

Tenant Alterations

Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Papworth Trust believes that everyone has the right to the lawful enjoyment of their home and we understand that tenants may wish to make alterations. This has to be balanced against protecting the long term security and purpose of our homes. In particular, the accessibility features and additional adaptations that have been installed to make our properties suitable for disabled people.

This policy outlines Papworth Trust's approach to tenant requests to carry out alterations to their home.

Where the alteration being requested meets the definition of an adaptation, the request will be considered in line with the Adaptation Policy. The Adaptation Policy advises what information is required as part of an adaptation request. Where this information is not submitted the request will be considered as a tenant alteration.

2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Recognise that tenants may wish to make alterations to their property
- Ensure alterations do not have a detrimental impact the immediate and wider neighbourhood and local environment
- Safeguard our homes to ensure that alterations do not adversely affect the property
- To find a balance between the above to ensure that permission is not unreasonably withheld
- Where permission is granted, ensure that alterations are carried out in a safe manner to the correct professional standard, to ensure the integrity of the building and crucially the safety of your household
- Ensure that where an alteration is permitted, any ongoing financial liability or risk associated with the alteration is burdened by the tenant

- Provide adequate security should a tenancy come to an end or where appropriate, the property will be returned to the original condition at our discretion, and at the expense of the tenant.
- Make the approach and responsibilities of any alteration request clear to tenants and staff.

3. Definitions

A tenant alteration is defined as 'any change made to a Papworth Trust property by a tenant, other than decoration'

An adaptation is defined as 'a physical alteration to a property or property grounds to improve safety, independence and function of the disabled person within that environment.'

4. General Provisions

There are a number of different tenures active within our stock and whilst the approach taken will be the same, the type of tenancy may affect the final decision.

If you are a secure or assured non-shorthold tenant, you have the right to make alterations to your home and garden, however, it is a condition of your Tenancy Agreement that you must seek written permission before making any alteration.

If you are an assured shorthold tenant consideration will be given to the length of the fixed term remaining and the likelihood of you being offered a further tenancy when assessing whether to grant permission for an alteration.

If you are a starter tenant or are still within a probationary period of a fixed term, you do not have the right to make alterations and permission will not be granted.

For alterations that require planning permission and building control approval, it is the tenant's responsibility to ensure the appropriate permissions are gained and compliance is met. Papworth Trust will not approve requests without the necessary permission.

5. Tenant Alteration Requests

Tenants should email all alterations requests to housing@papworthtrust.org.uk. This should detail what work is being requested including any plans and drawings to support requests. It should also include who would be undertaking the alteration including evidence of their competence.

We aim to deal with all tenant alteration requests within 28 days. There may be a variance to this depending on the complexity of the request submitted, to allow for further investigation. The tenant will be advised where this is the case within 28 days.

The request will be considered by a Housing Officer with additional technical expertise provided by the maintenance team to investigate whether the request is reasonable. The following will be considered:

- tenancy status (tenure)
- rent arrears or other debt
- suitability of request
- any other Housing management factor deemed relevant

Permission will not be granted to any request by tenants in rent arrears or owing any other housing-related debt to Papworth Trust.

When assessing the suitability of a request, we will consider the following:

- whether the alteration removes or inhibits any accessibility features or adaptations
- the impact on the structural integrity or fabric of the building
- the impact of the alteration on neighbouring properties and the intended appearance of the local area
- the specification of any equipment to ensure that any adverse impact to existing structures/components will not be caused
- ascertain any maintenance/servicing/liability/ upgrade impact that the proposed tenant work will cause
- ascertain any financial impact
- consider impact on the tenant work remaining at end of tenancy and whether it needs to be removed and reverted to the original

This list is not exhaustive and each case will be considered individually.

An inspection may be required to determine whether permission can be granted.

Tenants are expected to comply with reasonable requests for access and information relating to an alteration. Failure to comply will result in refusal of any request.

6. Specific Conditions

An inspection may be required to ensure the alteration has been carried out in accordance with the any conditions of the permission

Copies of all relevant certification will need to be provided to Papworth Trust.

It is the Tenants responsibility to repair, maintain and/or replace the authorised alteration and any specific conditions will be included in the permission. This may include accepting a variation of tenancy to levy an appropriate service charge.

It is Papworth Trusts decision whether any alteration can be left at the end of the tenancy. This will be explained in any grant of permission. If removal and reinstatement to original is required this will be at the tenant's expense and any additional work required that is associated with the alteration will be rechargeable to the tenant.

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to revoke any permissions granted and request reinstatement to original, where this is the case the tenant will be given reasons for this.

Any permission granted will be for a maximum of six months only. This is to ensure that resources are used appropriately and any changes in policy and/or legislation can be enforced.

Tenants may be entitled to compensation for property improvements. Where removal and reinstatement to original is required, any compensation will be offset against the cost of any remedial work.

7. Unauthorised Alterations

Where an alteration has been carried out without our permission it is an unauthorised alteration.

Where an unauthorised alteration has been identified it may need to be inspected to ascertain whether it would have been granted permission. Further inspections may be required to determine whether it is compliant and safe.

Where it is found to be permissible alteration, retrospective permission will be granted.

There may be a charge for retrospective permission inspections.

Where it is determined that permission would not have been granted, the tenant must reinstate the property to original and make good any damage. Timeframes will be agreed with the tenant dependant on the nature of the alteration and the risk it poses to the tenant and property.

Where a tenant fails to meet the agreed deadlines, Papworth Trust may request access and undertake the works. This will be recharged to the tenant in line with the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.

8. Appeals

Tenants are entitled to appeal any decision not to grant permission for a tenant alteration.

This will be carried out by a Reviewing Officer of greater seniority than the staff member who made the original decision. They will have been uninvolved in the original outcome and will review the decision taking into account any new supporting information provided by the tenant. The Reviewing Officer may consult with the staff member that made the original decision.

No further appeal will be heard and any complaint will be dealt with through the Papworth Trust complaints policy including, where appropriate, the tenant complaints panel.

9. Document control

Author	Business Manager – Housing Management
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10. Version tracker

Version number	Date	Comments/Reason for issue
1.0	06.07.2018	New policy

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