

Alterations and Improvements Policy

1.0 Aim / Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 Coastline recognises that customers may wish to make alterations or improvements to their homes and we will consider all applications from our customers to achieve this.
- 1.2 All amendments to the property both internally and externally are subject to the customer making a formal request in writing, and works must not commence until formal written permission has been granted by Coastline. We will not unreasonably withhold consent.
- 1.3 Before any works are completed to any property constructed before 2000 an Asbestos Survey must be completed by a competent company. The type of survey to be completed will be determined by the extent of works planned by the customer. This cost will need to be covered by the Customer.
- 1.4 Permission will not normally be withheld, but will be subject to specified conditions, depending on the complexity of the proposed alteration or improvement, and will always be dependent upon the customer being in good financial standing with Coastline.
- 1.5 This policy refers to customers who have assured tenancies, are shared owners and leaseholders.
- 1.6 All permissions granted to carry out alterations or improvements will expire after six months unless otherwise specified in the letter issued to the customer upon their request.

2.0 Customer responsibilities

- 2.1 Major work may require other approval, for example, Planning Permission, Building Regulation approval, asbestos surveys and approved removal
- 2.2 Safety regulations must be followed and work must be carried out by a suitably qualified person and we will regularly inspect the progress and will require completion certificates.
- 2.3 If the customer needs permission from external agencies such as Cornwall Council Planning or Highways department, we will need copies for our files.
- 2.4 All works must be completed within six months of Coastline granting permission. Failure to complete works within this time will result in the customer being required to make a new application.

3.0 Refusal of permission

- 3.1 Coastline will refuse permission if:
 - Alterations negatively affect the lettable or value of the property;
 - Works will affect the structural integrity of the building or adjoining properties;
 - An unsuitable contractor is to be used;
 - There are Health & Safety implications;
 - Necessary permissions have not been obtained or the work is unauthorised;
 - The alterations may have a negative impact on neighbours;

- The alteration or improvement is not suitable for the property type;
- The improvement cannot be easily reversed at the end of the tenancy;
- The customer/s has any outstanding debts with Coastline;
- The customer is under a Notice of Seeking Possession;
- The customer is seeking permission for Artexting (or other texture finish);
- The customer is seeking permission to redecorate or render external walls;
- The customer has a Probationary tenancy (with the exception of sky dish, shed and fencing which will be permitted but written permission must be submitted to Coastline prior to making these alterations);
- The customer has applied for alterations on a new build property, either internally or externally, during the defect period, usually 12 months from completion (with the exception of sky dish, shed and fencing which will be permitted but written permission must be submitted to Coastline prior to making these alterations).

4.0 Examples of works that require permission

- 4.1
- Decorate the exterior of the property;
 - Make any structural alterations or additions (kitchens, bathrooms, showers);
 - Alter or add any fixtures;
 - Remove any hedges, trees or shrubs;
 - Putting up a fence;
 - Putting up satellite TV aerial dishes;
 - Construct hard standings (for example a drive);
 - Putting up a shed, garage or conservatory;
 - Laying patios or decking.

5.0 Water Features and fish ponds

- 5.1 The installation of water features or fishponds is permitted, however any such installation should not exceed 6ft x 6ft and should be no more than 3ft deep. Customers will be asked to remove and refill the holes at the end of the tenancy. It is also recommended that customers who install ponds should take out public liability insurance.
- 5.2 Written permission must be sought for a fish tank with a greater volume than 33 gallons (155 litres). However, written permission is not required for a smaller volume tank. The installation of larger internal fish tanks will require some structural investigation to ensure that the location within the property is suitable. A qualified structural surveyor should be engaged to provide a written structural assessment.

6.0 Making an application

- 6.1 The application letter should include:
- Details of the alterations or improvements the customer wants to make including drawings and measurements if appropriate.

- The customer should advise Coastline when they have chosen a suitable contractor and they should provide us with their details.
- Details of planning permission or building regulations the customer has sought or is seeking.
- Certificates from contractors will also be required, and copies will be held on file for future reference.

7.0 Progressing applications and timescales

- 7.1 Upon receipt of the application we will arrange to visit the customer, if necessary, within 10 working days and will confirm our decision in writing within 20 working days (subject to the necessary documentation being received by Coastline).
- 7.2 Once we have granted permission and confirmed in writing, the customer can start the work.
- 7.3 If work is carried out without receiving written permission, we have the option of inspecting the work and asking the customer to reinstate the property to the original condition. If the customer fails to do so we may do the work and charge for the cost of doing it.
- 7.4 Once the work has been completed we may inspect the improvements or alterations to make sure we are happy with the quality of work. This will be recorded in CRM.

8.0 Compensation

- 8.1 We may pay compensation for certain improvements, therefore customers should keep payment receipts if they wish to claim compensation if they move out. Customers who held a tenancy with us before 20 February 2006 will qualify for compensation, however customers who became Coastline customers after this date will not. This is part of the the Housing Act 1985.
- 8.2 If the customer is eligible for compensation for improvements, we would base our calculations on the cost of the improvement and how long ago the work was done. Proof of permission and payment will need to be seen before compensation will be considered.
- 8.3 If a customer has had financial help such as a grant to undertake the works, the amount of the grant will be deducted from the cost of the improvements.
- 8.4 The maximum amount that can be claimed is £3000.
- 8.5 Compensation will cover the cost of materials (but not appliances such as cookers or fridges) and labour costs (but not the customer's own labour).

9.0 Qualifying Improvement Notional Life (years)

- 9.1 Qualifying improvements are shown below, if work is older than the expected life shown in years you will not get compensation:

Improvement	Number of years
Bath or shower	12
Wash-hand basin	12
Toilet	12
Kitchen sink	10
Storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen	10
Work surfaces for food preparation	10
Space or water heating	12
Thermostatic radiator valves	7
Insulation of pipes, water tank or cylinder	10
Lift insulation	20
Cavity wall insulation	20
Draft proofing of external doors or windows	8
Double glazing or other external window replacement of secondary glazing	20
Rewiring or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors)	15
Any object which improves the security of the dwelling-house, but excluding burglar alarms	10

10.0 Recording and monitoring

10.1 All requests for improvements and alterations are logged and decisions and correspondence are recorded on file.

11.0 Appeals

11.1 Customers have the right to appeal if they are dissatisfied with the decision of the designated officer and this should be done within 28 days of the date of the refusal letter.

11.2 The decision will be reviewed by the Tenancy Manager in line with this policy.

12.0 Compliance

12.1 Compliance with the various statutory and regulatory controls and requirements, including;

- Housing Acts;
- Health and Safety Acts;
- Building Regulations;
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System;
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012Fire Regulations;
- Gas Regulations;
- Water Supply By-Laws;
- General Civil Laws.

Policy Template

The Policy template is pre-set to the correct font and format and ready for population but some general rules to follow are;

- * Titles use 11pt bold Arial Narrow. Text is in 11pt Arial apart from headers that are in 8pt bold Arial;
- * All paragraphs in the body of the report must be numbered (do not use auto-numbering);
- * All text is indented and fully justified (use hanging indents);
- * Bulleted lists must be divided by 6pt (use format / paragraph / indents and spacing / select 6pt in the "spacing / after" box);
- * Use semi-colons (;) after each bullet point in short bulleted lists;
- * Do not allow area titles to become separated by page breaks;
- * Try to avoid your tables spanning two pages but always turn on the heading rows repeat function in case it is unavoidable.