

Making improvements to your home

Factsheet

This information is to help you decide whether you are eligible under your tenancy or lease agreement to carry out improvements. It also gives guidance about how to identify improvements, which may be subject to certain conditions, local authority planning permission or other regulatory standards.

You must complete an application form and receive written permission from Vico Homes before you make any arrangements for work to begin.

This document is for guidance only and does not give a legal interpretation or a summary of all the rules and regulations which may apply to improvements you wish to carry out in your home.

Tenancy agreements

If you are a tenant, leasehold or shared owner, as long as you have our written permission, you can make alterations or improvements to your home.

If you are an assured shorthold (starter) tenant, you do not have a statutory right to carry out improvements or alterations. Reasonable requests from starter tenants to carry out improvements or alterations will be considered.

You must complete the relevant home improvement application form for a decision to be made.

Carrying out improvements

You need written permission to carry out all improvements and alterations to your home.

We will not unreasonably refuse permission for improvements, but we may impose conditions which will apply to granting permission. Any conditions will be clearly identified in the letter you will receive and they must be adhered to. Failure to do so will be considered a breach of your tenancy agreement.

All alterations or improvements carried out must be completed equal, to the standard or an enhanced standard, to the specification we are working to at time of approval. This also applies to health and safety standards. Works will only be accepted when these standards have been achieved.

If during the life of the improvement or alteration, access is required to complete work which is obstructed by this, you will be expected to provide access for works to progress and be carried out. The responsibility and cost for removal and reinstatement will be at your cost, no liability will be accepted by us. If you don't complete this work to allow us to progress, we will complete all required work and the responsibility for the full cost will be recharged to you.

Should an emergency or a health and safety situation arise, where access is required, in the area where an alteration or improvement has been carried out, we have the right to remove it to gain access without prior notice or permission from yourself to rectify the issue. Where possible, condition dependant, this will be reinstated. Where this can't be reinstated due to poor condition or natural deterioration, we will not be held responsible for reinstatement or the cost of associated works. If you choose to reinstate the alteration or improvement the full cost of this will be your responsibility.

Where an alteration or improvement has been carried out and this has become in a state of disrepair and / or in an unsafe condition we have the right to revoke the permission and request removal of the item(s) and reinstatement of the affected area(s) back to their original status, at your own expense. If this is not completed, we will complete the required work and you will be recharged for the full expense of completing this.

If you carry out, or you employ someone to carry out alterations or improvements, and they are later found not to be of a competent, safe or required standard, you may be requested to remove the item(s) and reinstate the affected area(s) back to their original status, at your own expense. If this is not completed to an expected standard, we will complete the required work and you will be recharged for the full expense of completing this.

Where there are external works planned for the estate and or property, we may complete the required works planned for your property to ensure consistency across the estate, this will be determined by us.

Improvements involving gas, electrical, fire compartmentation and asbestos work

For your own safety, it is crucial all gas, electrical, fire compartmentation and asbestos work is carried out in line with legislation and regulatory guidelines. Proof this work has been carried out by a registered and competent contractor is required. On completion of work all relevant certification and documentation must be provided to us, this will be stored on your property records.

Gas

Only engineers registered on the Gas Safe Register can carry out gas work. It is your responsibility to make sure the engineer you use is correctly registered and a competent person. This person must also be registered with the current gas registration body for the United Kingdom. The boiler output must always be sufficient to cope with the demand of the existing central heating system or additional radiators.

Upon completion of work, certification will be produced to confirm the work has been installed to the current gas regulations and that all aspects of the installation are safe under the Gas Safety Installation and Use Regulations 1998. You will receive a landlord / homeowner certificate which will outline the work completed. Where a heat producing appliance has been installed this may be accompanied by a Building Control certificate, this will be sent to you once the appliance has been registered by your installer. We will need copies of both the building control certificate and the landlord / homeowner certificates. You must send this to us along with the Notification of completion form.

Electric

If you have any electrical wiring work carried out, the engineer must be a member of a government approved competency scheme, such as NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) or NAPIT (National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers). When the work is complete the engineer will give you one or more of the following sheets: BS7671: 2018 Electrical Installation Test Sheet, or a Minor works sheet. If applicable, the contractor will register the installation with building control and you will receive a Part-P Electrical Safety Approved Document through the post. You must send this to us along with the Notification of completion form.

Fire

Where any work being done in your home requires certification relating to fire safety, you must ensure this is provided by a competent person or organisation, who hold the relevant qualifications and registration with one of the governing bodies. This will ensure the work is of a required standard for your property and build type. In the case of fire door installation, we would expect to see the fire door test certificate along with an installation certificate by an approved installer. Where a break through the fabric of the building takes place, for example a new vent extraction hose is installed in an apartment block for a tumble dryer. We would need certification to evidence that the

compartmentation had been reinstated to a compliant standard. You must send this to us along with the Notification of completion form. If there is anything you do not understand or if you have queries and wish to discuss this further, please contact a member of our Building Safety team on 01977 788636.

Asbestos

If the area of work you have had permission granted to make improvements or alterations is found or suspected to contain asbestos within it, we will provide the appropriate asbestos survey at no cost to yourself. You will need to manage or remove all asbestos containing materials relevant to the improvement or alteration approved, the full cost of this will be your responsibility. To do this work you will be required to use a qualified and competent asbestos removal contractor, who will be required to work with the requirements of Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

You must secure and retain copies of all documents and provide these to us so that a record can be kept against the property. This includes, but is not limited to; removal information, waste transport and transfer documents. You must send this to us along with the Notification of completion form. If there is anything you do not understand or if you have queries and wish to discuss this further, please contact a member of our Building Safety Team on 01977 788625.

Where gas, electrical and fire compartmentation works are completed, if you do not submit the certificates, we will send out an engineer to inspect the work carried out.

If the work is not completed to expected standard we may complete the required work and the full cost of this service and any payment for associated repairs / alterations will be your responsibility.

Please keep a record of all documentation relating to the improvements or alterations you have carried out. The original certificates must be sent to us so a copy can be taken. We will return the original certificates back to you.

Improvements requiring planning permission and / or building control approval from your local authority

The following list gives you a general idea of the type of improvements, which need planning or building permission from your local authority.

The original certificates must be sent to us so a copy can be taken. We will return the original certificates back to you. If you do not submit the certificates, we will send out an engineer to inspect the work carried out and issue the appropriate certification. The full cost of this service and any payment for associated repairs / alterations will be your responsibility.

Improvements requiring planning permission and / or building control approval from your local authority.

The following list gives you a general idea of the type of improvements, which need planning or building permission from Wakefield Council , or your local authority if you live outside the Wakefield district.

Summary guide to improvements and alterations

Improvement or alteration	Types of permission needed			
	Vico Homes permission	Planning permission	Building regulations	Conservation area
Parking space for a car	Yes	Yes	No	No
Building a garage	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Building a porch / conservatory	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Building a garden shed / greenhouse	Yes	No	No	Yes
Replacing or erecting a new fence	Yes	No	No	Yes
Making a through lounge	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Removal of internal walls	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Renewing banisters	Yes	No	Yes	No
Putting in central heating	Yes	No	Yes	No
Fitting new kitchen units	Yes	No	Yes	No
External painting of woodwork	Yes	No	No	Yes
External painting of render / pebbledash	Yes	No	No	Yes
Fitting new windows	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
New external door	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Storm doors / patio doors	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Rewiring	Yes	No	Yes	No
Citizens Band aerial	Yes	Yes	No	No
Fitting double glazing	Yes	No	Yes	No
Cavity wall insulation	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Additional electric sockets / cooker panel	Yes	No	Yes	No
Wall lights / external lighting / intruder alarm	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Extractor fan	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Fitting a gas fire / electric fire				
Fitting a new bathroom suite	Yes	No	Yes ¹	No
New sockets / wall lights	Yes	No	Yes ²	No
Plumbing in a washing machine	Yes	No	Yes ³	No

If in a conservation area contact with Wakefield Council's Planning Department required.

Building regulations are not required if:

¹Like for like with same drainage. If any alterations contact required.

²Like for like. If completely new and new locations contact required.

³Like for like with same drainage. If new drainage contact required.

Important information

We will not be responsible for any temporary or permanent structures such as conservatories / porches, and so on which adjoin your home or any other property. If you are considering this type of structure, make sure you have adequate buildings and contents insurance to cover any claim relating to it.

Once you receive our permission letter, you are responsible for getting formal planning permission / building regulations approval from your local authority or any other permission you may need before work can start. This excludes driveways, highway approval would be required before permission is granted.

Please keep a record of all documentation relating to the improvements you have carried out. This includes the letter giving permission, Certificate of Acceptance, original receipts, details of the work and the date it was undertaken. If your tenancy ends, you may have the right to claim compensation for certain improvements and you will need to be able to produce original receipts to support your claim.

The application and decision process

Some alterations and improvements require written permission which will be issued with guidance notes, we will send you written confirmation with guidance notes attached following your enquiry.

The Survey Team will assess your application once it has been received and direct the application to the right team for processing. We will try to let you know our decision within 20 working days. If we need further information or have to visit your home to check the work you want to carry out, this may cause a delay. If necessary, we will contact you to arrange a time to visit.

You will receive a letter telling you if your permission has been granted. The permission letter is only valid for a period of three months. Failure to carry out the work and return the 'Notification of completion' form (contained within the permission letter) within three months, will cancel the permission and you will have to re-apply.

Any work carried out before permission is granted will not be classed as authorised and a charge may be incurred if authorisation has to be obtained at a later date.

If you are a leaseholder please refer to our 'Leaseholder guide to making improvements to your home' for information, which confirms what you must do if you want to make alterations or improvements to your home.

Following approval of alterations or improvements

If the permission is of a technical nature, the surveyor will arrange a follow up visit and will check if the improvement works have started. Depending on the stage the work is at, an assessment of compliance will be made any non-compliance will be explained and expectations set out to resolve this in a letter

An extension of time to complete the alteration or improvement can be made. The time required for the extension will be discussed and agreed with you, this work must be completed within the timescale set in the letter. An extension will only be granted if the work has already commenced.

After you have completed your alterations or improvements

When the work you have received permission for is completed, you must return the 'Notification of completion' form, along with any gas, electrical, fire and asbestos certificates. On receipt of this, a surveyor will come to your home to inspect the work carried out and make sure it complies with any conditions stipulated in the granting of permission.

If everything is satisfactory you will receive a 'Certificate of acceptance', which acknowledges that all the work has been carried out to our satisfaction. The surveyor will send this out to you within five working days of the final inspection.

If the final inspection reveals faults or the work has not been carried out in accordance with the conditions stipulated by us, you will receive a letter detailing the work you are still required to do. This work must be completed within the timescale set in the letter.

If you fail to return the Notification of completion form, within three months of permission being granted, a follow up visit will be completed and a letter sent out confirming what is expected of you. The permission request will be closed and permission revoked if works have not been completed. Leaseholders would need to re-apply and pay a further administration fee.

If the work is not completed, this would put you in breach of your tenancy agreement and we may carry out the work and recharge you.

Improvements carried out without written authorisation

If you make unauthorised alterations to your home, you are breaking the terms of your tenancy agreement. We may insist that you remove the improvements and put your home back to its original condition, at your own cost. If you do not do this, we may do the work and recharge you.

If you have carried out any other improvements to your home without permission, you will need to contact us immediately and apply for approval for the unauthorised work.

If your tenancy ends you may be able to apply for compensation for the improvements you have made. However, your application will not be considered if you do not have written authorisation.

Home improvement refusals

If the decision is made to refuse permission a letter will be sent to the explaining the reason(s) for our decision. If you disagree with the outcome of their application, you have the right to appeal. However, there is no right of appeal where the permission refusal relates to:

- installation of biomass, solid fuel or log burning stoves
- cat flaps in composite external doors
- replacement of fire doors
- installation of CCTV on properties located on communal or open plan areas
- improvements that contravene any building, planning, safety or legislative requirements

Appeal rights

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your application, you have the right to appeal within 28 days of the date of the letter. In the first instance contact the surveyor or officer who dealt with your application.

If the refusal is due to improvements contravening building, planning, safety or other legislative regulations, our decision will be final. If the refusal is not related to the above and an alternative course of action cannot be agreed, your application will be processed in line with our appeals procedure.

Application forms

Application forms can be found at www.vicohomes.co.uk, or by contacting the Survey Team:

Phone: 01977 788248

Email: hsgassetssurveying@vicohomes.co.uk

Completed application forms can be handed in at either our Wakefield or Pontefract Hubs or posted to the our Survey Team. Remember to attach any plans or drawings so your application can be processed without delay.

Vico Homes
Survey Team
Merefield House
Whistler Drive
Castleford
WF10 5HX



Struggling to read this information? Let us know if you would like this document in another format, size or language. Please call us on 0345 8 507 507 or email contact@vicohomes.co.uk