



Colchester
City Council

Tenant Alterations Policy

Title	Tenant Alterations Policy
Users of Policy	Colchester City Council tenants and leaseholders, staff at Colchester Borough Homes
Date Adopted	April 2018
Date last Reviewed	August 2025
Review Frequency	Every 3 years
Best Before Date	August 2028
Scheme of Delegation	
Formation of Policy	Portfolio Holder(s) with delegated responsibility for the Financial Management of the Housing Revenue Account
Amendments	Portfolio Holder(s) with delegated responsibility for the Financial Management of the Housing Revenue Account
Monitoring	Strategic Client for Asset Management
Implementation	Strategic Client for Asset Management
Approval of requests	Strategic Client for Asset Management, delegated to Director of Assets, Colchester Borough Homes

1. Aims of Policy

- 1.1. The aim of the Tenant Alterations policy is to set out Colchester City Councils approach to allowing tenants to carry out alterations to our properties.
- 1.2. This policy will consider tenant alterations in regards to Tenant needs (i.e. disability), Health and Safety, ongoing maintenance / management, suitability for the property / future tenants and consideration of suitability for the wider community / neighbourhood impact.
- 1.3. The policy will also cover the approach to unauthorised tenant alterations.

2. Definition of an Alteration

- 2.1. Any changes carried out on a Council owned property, by the tenant (or any person under the tenants instruction), other than those specifically demised as the tenants responsibility under the terms of the Tenancy Agreement i.e. decoration.

3. Legal

- 3.1. Section 97 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended, which states that secure tenants are required to obtain their landlord's consent prior to making any improvement to their property. This defines an improvement as 'any alteration in, or addition to a dwelling house' and includes:
 - any addition to or alteration in landlords fixtures and fittings
 - any addition or alteration connected with the provision of service to the dwelling house
 - erection of wireless or television aerial; and
 - carrying out of external decoration.

The required consent must not be unreasonably withheld and, if unreasonably withheld, shall be treated as having been given.

- 3.2. The terms and conditions of the Council's Secure and Introductory Tenancy Agreement, which outlines the rights and responsibilities of tenants.
- 3.3. The terms and conditions of the Council's leases which outline the rights and responsibilities of leaseholders.
- 3.4. Section 99A of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) outlines the right for tenants to be compensated for certain improvements at the end of a tenancy subject to specified eligibility criteria.
- 3.5. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) regulates the development of land in England
- 3.6. Building Regulations 2010 and The Building (Approved Inspectors) Regulations 2010 set out what kind of works needs approval and how that approval should be obtained and technical requirements that set the standards that should be achieved by the building work.

4. Related policy and Guidance

- 4.1. Secure tenants have the right to make alterations to their home and garden, however, it is a condition of the Tenancy Agreement that written permission is sought and approval granted from Colchester Borough Homes (CBH) as the Landlord's managing agent prior to any work taking place.
- 4.2. Leaseholders may need written permission for some home improvements dependant on the terms of their lease, this is covered in the Leaseholders Guide.
- 4.3. Introductory tenants can decorate their homes, but do not have the right to alter their homes in any other way until a full secure tenancy is granted.
- 4.4. Tenants occupying a newbuild property will not be granted permission for most alterations during the 12 month defects period with the exception of minor items such as video doorbells, etc. Some alterations may be required to be completed by the original builder at the tenants cost to maintain warranty conditions.
- 4.5. For works which require planning permission, building control, party wall agreements or any other statutory approvals, it is the responsibility of the tenant to engage with professionals (surveyors, architects, etc) to ensure the appropriate permissions are gained and compliance is met. CBH do not provide these services and will not approve requests without the necessary statutory permissions.

Planning and building control information can be found on the Council's website [Planning, Building Control and Local Land Charges · Colchester City Council](#)

- 4.6. Where alterations require statutory approvals, including Planning Permission or Building Regulations, tenants will be directed to Colchester City Council's in-house services, e.g. the Building Control team. This ensures consistency, quality assurance, and compliance with local standards. The Council's Building Control service, for example, offers direct access to qualified Registered building inspectors (RBIs) who are legally qualified and familiar with our local housing stock, and can ensure high-quality inspections and a cost-effective services under the Teckal exemptions that allow the Council and CBH to use its own services without procurement.

5. The Policy- general provisions

- 5.1. Applications for alterations can be made by completing the on-line form available on the CBH website [Tenant Alterations - Colchester Borough Homes](#)

cbhomes.org.uk). Other methods to request alterations will be available on request. Applications will need to detail the type of works to be carried out, by whom and evidence of their competence. The location of the works and any drawings or photo's that would assist in the application should be included. All work must be completed by a competent person with evidence supplied prior to approval being granted.

5.2. Acceptable alterations with written permission include:

- Refitting kitchens and bathrooms, where a request is to install a wetroom or shower cubicle in flats not on the ground floor, these must align with CCC's adaptations policy.
- Replacing or upgrading electrical fittings, including any additional wiring to any part of the property and outbuildings.
- Renewal of doors or replacing internal doors (not fire doors).
- Fitting satellite dishes (excluding blocks/schemes with digital tv).
- Solid flooring which could include tiling or wood or laminate flooring in Houses, ground floor only and ground floor flats.
- Fencing or brick walls.
- Doorbell cameras not connected to mains supply and not fitted to doors and door frames (this will be subject to specific conditions).

5.3. Restricted acceptable alterations with written permission include:

- Sheds & Outbuildings – Limited to a maximum size and not more than 2 allowed at any property as long as within Planning, Building Control and any other statutory guidelines, more details can be obtained on application.
- Hardstanding / patios – permission will be subject to service (utilities) location, access to the highway, impact on neighbouring properties, and other relevant considerations such as health and safety. Where appropriate an application to Essex County Council for a dropped kerb will be required, information can be obtained from the Essex Highways website, www.essexhighways.org and is the tenants responsibility to arrange this directly with ECC. Hardstanding areas will be limited to a maximum of 25% of the garden space.

5.4. Unacceptable alterations where written permission will not be provided include:

- Any alteration to incoming services utility, e.g. gas, electricity, water, sewerage distribution point
- Conservatories
- Car ports
- Loft conversions
- Decking
- Extensions
- Log burners
- Tiled, Laminate or solid wood flooring if you live in a first or second floor flat
- Door or Wall Flaps for pet access
- Ponds
- Fixed pools
- Any works which falls under the Party Wall etc. Act 1996 [Party Wall etc. Act 1996](http://legislation.gov.uk) (legislation.gov.uk)

The lists in 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 are not exhaustive and other requests will be treated on an individual request basis and where appropriate referred to the Council's Client Team for consideration.

- 5.5. Permission will only be given if planning & building control requirements are met.
- 5.6. It is the tenant's responsibility to maintain and repair the authorised alteration for the lifetime of the tenancy, unless stated otherwise on the permission letter.
- 5.7. Where permission is given, tenants will be notified if the alteration is considered 'permanent'.
- 5.8. At the end of the tenancy all alterations must be removed, unless the alteration is a 'permanent' alteration, and the property reinstated to its original condition; otherwise this work would be rechargeable to the tenant.
- 5.9. Prior to granting permission, we may need to visit your home to establish the suitability of the proposed alteration and to verify if certain conditions need to be adhered to.
- 5.10. Depending on the type of alteration carried out, CBH may need to inspect the work and you will be required to send copies of certification relating to gas, electrical works and any other certification relevant to the works.
- 5.11. All authorised alterations must be carried out to the current and appropriate planning consent, building regulations and all other relevant legislation.
- 5.12. Alterations must be carried out in a safe manner and by a competent person or contractors.
- 5.13. Where conditional permission is given, all conditions must be satisfied prior to the permission being fully awarded. If these conditions are not satisfied by the tenant the alteration will be considered 'unauthorised', see section 5. below.

6. Electric Vehicle Charging

- 6.1. The Government have set clear targets to reach nett carbon zero (NC0) by 2050 and Colchester City Council are committed to investing to help this happen, however this needs to be completed in a safe and reasonable way, therefore the following conditions apply:
 - The charging unit must be fixed to the wall of the property within the tenancy
 - All leads running from the charging unit to the car must not be a trip hazard or fixed to a wall or fence.
 - Leads crossing a path must be placed inside a channel designed specifically for the purpose. The channel must be cut in to the path and allowance made for drainage.
 - Leads crossing a lawn must be laid flat and made clearly visible. Liability for trailing leads are the tenants responsibility.
 - The installation must be carried out by a qualified electrician and an electrical installation certificate supplied to Colchester Borough Homes.
 - Leads extended from the charger to the vehicle must be recovered and stored on the charger or in your home when not in use.
 - The channel must be kept clear and any debris removed.
 - Excessively long runs of channels, or across more than one path are not permitted.

7. Plug-In Solar Panels

7.1 The Government are making plug-in solar technology available in the UK, this is a positive move for sustainability and for reducing tenant and leaseholders electricity costs but it come with risks that need to be mitigated before consent can be given for their use. The conditions for installation are:

- The tenant or Leaseholder requesting the installation of plug-in solar panels must have an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) completed and the system must be checked for compatibility with plug-in solar systems. The tenant or leaseholder must pay for this themselves. Should the electrical system be deemed incompatible for plug-in solar systems, the application will be declined.
- The tenant or leaseholder are responsible for ensuring that planning regulations are adhered to, either by situating the panels in an area that does not require planning consent or by receiving planning approval.
- Solar panels and any associated mounting brackets must meet current UK standards
- The location that the panels are to be positioned / mounted must be included in the application and should not be moved without further permission. This is to ensure that risk to third parties is considered within their positioning. If the positioning is considered to be a risk, the application will be declined.
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8. Unauthorised Alterations / Recharges

- 8.1. Where an alteration is completed without permission, Colchester Borough Homes may need to carry out an inspection to consider retrospective permission. You may be charged for this inspection. In the event that retrospective permission is not granted you will be asked to remove the alteration and you may be charged for any remedial work.
- 8.2. Where a tenant is instructed to remove an unauthorised alteration, this must be removed within the timescale indicated on the notification letter. If the tenant fails or refuses to remove the alteration, CBH will remove it and complete any remedial work at the tenants cost.
- 8.3. Where an alteration is deemed to be a category 1 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety ratings System (HHSRS), CBH will arrange for immediate removal and will complete any remedial work at the tenants cost.
- 8.4. Where the inspection identifies that the alteration could be accepted with remedial work, this work must be completed and appropriate certification received within one calender month of the inspection. If the remedial works are not completed or the certification documents not received within this time, action will be taken to either return the property to its original condition or the remedial work completed and any costs incurred will be recharged to the tenant.
- 8.5. Where an alteration is approved, the alteration must be maintained in good condition, where this does not happen, CCC/CBH reserve the right to complete maintenance work and re-charge the tenant.

9. Appeals Procedure

- 9.1. Appeals must be received within 28 days of the date of the decision not to allow works and must give specific grounds for the appeal whether it is based on the decision, policy or the procedure.
- 9.2. Appeals against decisions will be considered by the Director of Assets at Colchester Borough Homes taking into account new supporting information provided by the applicant and they may consult with the Officer who made the original decision.
- 9.3. Where an applicant is appealing against how the policy and/or the procedure have been applied the Director of Assets will investigate the case and respond using the Colchester Borough Homes complaints procedure.

10. Service Standards

- 10.1. Acknowledgement will be sent within 5 working days of receipt.
- 10.2. Decision – the tenant will be notified of the decision within 28 working days of receipt of enquiry, or where this is not possible the tenant will be notified within the same period with the reasons and a revised target date for a decision.
- 10.3. Appeals acknowledgement will be sent within 5 working days of receipt.
- 10.4. Appeal Decision – Customer will be notified of outcome within 28 working days of receipt of appeal, unless additional time is required to provide a full response, in which case the customer will be notified of the delay.
- 10.5. The Policy is covered by the Asset Management Strategy Equality Impact Assessment which is available to view on the Council's website [Equality Impact Assessments · Colchester City Council](#)

11. Monitoring and Review

- 11.1. We will monitor that the Service Standards set out in this Policy are met.
- 11.2. The policy will be reviewed every 3 years to make sure the policy continues to be efficient and effective, whilst ensuring it still meets current legislation and the Council's Constitution.

12. Communicating the Policy to Staff

- 12.1. Managers and staff involved in the implementation of the Policy will receive a copy of the policy including:
- 12.2. Housing Officers, Visiting Officers, Asset Management, Adaptations, Customers Services, Members.
- 12.3. Colchester Borough Homes will provide sufficient training to enable staff to understand and comply with the Policy.
- 12.4. A copy of the Policy will be accessible from the Council's document management system and websites of Colchester City Council and Colchester Borough Homes.
- 12.5. Any amendments to the Policy will be communicated, in a timely manner, to managers and staff involved in implementing the policy.

13. Communicating the policy to customers

- 13.1. The policy will be communicated to customers using the following methods:
- 13.2. Articles regularly in Housing News and Views

- 13.3. Sheltered Scheme newsletters
- 13.4. Colchester City Council and Colchester Borough Homes websites
- 13.5. Social Media
- 13.6. Colchester Borough Homes will develop and provide information including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to assist with enquiries from tenants