



## Introduction

To ensure our offer is clear to our customers, this policy sets out our approach to approvals when customers apply to make improvements to their home. For specific leaseholder information please see appendix 2.

This policy should be read in conjunction with customer improvements legislation and individual tenancy agreements.

This policy links to some of our other policies, and we have thought about these links when reviewing the policy. Our aids and adaptations policy, should be referred to when considering a home improvement to enable customers to live independently.

## Aims and objectives

- To provide clear information about our approach to assessing requests for home improvements.
- To ensure we manage requests for home improvements fairly, considering the individual needs of customers and their families.
- To effectively manage investment in our housing stock.

## Scope

This policy applies to customers of Great Places Housing Group social housing, supported housing and sheltered housing. If there is any variance between this policy and individual tenancy agreements, then the tenancy agreement takes precedence.

## What is involved?

We require customers to seek written permission from us before commencing any improvement work. Requests for improvements should be submitted in writing by the lead customer, and permission for any improvements will be confirmed in writing. Requests should include all appropriate information, drawings, and technical specifications.

We give equal rights to all customers wherever possible. Therefore, we allow assured customers and those in older person housing schemes to have the same rights as secure customers have in legislation. Where agreed in advance, customers who request to make home improvements may be able to claim compensation for qualifying improvements when they move out of the property.



We do not allow customers on assured short-hold tenancies and starter tenancies to make improvements.

You will need permission for alterations to the following;

- walls, windows, doors, and floors;
- electrical alterations;
- heating systems and fireplaces including wood burners;
- kitchens;
- bathrooms;
- garages and sheds and other outbuildings;
- satellite dishes and TV aerials;
- hard standings and drop curbs;
- extensions, conservatories, and external structures.

Permission for home improvements may be refused if:

- the intended work involves a structural change to the premises or affects the integrity of key parts of the home (such as walls, floors, ceilings, external doors leading in and out of the property, communal doors, or wiring);
- it makes the home unsafe;
- work breaches statutory obligations, planning, building control or conservation area regulations;
- works breaches any head lease or covenant to which the proposed improvement is subject to;
- it reduces the living space or value of the property;
- it takes the property outside decency, under the Decent Homes Standard;
- it affects any work planned by us or increases our maintenance costs;
- the work removes landlord fixtures that are an essential feature of the structure or installations e.g., wiring and pipework;
- it has a negative impact on neighbours;
- the property is a new build within the defects period;
- or it is an alteration to property boundaries and boundary treatments.

We may allow minor electrical improvements (e.g., single light or socket installations). This must be carried out by a qualified electrician, with the relevant certificates provided to us.

We do not allow improvements that require to landlord fixtures or fittings to be removed.

If the improvement is a customer fixture or fitting under the tenancy agreement, the exiting customer may take it with them providing the property is reinstated to our standard specification, remains in a lettable standard and removal does not cause any damage or hazard.



Requests for non-qualifying works are assessed on a case-by-case basis and only granted in exceptional cases. Customers are not entitled to compensation for these improvements.

We advise customers to investigate and make sure they have the necessary funds for the improvements as quotes can expire, leading to future problems.

Alteration should not be completed without permission, unapproved alterations identified will be subject to a recharge, including all associated costs.

## **Requesting an improvement**

We ask customers to submit:

- relevant plans, catalogue illustrations and details of the proposed improvement;
- evidence of approval obtained (where necessary) from the local authority planning, building control, environmental health department, or utilities provider, and party wall consent;
- a project delivery plan with timescales for the proposed work;
- confirmation that contractors and suppliers are suitably qualified/accredited to undertake the work.

We take a fair and reasonable approach when assessing requests for improvements. Our surveyors engage with customers after an application has been submitted and support them to meet the necessary requirements.

Improvements must be carried out by professionals who are suitably competent and qualified.

## **Granting permission**

We take a fair and reasonable approach when considering requests for alterations and treat all leaseholders in a fair and equitable way.

We aim for an initial response time of 20 working days, and information regarding timescales for a final decision is communicated to leaseholders in receipt of an application.

In certain cases, we may require a surveyor to visit the property to discuss the proposed alterations before we grant permission.

We will provide our decision, and reason for it, in writing.



Where we give permission for a customer improvement, we will follow up to check that the work has been completed to the agreed standard. All approved improvement works must be completed in line with the agreed deadlines and must meet the original specification in the application that was approved, including any necessary certification to confirm the safety of the completed improvement.

## **Failure to comply**

If we identify that the improvement has not been completed to the correct specification, we will engage with the customer and may advise them (in writing) that they need to remove the improvement and return the home to the original specification or rectify the works. In these situations, we will follow up with the customer to check, and if this does not happen, we will enforce tenancy conditions.

Alterations may lead to a re-assessment of the property which could result in adjustments to rent and charges.

Failure to comply, or changes to the agreed plans, may require retrospective approval. Where works are not compliant with criteria outlined above, the customer will be required to rectify the work to an acceptable standard.

## **Laminate flooring**

Laminate flooring can cause issues of noise transference between properties or cause repair obstacles, e.g., when we need to access pipework or remedy leaks. Therefore, we do not grant permission for laminate flooring unless the following conditions apply:

- the customer lives in a home where the rooms are not above other customers properties;
- the property has concrete flooring;
- the customer purchases and installs sound insulation pads which lie beneath the laminate. We recommend acoustic sound insulation, which is widely available throughout the UK;
- the customer accepts that they will need to remove the flooring so that we can fulfil our maintenance and repairing obligations if required. We do not accept liability or responsibility for damage or replacement of the flooring;
- the customer agrees to remove the laminate entirely when they leave and restore the property to our satisfaction.

Laminate flooring required for health reasons is assessed on a case-by-case basis, after appropriate supporting correspondence has been provided.



## **Considerate neighbour**

Improvement work must not cause serious disruption or nuisance to neighbours or other people in the estate or area.

## **Repairs and Maintenance**

We advise customers who is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the improvement when providing our written permission.

Where we are not responsible for the repair and maintenance of an improvement, we may carry out repairs in an emergency. This includes where failure to maintain an improvement puts the customer or others at risk, or where not repairing the improvement would cause damage to our property. In such circumstances, we may recharge the repair costs to the customer.

We may agree to carry out repairs that are needed as the result of poor-quality improvement works. Any associated cost would be recovered from the customer.

## **Compensation**

In exceptional circumstances, when a customer leaves their home they may be entitled to compensation for a qualifying improvement they have carried out. The maximum payment is £3000, and the minimum payment is £50.

We only pay compensation where approval was sought and written permission for the finished improvement was provided.

We calculate compensation using the receipts and original estimate provided by the customer for the completed work covered, that formed the basis of our permission.

We only pay compensation for an improvement where the customer is moving home permanently, this includes permanent decant or transfer. We do not pay compensation for customer improvements where a customer is evicted or the tenancy changes through a joint tenancy, assignment, or succession.

Where we agree to compensation for an improvement, we will use the compensation to clear any debt the customer has with us, before issuing final compensation.



The following table lists the improvements for which compensation may be considered at the end of the tenancy and their average associated notional life:

Improvement	Life Cycle (years)
Insulation (Loft / Cavity)	20
Double Glazing	20
Electrical installations	20
Bathroom / sanitary fitting	25
Kitchens	20
Doors - Front / Rear	20
Roof	60

The amount of compensation owed to a customer is calculated in line with The Secure Customers of Local Authorities (Compensation for Improvements) Regulations 1994. This formula considers the cost of the improvement and the expected lifetime the improvement has left when compensation is requested.

$$C \times \left( 1 - \frac{Y}{N} \right)$$

Where:

**C** = cost of the improvement (excluding the amount of any grant or minor works assistance under Part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989(6) or the Home Energy Efficiency Grants Regulations 1992(7) paid in respect of the improvement)

**N** = the notional life of the improvement; the useful lifespan of the improvement before it would need to be renewed or upgraded.

**Y** = the number of complete years, with part of a year being rounded up to a complete year, starting on the date the improvement was completed and ending on the date the compensation is claimed.

**Example**

	cost	completed years		
kitchen	£6,800.00	7 years installed	0.35	£2,380.00
		notional Life		
		20 Year life		



## Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

We understand that customers may need to make home improvements to support themselves to remain independent and live in their own home. We support them with this by signposting to our Aids and Adaptations Policy and providing information on how a request for aids and adaptations can be made.

All requests from customers to accommodate their needs are considered and acted on where possible, in accordance with our Inclusive Services Policy and the Equality Act 2010. You can request a reasonable adjustment from us through the officer you are engaging with, or by contacting our Customer Hub.

This policy aligns with our wider approach to Equality Diversity and Inclusion as outlined in our Customer Experience Strategy.

## Key terms and definitions

An improvement will count as a **landlord's fixture** where it becomes a fixed part of the structure or installations of the building, as defined in the Landlord and Customer Act 1985. For example, new bathrooms and central heating will be landlord's fixtures. We have a duty to keep such items in good repair.

## Who will be involved?

The Director of Property has overall accountability for this policy.

The Property Surveying team will monitor the application process and sign off any approved works.

## Record keeping

All records and component information must be recorded in Aareon QL

## Legislation and Regulation

Under the Landlord and Customer Act 1927 and the Housing Act 1985, customers have the right to make certain improvements to their home, with Great Places written permission, in line with the law, statutory obligations, their tenancy agreement and this policy.

- Housing Act 1985
- Statutory Instrument 1994 No. 613 of the Secure Customers of Local Authorities



(Compensation for Improvements) Regulations 1994

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Equality Act 2010

## Links to related policies, strategies, and procedures

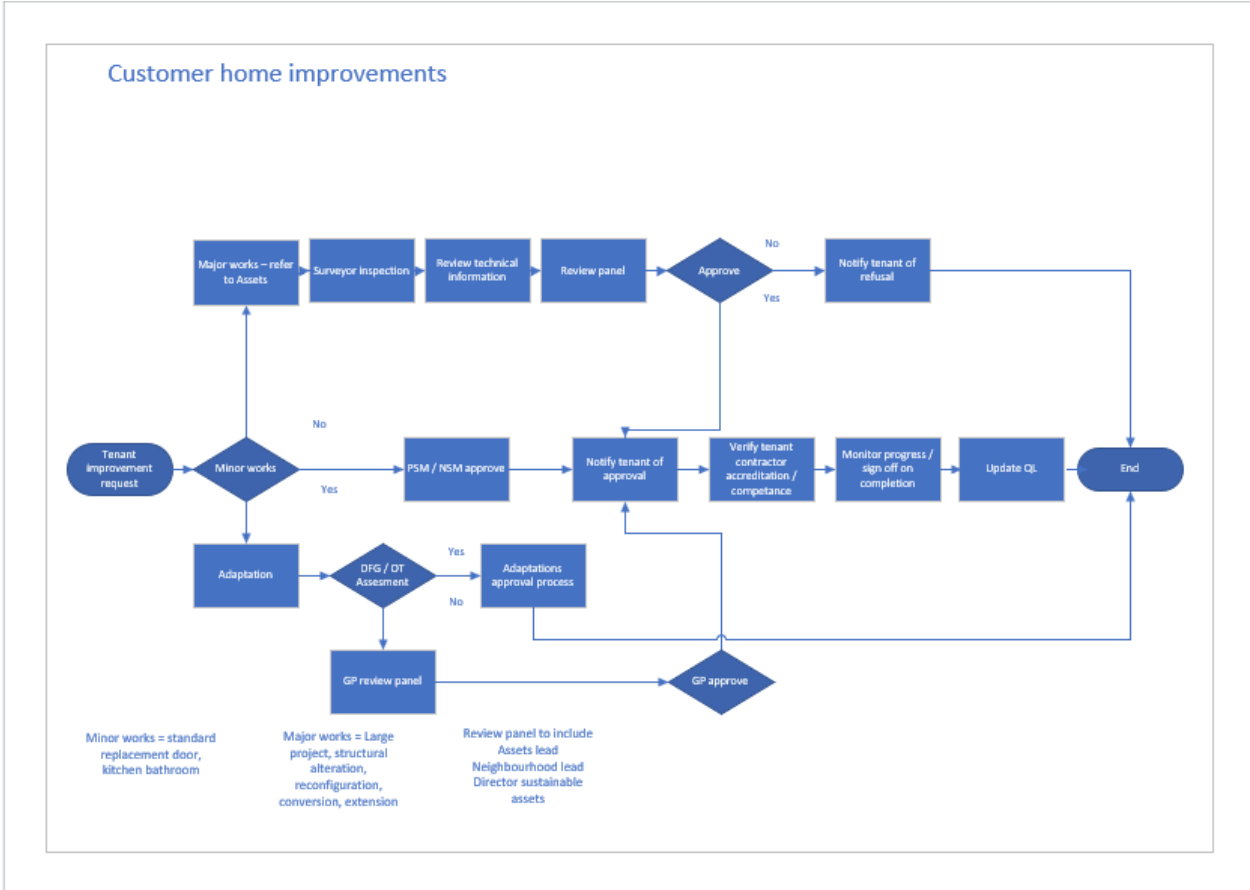
- Customer Experience Strategy
- Repairs Strategy and repairs policy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Adaptations Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Inclusive Service Policy
- Recharge Policy

<b>Policy approval date:</b>	31/08/25
<b>Equality impact assessment date:</b>	April 2025
<b>Safeguarding/Modern Slavery impact:</b>	N/A
<b>Policy review date:</b>	August 2028
<b>Lead team:</b>	Assets
<b>Level of authorisation required:</b>	Directors
<b>Please record all authorisation meetings, with dates and details</b>	Directors 31/07/25





## Appendix 1





## Appendix 2

### Leasehold Alterations

#### Introduction

Under the terms of their lease, leaseholders may be able to make alterations to their premises with permission. This covers all leaseholders (commercial and residential) in the Great Places Group, including Plumlife.

This sets out our process and should be read in conjunction with Individual Leasehold Agreements and appropriate regulatory legislation.

#### Leasehold Alteration Procedure

This procedure applies where we are the freeholder. Any applications made on properties where we are not the freeholder are determined by the freeholder or their appointed agent separately. Individual lease agreements take precedence over this policy document.

#### Our approach

An alteration could be:

- Structural alterations
- An addition to, or change in, the fixtures and fittings
- An addition or change to the provision of services to the premises
- A change to the layout or floor plan inside the premises
- A change to the façade
- A change to shopfront, manifestations, and signs

Leaseholders must seek permission from us for any alteration work.

Leaseholders are advised to investigate and ensure they have the necessary funds for the improvements as quotes can expire, leading to future problems.



## **Unpermitted alterations**

We do not allow any alterations which would negatively impact the building, other residents, the environment, or the value of the property.

If a leaseholder undertakes an alteration without requesting permission (as specified in this policy and their lease agreement) they are potentially in breach of their lease. In such cases, we may ask the leaseholder to reinstate the property to its previous state at their own cost. Alternatively, we may reinstate and recover all costs including but not limited to, the reinstatement costs, management, consultant, and legal costs.

## **Requesting permission**

We will give guidance if an alteration requires approval. We do not offer a pre-application advice service; our surveyors engage with leaseholders after applications are submitted. We may answer general enquiries, but do not go into specific details without a full application.

Leaseholders pay a legal and administrative fee to Plumlife / Great places when submitting an application. This is non-refundable regardless of outcome and the decisions made by our surveyors are non-negotiable.

Leaseholders should request alterations in writing, on the appropriate form that the Plumlife Property Manager or Great Places Assets Team can provide.

All requests for alterations should refer to, and align to, the terms contained within the lease of the property. The specific clause within the lease must allow for the type of alteration requested for permission to be granted.

Leaseholders are asked to provide the relevant clause from the lease permitting the alteration and to seek, and provide, legal clarification in the case of any ambiguity. In the absence of a clause permitting the alteration, we may refuse the request.

Leaseholders are asked to submit detailed plans for the alteration which contains information about the design and materials to be used.

Leaseholder must provide details of planning permission and/or building regulations approval and any other relevant statutory approvals as required.

Leaseholder must provide details and/or samples of all materials to be used, and these must comply with the requirements of the Building Safety Regulator.



## **Granting permission**

We take a fair and reasonable approach when considering requests for alterations and treat all leaseholders in a fair and equitable way.

We aim for an initial response time of 20 working days, and information regarding timescales for a final decision is communicated to leaseholders in receipt of an application.

In certain cases, we may require a surveyor to visit the property to discuss the proposed alterations before we grant permission.

We provide our decision, and reason for it, in writing.

## **Undertaking the work**

The work **MUST** be carried out by a competent tradesperson, where appropriate trades such as Gas, Electric or work to Fire rated components etc, trades shall be certified by the relevant governing body. All materials shall be approved by the relevant regulatory body and **MUST** not result in a breach of Statutory regulations.

All contractors, suppliers or tradesperson carrying out work **MUST** be competent and hold appropriate trade qualifications and accreditation and **MUST** have appropriate insurance cover.

Great Places Property Surveying team will monitor and sign off work from a Great Places perspective

## **Future maintenance responsibilities**

The leaseholder is responsible for future repairs and maintenance of alterations.

We will recharge the leaseholder for any unforeseen arising costs we incur as a result of the alteration.

## **Developments where we are not the landlord**

We have no control over the approval of alterations by other landlords and external managing agents; leaseholders must obtain direct consent from the freeholder of the building. We can provide the contact information for this and support leaseholders who remain under our affordable head lease to submit an application.



## **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

All requests from leaseholders to accommodate their needs are considered and acted on where possible, in accordance with our Inclusive Services Policy and the Equality Act 2010.

You can request a reasonable adjustment from Great Places through the officer you are engaging with, or by contacting our Customer Hub. Examples of the support we can provide include providing information in alternative formats and adapting our communication to suit customer needs.

## **Legislation and Regulation**

- Landlord and Customer Act 1927 and 1987
- Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- The Building Regulations 2010
- The Building (Amendment) Regulations 2018
- Building Safety Act 2022

## **Responsibilities**

The Director of Property has overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation.