



A Guide to
Undertaking
**Your Own Home
Improvements**



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide customers with guidance and advice when they wish to carry out alterations to their homes.

This document should be used to help customers decide whether to proceed with making an alteration request.



There are three types of alteration requests as follows:

1. Requests that **will not be permitted**.
2. Requests that **will be permitted** without the need for you to submit a formal application. You will still need to contact us and obtain our permission for these requests.
3. Requests that **may be permitted** and require Platform Housing to consider the application on an individual basis. You will need to submit a formal application for these. These requests fall into two categories:
 - a) Requests for substantial alterations that require us to undertake a pre inspection to determine whether approval can be given, and if approval is given undertake a post inspection to ensure works have been carried out correctly. Evidence will also need to be provided to demonstrate that the work has been completed to the required standards.
 - b) Requests for major alterations that will not require us to undertake pre and post inspections of the work. You will still need to demonstrate the work has been completed to the required standards.

General Conditions

There are various considerations that should be taken into account before making an alteration request, including:

The type of tenancy agreement you have

Alteration requests will only be considered if you have a secure tenancy such as an Assured General Needs or Fixed Term. If you have a Starter Tenancy you are not permitted to undertake major/substantial alterations (type 3a and 3b requests).

If you have a market or intermediate rent property, or are a shared owner or leaseholder you will need to follow the Home Ownership process for requesting alterations. Please call our customer contact centre for more information.

Tenancy breaches

A tenancy alteration request will automatically be refused if there is a breach of tenancy. Tenancy breaches may include:

- Significant non-payment of rent
- Evidence of wilful damage or neglect to the property
- Unauthorised alteration requests
- Involvement in or subject to an antisocial behaviour order.

Retrospective applications

No work should be undertaken without our permission. However, if you have undertaken work without our permission you will need to apply for retrospective consent. This will involve going through the same process as detailed in this guide and works will either be Approved or Refused.

Please call our customer contact centre for more information.

New build properties

Alteration requests will generally not be considered if your property is less than 12 months old as alterations may invalidate the new build warrantee.

The only exceptions to this are the following if the property is a house or bungalow:

- A digital TV aerial or standard satellite dish
- A shed or greenhouse
- Laminate flooring

Subject to specific requirements being met, these requests will normally be Approved without the need for you to submit a formal application, (refer to Alteration Requests section 2 below).

Undertaking the work

All work must be carried out by competent tradespersons/contractors to the complete satisfaction of Platform Housing.

For certain works undertaken, evidence will need to be provided that the works have been undertaken to the required standards and you have complied with all statutory obligations.

General Conditions (cont)

Platform Housing will not be responsible for any future maintenance costs relating to the improvements or alterations you undertake.

It is your responsibility to maintain insurance cover and make sure any installation is kept in a well maintained condition not to cause damage to any property or injury to persons.

You must not work with, damage, or remove materials that you know or think might contain asbestos. If you think there are materials in your home that may contain asbestos and are damaged or in a poor condition please call our customer contact centre.

Potential costs and other charges

Before deciding whether you would like to undertake an alteration you should carefully consider the following potential costs and re-charges:

- **Poor workmanship** - if Platform Housing deems the workmanship is unsatisfactory, you will be required to either complete the works to the necessary standards or re-instate the property to how it was before the alteration took place.
- **At the end of the tenancy** - if at any time you vacate the premises, you may be required to reinstate the property to how it was before the alteration took place.
- **Unauthorised works** - if you carry out unauthorised alterations, you will be required to reinstate the property to how it was before the alteration took place. Unauthorised works include work undertaken which have been refused, work undertaken before Platform Housing has confirmed a decision,

works that have not been undertaken in accordance with the correct statutory/legal requirements, or if the required certification/documentation has not been received by us within 12 months of the approval date.

- **Subsequent repairs** - if damage to the property occurs due to the alteration or while the alteration is being undertaken, you will be required to undertake the necessary repairs and possibly re-instate the property to how it was before the alteration took place.
- **Impeding future maintenance** - if your alteration impedes future maintenance work that Platform Housing is responsible for, re-instatement works may be required or the extra-over cost of being able to undertake the required maintenance will be re-charged to you.
- **Impact on your future rent** - some alterations may have an impact on your rent, e.g. if you intend to form an additional bedroom it may mean your rent will need to increase. This should be discussed with your Neighbourhood Officer as part of the application process.

If you have not satisfactorily completed the alteration or re-instatement works have not been completed within the required timeframe (that will be determined by Platform Housing depending on the nature and extent of the work) Platform Housing will carry out the necessary work and you will be re-charged.

Re-charges will include the cost of the work required, administration costs and VAT where applicable.

General Conditions (cont)

Other consents/approvals may be required

It is your responsibility to check if Planning permission or Building Regulation approval from the Local Authority is required. If it is, you will need to obtain the necessary consents and provide copies of such documentation to Platform Housing as soon as possible. You will also need to provide written confirmation if it is not required.

It is also your responsibility to check whether the Party Wall (etc) Act 1996 will apply to the work you intend to carry out. If so, you will need to obtain the required consents from your neighbours, and cover the costs of any associated work and agreements that may be required. You will need to provide copies of the necessary documentation to Platform Housing before commencing works.

It is also your responsibility to check whether any other consents or approvals are required.

Penalties issued by the Local Authority for failing to have the necessary consents in place can be severe, so please ensure you have the relevant approvals first.

If you carry out alterations without the necessary consents/approvals, the 'Approval' you have received from us will be retracted and the works will be deemed 'Unauthorised'.

Alterations required for medical reasons

In some cases, adaptations may be required to assist you for medical reasons such as the installation of handrails, ramps, over bath or level access showers. If you require this sort of help, you should contact an Occupational Therapist. They can assess your needs and formally recommend to us what alterations may be required. If the alterations are minor, and we have the funds, this work would be done free of charge by us. If the works are major, then funding may be available from the Local Authority through a Disabled Facilities Grant.

Works processed in this way need to be approved by Platform Housing in accordance with our Aids and Adaptations Policy, but you will not need to make an Alteration Request.

Alteration Requests

The 3 types of alteration requests are now explained in more detail.

Please note the following lists are not exhaustive and if you wish to undertake work not listed then please contact us for further advice.

1. Requests that **will not** be permitted

The following requests are an automatic Refusal by Platform Housing.

Reasons for refusal are provided next to each request. Any applications received for these types of requests will not be processed and you will be notified of this by our contact centre.

Request ID	Type of request	Reason/s for refusal
1.1	Installation of a pond.	Extensive future maintenance and re-instatement costs. Health and safety implications.
1.2	Installation of a new shed or greenhouse in a front or side garden.	Not an appropriate location for these types of structures.
1.3	Installation of a new shed or greenhouse in a communal area/garden.	Not part of property tenancy.
1.4	Installation of a new shed or greenhouse if one already exists in that location.	Given the size of most rear gardens one of each is considered reasonable.
1.5	Upgrading or providing new fencing to a communal area/garden.	Not part of property tenancy.
1.6	Installing new fencing to a private garden if no physical boundary has existed before.	Closing off open boundaries will impact upon the locality and will often contravene planning conditions of new estates.
1.7	Installing a dropped kerb if no driveway exists or if an existing driveway has not had approval.	Approval for driveway must be provided before a dropped kerb approval will be given.
1.8	Installing a garage on a designated parking space.	Restricts future letting of parking space and extensive re-instatement costs.

Alteration Requests (cont)

1.9	Installation of a hot tub	Extensive future maintenance and re-instatement costs. Health and safety implications.
1.10	Installation of decking to any location	Extensive future maintenance and re-instatement costs. Health and safety implications.
1.11	Installation of an outside tap in a communal area.	No control of water usage or potential misuse.
1.12	Installation of a sky dish or aerial on a block of flats/maisonettes.	Contravenes planning requirements. Connection must be made to a communal system. If no communal system in place then contact us for further advice.
1.13	Changes to existing external doors, including the installation of cat flaps.	Will permanently impact on the integrity and performance of the door.
1.14	Any work within loft/attic, including the installation of a loft ladder.	No access to loft/attic areas is permitted in tenancy agreement.
1.15	Installation of any gas heating appliances (except cookers).	Health and safety implications.
1.16	Installation of any solid fuel heating appliances.	Health and safety implications.
1.17	Installation of any oil/LPG heating appliances or oil/LPG storage tanks.	Health and safety implications.
1.18	Installation of laminate, vinyl or tiled flooring to any flat or maisonette (vinyl is permitted in bathrooms and kitchens).	High noise transmission to neighbouring properties.
1.19	Painting over or covering of any kitchen or bathroom fixtures and fittings.	Permanent damage caused to fixtures and fittings.

Alteration Requests (cont)

2. Requests that **will be** permitted by Platform Housing without the need for you to make a formal application request

The following requests are an automatic Approval by Platform Housing. Should you wish to undertake any of these works you do not need to make a formal application alteration request but you must ensure you adhere to any specific requirements provided.

For these requests you must email or phone our customer contact centre to explain what works you intend to carry out so that we can update your tenancy records. Failure to do so will invalidate the Approval status and works will be deemed 'Unauthorised'.

Request ID	Type of request	Specific requirements
2.1	Installing a dropped kerb if an approved driveway currently exists.	Permission for these works must be provided by Highways, who will also undertake the work on your behalf. They will charge you a fee for this.
2.2	Installation of a new shed or greenhouse in a rear garden.	Only if garden is part of tenancy agreement. The structure is classified by the Local Authority as Permitted Development – for guidance refer to: www.planningportal.co.uk You have consulted with your adjacent neighbours. The structure must not be within 1m of any property or boundary or be placed over any drainage pipework, gullies or manholes. Only one of each structure is permitted per property.
2.3	Upgrading existing or installing new fencing to a garden area.	Only if garden is part of tenancy agreement. Fencing is not more than 1.8m high or 0.9m high if adjacent to a pavement or road. Fencing must be positioned on the original boundary line (i.e. the previous fencing, hedge or other physical boundary must be removed prior to installation).

Alteration Requests (cont)

2.4	Installation of an outside tap in a garden area.	<p>Only if garden is part of tenancy agreement.</p> <p>Only if a competent plumber undertakes the work.</p> <p>You take full responsibility for water usage, potential misuse and water hygiene risks i.e. legionella.</p>
2.5	Installation of a sky dish or aerial on a house or bungalow.	<p>The equipment must not cause interference to neighbouring signals.</p> <p>Approval will be retracted if planning enforcement action is taken by the Local Authority.</p>
2.6	Installation of a washing machine or dishwasher.	<p>Only if a competent plumber undertakes the work.</p> <p>Unnecessary pipework 'deadlegs' are not introduced into the system.</p>
2.7	Installation of an additional radiator or towel radiator	<p>Only if a competent plumber undertakes the work.</p> <p>Unnecessary pipework 'deadlegs' are not introduced into the system.</p>
2.8	Installation of a shower (refer to section 3 below for electric shower).	<p>Only if a competent plumber undertakes the work.</p> <p>Unnecessary pipework 'deadlegs' are not introduced into the system.</p>
2.9	Change of existing light fittings.	<p>Only if a competent electrician undertakes the work.</p> <p>Spot lights must be adequately fire rated.</p>
2.10	Upgrading or replacing internal doors.	<p>You are not permitted to change any fire doors.</p> <p>Door architraves and frames are not to be replaced.</p>
2.11	Changing of door locks.	<p>New locks must be min 5 lever and no lesser standard than the existing.</p> <p>Min 2 keys must be provided for each lock at the end of your tenancy.</p>

Alteration Requests (cont)

2.12	Replacing or installing energy meters (water, gas, electric).	Work must be undertaken by your energy supplier.
2.13	Redecoration of walls and ceilings.	Work to be undertaken by a competent tradesperson.
2.14	Fixing of mirrors/shelves and similar fittings.	Work to be undertaken by a competent tradesperson.
2.15	Upgrading/replacing small areas of wall tiling, floor tiling or plaster up to 2m ² .	Work to be undertaken by a competent tradesperson.
2.16	Installation of laminate, vinyl, or tiled flooring in a house or bungalow.	Floor tiles must not be installed on timber floors. Floor coverings installed in bathrooms and kitchens must be non-slip. Work to be undertaken by a competent tradesperson.



Alteration Requests (cont)

3. Requests that **may be permitted but require Platform Housing to consider the application on an individual basis**

You will need to submit a formal application Alteration Request for these. These requests fall into two categories:

- a) These requests are for substantial alterations that are likely to materially alter the property or have an impact on others. These types of requests require:
- You to submit an application by completing the customer alteration form on our website (we can post the form to you if you do not have access to the internet). Once received, we will log the request and aim to contact you within 28 working days with a decision. In some cases, we may need longer than 28 working days to reach a decision in which case we will communicate this to you.
 - Us to undertake a pre-inspection visit to determine whether approval can be given. Technical aspects will be carefully considered along with how your proposals may affect other properties/persons in the locality and the impact it may have on future letting of the property.
 - Us to confirm to you whether the application has been refused or approved.
 - If approved, you will need to notify us that the works have been completed so that we can undertake a post inspection to ensure the works have been carried out correctly.
 - You will also need to provide evidence to demonstrate the work has been completed to the required standards and in accordance with applicable legislation, such as Planning consent, Building Regulation approval, the Party Wall Act, structural calculations, electrical and gas installation certificates etc.
 - You to notify us that works have been completed and provide the evidence required within a 12 month period from the date approval is given. If you haven't provided us with the documentation required or notified us of reasons why this is not possible within 12 months the alteration will be deemed 'Unauthorised works'.

An alteration request can include more than one item of work, however, we will not accept multiple applications for the same property at the same time i.e. the works for one request must be fully complete before another application can be considered.

The following requests are likely to require Planning permission, Building Regulation approval and other consents may also be required.

The 'Typical information required' below has been provided as a guide only and it is your responsibility to check and confirm to us what is or is not required.

Alteration Requests (cont)

Request ID	Type of request	Typical information required
3.a1	Building a new extension, porch, conservatory, loft conversion or garage/outbuilding.	<p>Planning consent (or confirmation it is Permitted Development).</p> <p>Building Regulation completion certification.</p> <p>Party Wall consent (if required).</p> <p>Structural calculations (if required).</p> <p>Gas, electrical, other certification.</p>
3.a2	Structural alterations to external walls.	<p>Structural calculations.</p> <p>Planning consent (or confirmation it is Permitted Development).</p> <p>Building Regulation completion certification.</p> <p>Party Wall consent (if required).</p> <p>Gas, electrical, other certification.</p>
3.a3	Installing external wall insulation or cladding.	<p>Planning consent (or confirmation it is Permitted Development).</p> <p>Building Regulation completion certification.</p> <p>Party Wall consent.</p> <p>Structural calculations.</p> <p>Gas, electrical, other certification.</p> <p>Before and after Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's).</p>
3.a4	Alterations to internal walls.	<p>Building Regulation completion certification.</p> <p>Party Wall consent.</p> <p>Structural calculations.</p> <p>Gas, electrical, other certification.</p>
3.a5	Alterations to chimney breast/stacks.	<p>Planning consent (or confirmation it is Permitted Development).</p> <p>Building Regulation completion certification.</p> <p>Party Wall consent.</p> <p>Structural calculations.</p> <p>Gas Safe/Oftec (oil)/HETAS (solid fuel)/electrical certification.</p>

Alteration Requests (cont)

3.a6	Installing a new kitchen or changes to existing.	Plans and specifications. Gas/electrical certification.
3.a7	Installing a new bathroom or changes to existing.	Plans and specifications. Gas/electrical certification.
3.a8	Installing internal wall insulation.	Building Regulation completion certification. Party Wall consent. Structural calculations. Gas, electrical, other certification. Before and after Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's).
3.a9	Installing new wall/floor tiling or plaster over 2m ² .	Product specification.
3.a10	Installing a new driveway, hardstanding or patio area.	Planning consent (or confirmation it is Permitted Development). Building Regulation completion certification. If a driveway is approved, you must follow guidance in 2.1 to ensure correct dropped kerb is installed.
3.a11	Installing new renewable energy equipment such as photo voltaic, solar thermal, air or ground source heat pumps.	Planning consent (or confirmation it is Permitted Development). Building Regulation completion certification. Party Wall consent. Structural calculations. Gas, electrical, other certification. Before and after Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's).
3.a12	Installing CCTV/security system to your property	Police crime number or consent from the Police. Electrical certification.

Alteration Requests (cont)

b) These requests are for major alterations but are unlikely to materially alter the property or have an impact on others. These requests will still be considered on an individual basis but will not require us to undertake pre and post inspections of the work. You will still need to provide evidence to demonstrate the work has been completed to the required standards and in accordance with statutory consents.

Request ID	Type of request	Typical information required
3.b1	Installing new windows or external doors (with no works required to structural openings).	Building Regulation completion certification or FENSA certification.
3.b2	Installing cavity wall or loft insulation.	Building Regulation completion certification. Before and after Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's).
3.b3	Installing new electrical circuits or changes to existing circuits.	Building Regulation completion certification or NICEIC certification.
3.b4	Installing a new electric shower (either over bath or walk in) or electric cooker.	Building Regulation completion certification or NICEIC certification.
3.b5	Installing a new gas cooker.	Building Regulation completion certification or Gas Safe certification.

Potential Compensation for Improvements

The Housing Corporation Regulatory Circular 94-33 titled 'Right to Repair & Right to Compensation for Improvements' issued in December 1994 and revised in August 2002 sets out the rights of Customers to compensation when they carry out certain designated improvements to their homes and terminate their tenancy before the expiry of the life of the improvement.

Compensation may only be paid at the end of the tenancy and is subject to Platform Housing providing approval for the works undertaken. To apply for compensation you must write to Platform Housing between 28 days before the end of your tenancy and 21 days after your tenancy with copies of all invoices and written evidence that Approval for the alteration was given.

The maximum amount of compensation payable is £5,000 and the minimum is £100. Any calculated compensation figure below this value will not be payable. Compensation is calculated based on the life expectancy of the improvement and the cost of the improvement.

The designated improvements with their respective life cycles are as follows:

Designated improvement	Life expectancy (yrs)
Bath or shower	12
Wash hand basin	12
Toilet	12
Kitchen sink	10
Storage cupboards in bathroom/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
Loft insulation	20
Draft proofing of external doors/windows	8
Double or secondary glazing	20
Rewiring or provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings	15
Anything which improves the security of the dwelling (not burglar alarms)	10

Example of compensation calculation

A Customer installs a shower at a cost of £1,200. The life expectancy is 12 years. If the Customer terminates their tenancy after 5 years of carrying out the improvement the compensation payable is:

Each year of its installation would equate to 1/12 of its value = £100.

£1,200 - £500 (less 5 years of its life) = £700 compensation.

