

Taking the stress out of Leaseholder Alterations

EK Licence to Alter provides you with the ideal combination of technical and procedural expertise to simplify the often daunting licence to alter process.

Over the years, we have developed tried and tested procedures for the licence to alter consent process from start to finish, managing multiple parties throughout.

Key Licence to Alter Services

Whether you're a landlord or a leaseholder, EK Licence to Alter has the expertise to guide you smoothly through the process.



Alterations Manuals
and procedures for
residential blocks



**Assessment of Leaseholder
Proposals** and review
of project details



Reporting to Landlord
and advising of terms and
conditions of consent



Schedules of Condition
advice and oversight



Monitoring of Works
on site and reporting to
landlord on progress



Dispute Resolution
including a service for
problematic consents



Desktop only Reporting
services for minor
works projects



Certification,
pre-commencement and
post completion



**Retrospective
Assessments** on
unauthorised alterations

EK Licence to Alter has vast experience in dealing with residential alterations and our skills and expertise in this area enable us to provide clear advice to managing agents, landlords and leaseholders.

Our services include drafting management guidelines and regulations on behalf of the landlord, reviewing and advising on the leaseholder's proposals, monitoring the works on site and ensuring that all completion documentation is handed over before sign off.





• Sector: Residential

Case Study: Red Brick Mansion Block — Chimney Removal Implications

EK Licence to Alter has carried out a number of LTA applications at this mansion block in central London, so our familiarity will assist as the application progresses.

We are acting for the landlord (freeholder) of this sought-after mansion block in central London in respect of an application from a leaseholder to carry out substantial alterations to their flat.

The leaseholder wishes to change the layout of the flat, including widening doorways and removing a chimney breast within the demise.

Crucial to the consent will be integrity of the building following removal of the chimney breast which is structural. We will bring in a structural engineer for their input. We have counted 5 flats above the flat in question, all of which could be affected by the removal of the chimney, and therefore full schedules of condition will be required to each of the flats — a cost fully covered by the leaseholder requesting consent.

A chimney expert will be required to ascertain how the chimney can be removed without affecting the flues serving other flats. We will take receipt of this report and include its findings in our report to the landlord.

Legal advice will be sought by the landlord in respect of the footprint of the chimney. Who owns that space? Does the space the chimney

leaves increase the internal area of the demise and would a premium be applicable, to the landlord's benefit? This is to be ascertained.

There are even implications in increasing the size of the flat, potentially impacting on the service charges paid by this leaseholder and therefore all leaseholders. It is likely that the footprint of the chimney will be de minimis and the service charge unaffected.

Finally, the lease contains an absolute prohibition on hard flooring in the living areas, so if the landlord was to allow hard flooring subject to necessary acoustic specifications and testing, they should proceed with caution, not least because of *Duval vs 11–13 Randolph Crescent Ltd*.

This case study illustrates the number of stakeholders/professionals involved with an LTA application. It also highlights the lease implications of structural and non-structural work, and how vital it is to protect the integrity of the building and other leaseholders' flats.

• Sector: Residential

Art Deco Development in West London

A beautiful Art Deco mid 1930s flat close to the famous Ealing Studios is the set of an ongoing licence to alter application — a rather straightforward application only slightly complicated by the buildings' grade II listed status.

The development was originally constructed to attract the stars of the silver screen working close by, however at the time, actors and actresses preferred to stay in the West End and be driven into work, so the blocks were largely occupied by film crew and the not-so-famous.

Around 40 years ago, the flats — previously only available for rental — could now be purchased and today they are all private dwellings occupied by the leaseholder or their subtenant.

EK Licence to Alter was instructed by the share-of-freehold company to report on proposed alterations to a flat in one of the five handsome blocks. The leaseholder's proposals are straightforward: to remove two walls between the bathroom and adjacent WC, thus creating a more modern, larger bathroom.



The lease dictates that alterations are not permitted without landlord's prior consent, which the landlord (the freehold-owning RMC) is inclined to grant subject to certain conditions, such as materials and workforce making use of the rear fire exit steps instead of the internal common parts.

A structural engineer acting for the leaseholder has confirmed the walls are not load-bearing and therefore their removal would not affect other flats or the integrity of the building.

Once we have the leaseholder's successful application from the local planning authority given the building is grade II listed, we will report to the landlord to seek their green light, and liaise with the landlord's solicitor to draw up the licence and permit work to begin.



• Sector: Residential

Mansion Block, Chelsea

The leaseholder wished to modernise his flat in a mansion block built in the late 1800s. The work involved removal of internal structural walls and chimneys, installation of new bathrooms and kitchen.

The removal of chimneys is always of concern as it may mean that the flats below cannot use theirs in future. In this case, it was shown that the flat below (lower ground floor) either did not have chimneys or had already had their own removed.

The structural engineer was therefore able to design a suitable beams arrangement to support the remaining chimneys above, as well as further structural strengthening where other walls were to be removed. It was also necessary to bring in an advising engineer, to act for the landlord, to assess and approve the leaseholder's engineer's designs.

Further problems were encountered following a full strip out of the property, whereby it was found that the walls in the property had not been correctly tied into the front elevation — presumably a problem since construction. Therefore suitable ties were installed to rectify this issue.

The project took 5 months to complete and the flat is now habited by the delighted leaseholder.

• Sector: Residential

Case Study: Creation of homeworking space in a school conversion

Do you dream of having a perfect homeworking space? This leaseholder made that dream a reality.

We acted as landlord's surveyor in respect of a licence to alter application from a leaseholder in this converted school in north London. The leaseholder, also a shareholder in the freehold-owning RMC, wished to take full advantage of the double-height ceilings in what used to be a classroom, and build an additional mezzanine to create some homeworking space. (There was already a mezzanine bedroom in the flat).

The lease stated "not to make any structural alterations or additions without landlord's consent" hence the leaseholder diligently sought permission.

This was a particularly interesting application. This Victorian school was converted to flats around 20 years ago, complete with high ceilings and mezzanines as unique selling points. And with the recent change in working habits, this leaseholder saw an opportunity to create a separate working area, thus demarcating 'work' and 'living' spaces — the sort of separation not everyone is lucky to have in their flat.

Once we had submitted our report to the RMC directors and they subsequently agreed to the work, the leaseholder's professional team demolished non-load-bearing walls to form new doorways and erected



the new mezzanine level. The mezzanine required installation of new steel columns and beams, with the beams bolted to the main wall of the flat with resin anchors.

This was a ground floor flat, hence there were close to zero loading considerations. Had these works been proposed for a flat on a high storey, that would have been a different case. The mezzanine level needed to comply with building regulations in respect of its glass balustrades to minimise risk of falling from height.

There were potential Party Wall considerations however the leaseholder having taken advice (which we agreed with), there was no cutting into a neighbouring wall, floor or ceiling, therefore no Party Wall notices needed to be served.

Taking as much pressure from the managing agent as possible, we worked closely with them to serve the best interests of the RMC and enable the leaseholder to fulfil their homeworking vision.

The finished result was a modern, 'floating' home office, which would serve as an extra selling point if the leaseholder decided to move on.

School and church conversions make for very special spaces for residential units, the available height being key to maximising creativity.



Call us today to discuss your leaseholder alteration requirements.



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“I have worked with Bill on a number of licence to alter applications over the years, some of which have been complex and ‘back to the bare brick’ alterations.

One such recent project involved a demanding new owner in a Mayfair block of flats with plans to completely alter and refurb their ground floor apartment. The works included moving the main apartment front door and increasing it in size, which was certainly a controversial intention, made more difficult by the last minute change in the design team prior to the project starting on site.

Bill and his team were able to deal with the demands of my client and the concerns of the other owners in the apartments above and below, which included: noise and sound insulation; making connections ready for the new heating and hot water services; delays and timescales being moved. Most of this took place during the Covid lockdowns in 2020 and 2021.

The challenges that leaseholders and their professionals teams present property managers like me mean we rely on the type of support that EK Licence to Alter offers day in day out.”



Sarah Belsham MIRPM AssocRICS
Fry & Co