ALTERATIONS POLICY

DOCUMENTATION MASTER SHEET

Amendments to this Document are Detailed Below.

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ALTERATIONS POLICY

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
01	24/05/21	Draft v1	27/05/21	RP	AG
02	10/05/22	V2 following EIA	10/05/22	RP	MH
03	17/04/2026	Triannual review	08/05/2026	CM	SLT
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ALTERATIONS POLICY

OVERALL AIM/INTRODUCTION

We recognise that our customers have a right to enjoy their home, allowing them to make improvements, alterations and adaptions to meets their needs. This policy sets out how we will give our customers permission to carry out improvements within their homes in line with legal and regulatory guidelines. It also ensures that all requests are dealt with fairly and that everyone is treated equally.

SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy sets out GCH's approach to our customers rights to make improvements and alterations to their home. It provides guidance on what alterations will be allowed, under what circumstances and how they will be processed. It covers all customers that live in social housing, supported and independent living properties. It also covers Leaseholders and Shared Owners.
Any request linked to a customer's health condition, disability, or need for reasonable adjustment will be considered under GCH's Aids and Adaptations Policy and not under this Alterations Policy.
If there is any variance between this policy and individual leases or tenancy agreements, then the lease or tenancy agreement will take precedence.
This policy does not cover the following works, which are generally permitted:

1. Internal painting and decorating
2. Planting plants (not Trees)
3. Installation of floor coverings (apart from wooden or laminate floors in flats from the first floor and above and kitchen and bathroom flooring will not be permitted)
4. Installation of curtains, blinds and poles
5. Other items listed in the tenancy agreement

Alterations vs Adaptations

Alterations are customer-requested improvements that are not required to meet a health, disability, or medical need. Where a request has the purpose of supporting independent living, mobility, medical need, or safety linked to a health condition or disability, it will be assessed under the Aids and Adaptations Policy, regardless of how the request is described by the customer.

REQUESTING PERMISSION

Permission for alterations or improvements must be requested by the customer in writing, and then written consent obtained from us, before making the improvements to their homes. If the customer is unable to write to us, then they should contact GCH for support.
Verbal permission is not acceptable because as a landlord, we need to record any improvements if they affect the fabric of the building or could affect health and safety.

ALTERATIONS POLICY

To request an alteration, customers must submit to the Asset Management Team or the Leasehold Manager in the case of leaseholders and shared owners:

1. Description of the work, including photographs and/or plans (hand-drawn are acceptable)
2. Details of who will carry out the work and copies of their insurances and professional registration
3. Approval from the Planning Department or Local Authority Building Control, where required Special consideration will need to be made for the potential for asbestos in the area to be altered.

A qualified surveyor will review the request within 15 working days and provide written approval or refusal. Where approval is granted, further certificates and method statements may be required once works are completed. Reasons behind refusals will be explained.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM IN RENT ARREARS?

Where a customer is in rent arrears, subject to notice, or in breach of tenancy, alterations will normally be refused. Requests that fall under the Aids and Adaptations Policy will be assessed separately in line with that policy

PERMITTED WORK

GCH will normally provide approval for the following works:

- Installation of sheds and similar garden structures in private gardens as long as they are at least 5 metres from the nearest property
- Satellite dishes unless external wall insulation (EWI) has been completed on your building and if your property is a new build that has been constructed in the last 5 years.
- Garden fences and walls
- Replacement of internal doors, where a fire door is not required
- Kitchen replacement
- Replacement of bathroom suite
- Minor electrical works such as installing a new light fitting or moving a socket (subject to the necessary certification by an approved installer)
- Patios and path
- Outside taps

NON PERMITTED WORK

Permission will normally be refused if the intended work would:

- Involve a structural change to the premises
- Increase our maintenance costs
- Reduce the living space
- Breach planning, building or conservation area regulations.
- Reduce the value of the property

- Adversely affect the thermal efficiency of the property
- Enclose parts of external communal areas

Specific examples of home improvement we will not allow customers to carry out include:

- Works that create health and safety risks
- Installing outside, wall mounted charging points for electric scooter charging.
- Change of use of any room off a kitchen – cannot be used as a bedroom or a place that is slept in.
- Installation of outside structures within 5 metres of the property
- Layout change (addition or movement of walls)
- Change of use of rooms (e.g. relocating kitchen / bathroom)
- Replacement of complete window sets (glazing and frame) or external doors, unless installing a 30-minute fire safe door, with appropriate seals and door closer to a flat or maisonette
- Replacement or removal of internal fire doors
- Installation of security bars on windows or doors, due to restriction of fire escape
- Installation of cat or dog flaps as they will affect the fire integrity of the door
- Installation of solid fuel heating appliances
- Removal of chimney breasts
- Anything that involves the removal of landlord's fixtures that are an essential feature of the structure or installations e.g. the boiler, wiring infrastructure and pipework.

'This does not apply to works agreed and funded or approved under the Aids and Adaptations Policy'

ELECTRICAL CHARGING POINTS

Permission for the installation of an electric vehicle (EV) charging point will generally be granted where the customer occupies a house or bungalow with an enclosed private driveway. The installation must also be carried out by a qualified and accredited electrician who holds appropriate NICEIC or NAPIT electrical certification and compliance with current UK Wiring Regulations (BS 7671) and Building Regulations (Part P). In addition, the installer must have completed the Level 3 Award in the Installations and Commissioning of Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment.

However, applications from customers who live in homes with or park in communal car parks will not be approved, as such installations are not permitted in shared parking areas.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE

If an alteration request is granted, the maintenance of the alteration (e.g. bathroom replacement) will be the customer's responsibility for the lifespan on the component. If GCH have to carry out any make safe or routine repairs, the customer may be subject to recharges for these items.

If a customer mutually exchanges into the property, the incoming customer will become responsible for any alterations for the lifecycle of the component/item.
If a customer who has made authorised or un-authorised alterations to their home, hands in their notice to end their tenancy of the property, they may be asked to put the property back to its original condition. If unable to do so, the outgoing customer may be subject to recharges for the cost of doing so.

For some alterations, we may require regular servicing and maintenance evidence to ensure the ongoing safety of the equipment.
For some alterations approved, at the end of a tenancy, a customer may have a right to compensation.

SIGN OFF AND UNAUTHORISED WORKS

Customers must write to GCH, once works are completed, to allow a GCH surveyor to sign-off the works. Any certificates requested when works were approved must be provided. The surveyor's opinion on the quality and scope of works is final.

Where works are sub-standard or the necessary certificates are not provided, the customer must correct the work or reinstate the property to its original condition, at their expense. Failure to do this may constitute a breach of tenancy or lease and will be referred to the Housing Team.

Where unauthorised works proceed have been carried out, customers will have the opportunity to apply for retrospective approval. Unauthorised works may constitute a breach of tenancy or lease, and the case will be referred to our Housing Team for review and possible action if the breach is serious. Any damage caused through alterations will be charged to the customer.

CONSULTATION

The Housing Team, Assets, and Leasehold team were consulted in the drafting of this policy.

APPEALS

If a customer is unhappy with the decision and/or reasoning for the refusal of an alteration, the customer has the right to appeal the decision.

Where new information indicates the request relates to a health or disability need, the appeal may be redirected for consideration under the Aids and Adaptations Policy rather than the Alterations Policy

The appeal must be formally received in writing within 14 working days of the decision notice providing any further supporting documents that may be useful in the appeal. GCH will provide acknowledgement within 5 working days and a final outcome response will be provided within 28 working days of formally receiving the appeal.

The appeal will not be carried out by the same person who made the initial decision.

REVIEW

This policy will normally be reviewed triennially to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, unless an earlier review is required due to regulatory, statutory, or other requirements.