incurred to provide retrospective authorisation would be your responsibility to pay until permission is granted.

If you cannot prove you have received written permission from us for any improvements or alterations you have carried out, this may affect any future sale of your lease.

How do I make a payment?

Payments can be made by:

- cheque made payable to Wakefield and District Housing Limited and returned with your application form to the WDH Survey team; and
- using a credit or debit card, by phoning OneCALL on 0345 8 507 507, or over the counter at our hubs in Wakefield or Pontefract.

What improvements need planning permission and / or building control approval?

The following 'Summary guide to improvements and alterations' gives you a general idea of the improvements which need planning or building permission from Wakefield Council, or your local authority, if you live outside the Wakefield district.

Once you have received our permission for your improvement, it is your responsibility to get any formal planning permission and / or building regulations approval from your local authority, or any other permission you may need before you start the work.

Summary guide to improvements and alterations

	WDH permission	Planning permission	Building regulations	CA	BR
Building a porch	✓	✓	✓		
Making a through lounge	✓	x	✓	✓	
Removal of internal walls	✓	x	✓	✓	
Renewing bannisters	✓	x	✓		
Putting in central heating	✓	x	✓		
Fitting a new bathroom suite	x*	x	✓		✓1
Fitting new kitchen units	x*	x	✓		
Re-arranging kitchen units	x*	x	✓		
External painting of woodwork	✓	x	x	✓	
External painting of render / pebbledash	✓	x	x	✓	
Fitting new windows	✓	x	✓	✓	
External door / storm doors / patio doors	✓	x	✓	✓	
Rewiring	✓	x	✓		
New sockets / wall lights	✓	x	✓		✓2
Additional electric sockets / cooker panel	✓	x	✓		
Wall lights / external lighting / intruder alarm	✓	x	✓	✓	
Extractor fan	✓	x	✓	✓	
Plumbing in a washing machine	✓	x	✓		✓3
Citizen Band (CB) aerial	✓	✓	x		
Parking space for a car (designated WDH plot or site only will be considered)	✓	✓	x		
Build a garage (designated WDH plot or site only will be considered)	✓	✓	✓		
Building ground floor extensions or erecting a conservatory	Permission will not be granted as the land it is built on and the building it takes support from do not form part of your lease agreement.				
Fencing off open plan / communal areas / erecting a garden shed / greenhouse	Permission will not be granted to a leaseholder to have exclusive rights over a piece of land that others already have a right over.				
Parking vehicles, creating a hard standing or building a garage within the curtilage	Permission will not be granted to one leaseholder to park vehicles, create hard standings or build a garage on land within the curtilage, due to the communal rights of all occupants within the building. Only applications relating to WDH garage plots will be considered.				
Installations within loft area	Permission will not be granted to board out the loft space or for any appliance such as a central heating boiler or water heater to be fitted within the loft area above a leasehold flat as this is not a designated part of the leasehold agreement.				

Key

*WDH permission is not needed if there are no alterations to existing pipe work or circuitry.

CA If in a conservation area, contact with local authority Planning Department is required.

BR Building regulations are not required if:

1. like for like with same drainage. If any alterations, contact required with the local authority.
2. like for like. If completely new and new locations, contact required with the local authority.
3. like for like with same drainage. If new drainage, contact required with the local authority.

What types of improvements are likely to be refused permission?

All applications for improvements are assessed on their individual merit. However, we would not permit any improvements or alterations which may:

- adversely affect or impact on our, your neighbours' or your neighbours' property;
- affect any part of the building which is not designated as part of your leasehold agreement;
- affect the structure of the building; or
- affect the use of communal areas or facilities.

We will not unreasonably refuse permission for improvements, but we may impose conditions which will apply to granting permission. Any conditions will be clearly identified in the letter you will receive and they must be adhered to. Failure to do so will be considered a breach by you of your obligations under your lease agreement.

Why do I have to submit certificates for gas, electrical, fire compartmentation and asbestos work?

For your own safety, work of this nature must be done in line with current regulations.

Gas work – This work must be completed by a tradesperson who is registered on the Gas Safe Register, they must also be registered with the current gas registration body for the United Kingdom

Electrical work - The work must be completed by a tradesperson who is qualified to IEE Wiring Regulations 18th Edition and must be a member of a government approved competency scheme, such as NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) or NAPIT (National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers).

Fire Compartmentation work - Where any work being done in your home requires certification relating to fire you must ensure this is provided by a competent person or organisation who hold the relevant qualifications and registration with one of the governing bodies.

Asbestos work - To do this work you will be required to use a qualified and competent asbestos removal contractor, who will be required to work to the requirements of Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

The tradesperson, in all instances, will provide you with the appropriate certificates for the work. The original certificates must be sent to us so a copy can be taken. We will then return the original certificates back to you. If you do not send the certificates, we will send out an engineer to inspect the work that has been carried out and issue the appropriate certification. The full cost of this service and any payment for associated repairs or alterations will be your responsibility.

What is the decision process?

Our Survey team will assess your application once it has been received. We will try to let you know our decision within 20 working days. If we need further information or have to visit your home to check the work you want to do, this may cause a delay. We will contact you to arrange a time to visit, if necessary.

You will receive a letter informing you of the decision made following your application for alterations or improvements. The permission letter is only valid for three months. If you fail to carry out the work and return the 'Notification of completion' form (contained within the permission letter) within three months. 'Target Expired' letter will be sent and a visit to your home will be completed to clarify this. Failure to commence within three months the application will be cancelled. If you wish to proceed with the alteration or improvement in the future you will have to apply again.

What do I do when I have completed my improvement?

When the work you have received permission for is completed, you must return the 'Notification of completion form' with any gas, electrical, fire compartmentation and asbestos certificates you have been given. When we receive these, the surveyor will come to your home to inspect the work that has been carried out and make sure it complies with any conditions stipulated in the granting of permission.

If the final inspection reveals any faults or that the work has not been carried out under the conditions stipulated by us, you will receive a letter telling you the work you still need to do. This work must be completed within the timeframe set out in the 'Further Works' letter.

If everything is satisfactory you will receive a 'Certificate of acceptance'. This acknowledges that all the work has been carried out to our satisfaction. The surveyor will send this out to you within five working days of the final inspection.

If the work is not completed, this would put you in breach of your lease agreement and we may carry out the work and recharge you.

Do I have the right of appeal against the decision?

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your application, you have the right to appeal within 28 days of the date of the letter. You must do so in writing to the survey manager giving the reasons for your appeal.

Requests to escalate to appeal may not be considered if:

- you cannot provide a valid reason(s) why this requires further consideration;
- approval cannot be provided as it is outside our control; or
- it has been shown that we have complied with, or followed our approved policies and procedures.

You will receive a response within 20 working days from receipt of your appeal letter.

If the reason(s) for refusal is due to the alteration / improvements contravening building, planning, safety or other legislative regulations, our decision will be final. If the refusal is not related to the above and an alternative course of action cannot be agreed, your application will be processed following the appeals procedure.

We are committed to providing equal access to information. If you would like this information in another format, please phone us on 0345 8 507 507.