

Alterations Policy

Status: APPROVED

Policy Lead:	Director of Assets & Sustainability
Owned By:	Repairs Lead
Date Approved:	October 2025
Approved By:	Operations Committee
Review Date:	October 2028
Regulatory / Legislative Considerations/ References	• Housing Scotland Act (2001) • Scottish Housing Quality Standard
Other Documents to be read in conjunction with this policy:	• Alterations Procedure

Policy Title:	Alterations Policy
Purpose / Aim of policy:	To set out our approach to customer alterations.
Scope of Policy:	All properties owned or managed by BHA where customers may wish to undertake alterations.
Definitions:	None required
Specific detail related to each strand in the scope:	Introduction Scope Objectives
Approval Source:	Operations Committee
Equality Impact Assessment:	Not required
Glossary of Terms	None required
Risk Implications:	A strong and well-defined alterations policy will ensure a fair and consistent approach for our customers, allowing them to make a home but it will also allow us to ensure the standards of our homes are maintained, that there are no compliance or statutory implications.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA) is committed to ensuring our properties become homes for our customers but we also need to balance this against further maintenance requirements, ensuring the safety of our homes and ensure a fair and consistent approach.

2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 This policy describes the approach that BHA will take when considering an alteration request in the context of the following legislation:

- Health and Safety at Work (etc) Act 1974 (HASAWA)
- Fire Safety (Scotland) Act 2005
- Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- The Tolerable Standard (under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006)
- Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004
- The Building (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2022
- Scottish Building Standards Technical Handbook for Non-Domestic Buildings
- The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (Tolerable Standard) (Extension of Criteria) Order 2019
- Housing Scotland Act (2001)

This policy will apply to all properties owned or managed by BHA including our commercial properties.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 To meet all legal and regulatory obligations and also ensure best practice is followed in relation to granting of Alterations Permission, the aims and objectives of this policy are to ensure:
- that we fulfil our legal and regulatory obligations relating to Alterations Permissions whilst ensuring that our customers can make our properties their homes.
 - that we take a considered and consistent approach for all customers.
 - that all alterations permissions are recorded appropriately for future reference
 - that BHA does not end up with additional maintenance burdens as a result of alterations being left in properties.
 - that our customers remain safe and that works are completed in a safe manner in compliance with any regulatory requirements.
 - ensure any contractors procured to risk assess, monitor, or remediate Fire risks are suitably experienced and competent.
 - ensure how we will satisfy ourselves that the policy and procedure has been implemented and the controls are demonstrably effective in ensuring BHA comply with its legal obligations.

4. GENERAL PRINCIPLE

- 4.1 If a customer submits a request to alter or improve their home, BHA will check if the customer has any arrears and will not grant permission should rent and charges not be up to date. BHA will contact the customer to advise of the arrears and offer options for payment in full or an agreement to clear any outstanding debt. The exception to this will be where the customer can demonstrate that the works are needed to facilitate independent living and that these works cannot be undertaken by BHA.
- 4.2 Where the rent account is up to date and the request is not on the list at *Appendix 1B* then the principle that will be applied is that BHA will not withhold permission unreasonably, without good reason.
- 4.3 BHA will respond within 28 Calander days of any written request being submitted by our customer.
- 4.4 In general BHA will not maintain any alteration undertaken by customers and this should be made clear in the acceptance/ condition correspondence. From time-to-time BHA may step in, where the issue will have significant detriment to the property and/or the circumstances of the household. That decision to step in will not negate rechargeable repairs being levied and should be referred to an Operational Lead or Director.

5. PERMITTED ALTERATIONS

- 5.1 Appendix 1A sets out the types of alteration that BHA may permit along with the conditions that would require to be complied with. *Appendix 1B* summarises those alterations that are not permitted.
- 5.2 These are common alterations, but these lists are not exhaustive. Where a customer seeks permission for an alteration or improvement that is not listed, BHA will apply a test of reasonableness based upon the relevant circumstances of the customer.

6. TENANCY BREACHES AND RECHARGEABLE REPAIRS

- 6.1 Where a customer has undertaken alterations without BHA's approval, this may be considered as a breach of tenancy, and the provisions of the Rechargeable Repairs Policy may apply. The duty will be on the customer to provide evidence that permission was granted.
- 6.2 Likewise if the customer has been given permission to carry out an alteration with the condition being that it is removed and reinstated at the end of tenancy and they fail to do so then the customer will be recharged for the making goods works that BHA will then have to undertake.
- 6.3 Any recharges will include not only the putting right of the works but also any disposal of any additional items installed or debris as a result of the alteration.

7. RIGHT TO COMPENSATION FOR IMPROVEMENTS

- 7.1 If a property becomes void that has had authorised alterations or improvements carried out by the customer, the Right to Compensation for Improvements provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 may apply for our properties located in Scotland. This will not apply for our properties in England.
- 7.2 The customer must have been a Scottish Secure or Short Scottish Secure Tenancy and that tenancy must have terminated by means of 4 weeks' notice. The landlord must also have approved the alteration. If the tenancy has ended due to the death of the customer, then compensation can still be claimed but compensation cannot be claimed if the property has been reposessed by the landlord, or they have been given a new tenancy for their existing homes with the same landlord.
- 7.3 Compensation can be claimed for alternations considered to be improvements which were started on or after the 30th September 2002. These include installing, replacing or fitting:
- a bath or shower;
 - cavity wall insulation;
 - sound insulation;
 - double glazing, replacing external windows or fitting secondary glazing;
 - draught-proofing external doors or windows;
 - pipes, water tanks or cylinders;
 - a kitchen sink;
 - loft insulation;
 - rewiring, providing power or lighting, or adding other electrical fixtures (including smoke detectors);
 - security measures other than burglar alarms;
 - space or water heating;
 - storage cupboards in a bathroom or kitchen;
 - thermostatic radiator valves;
 - a wash-hand basin;
 - a toilet;
 - a work surface for preparing food; and
 - Mechanical ventilation in bathrooms and kitchens

Decoration is not a qualifying improvement.

- 7.4 The landlord will calculate the compensation on the basis of the cost of the installation and may ask for proof of that cost. Any grant will be deleted from the cost and the compensation will take the age of the improvement into account. We will also consider if the specification far exceeds that which BHA would normally install and amend the compensation to reflect that and the condition of the improvement at the time of calculation. White goods or the value of the customers labour will also not be taken into account.

8. RECORDING

- 8.1 All alterations permissions will be recorded on the housing management system as set out in the procedure and all letters will be saved in our document management system.

These sources should be checked as part of the void process (see void procedure). The recording should also include reference to whether BHA has agreed to maintain the alteration or not. The general principle is that BHA will not maintain any alteration.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed and re-approved every 3 years, or sooner if there are any changes in legislation or guidance to ensure the policy is still suitable and sufficient, or it is deemed no longer suitable and sufficient.

Alterations that are permitted

Alteration	Conditions that must be complied with as a minimum	Who can give permission
Shower	Must be installed by a competent electrician. 10mm cable and copper piping must be used and a copy of the electrical installation certificate supplied. A minor works electrical certificate must be provided to BHA following completion of these works.	Repairs Manager
Laminate or wooden flooring	Only permitted in houses, bungalows and ground floor flats. The Association will not be liable for any damage or requirement to uplift to allow repair/major repairs works	Neighbourhood Manager
Shed	Must be erected on solid concrete or slabbed base. Must consist of Timber and be no larger than 8x4x6ft (LxWxH). And must be a minimum of 3m from any existing dwelling. They should also be at least 1m from any boundary line. (if they are not 1, from the boundary line check any restrictions on height) Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Neighbourhood Manager
Greenhouse	The greenhouse can be laid to bare soil but must be firmly anchored. This must not exceed the same measurements for sheds and be 3m from any existing property. They should also be 1m from any boundary line. (if they are not 1, from the boundary line check any restrictions on height) Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Neighbourhood Manager
Driveway	If fence line is opened, gates must be installed to match the existing perimeter fence. Planning permission must be granted in writing from local authority to drop kerb. Sub base must consist of at least 150mm compacted hard-core, 50mm compacted sand with concrete slabs to a minimum requirement of 50mm. Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Repairs Manager
Fencing	Maximum height of 1.8m in rear gardens and 1m in front gardens. Written agreement from neighbour required. Must be within own boundary line. Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Repairs Manager
Kitchens	Full details of manufacturer's specification and installer must be provided so that the Association can make an informed decision on the quality of kitchen, availability of spare parts, etc. The kitchen must be of a safe regular design and comply with Scottish Housing Quality Standard requirements and have a minimum of	Repairs Manager

Alteration	Conditions that must be complied with as a minimum	Who can give permission
	1 cubic metre of storage space.	
Dishwasher	Any alterations to the pipework to allow for a dishwasher to be installed should be carried out by a qualified plumber. Where there are already connections in place. This is not required. This will only be approved where there are no significant alterations to the kitchen such as removal of a storage unit as this could potentially render the kitchen non-compliant with the SHQS. Leaks from the dishwasher will be recharged.	Repairs Manager
TV Aerial	When fixed to a bracket within the loft space.	Neighbourhood Manager
Wall-mounted televisions	Must be adequately fixed by a competent tradesman using a TV bracket recommended by the manufacturer.	Neighbourhood Manager
Loft insulation	Full details must be provided of installer / company carrying out the installation, with the depth being to a minimum requirement of 270mm in depth.	Repairs Lead
Cavity wall insulation	Full details must be provided of installer / company carrying out the installation.	Repairs Lead
Security / burglar alarm	Full details must be provided of installer / company carrying out the installation. A Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate will be required post installation in linked to the electricity.	Repairs Manager
Close circuit television (CCTV)/ ring doorbells	Full details must be provided of installer / company carrying out the installation. Camera to be recording own property only and be installed in relation to CCTV data protection guidelines. A Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate will be required post installation if linked to the electricity Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Repairs Manager for mains connected equipment and NW for ring Doorbells
Dog kennels	Maximum size of 1m wide x 1.2m long x 1.2m high. Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Neighbourhood Manager
Satellite dish	Any equipment fixed onto the render system has the potential to cause the render to fail. Details of the fixings should be provided at the point of application along with how this will be made good on removal Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Repairs Manager
Temporary ramp / stair lift	These must be installed in compliance with the building regulations where related to ramps and stairlifts. These will need to be removed prior to vacating the	Repair Lead

Alteration	Conditions that must be complied with as a minimum	Who can give permission
	property Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	
Tiled walls	These can be agreed except where the property is still under a defects liability period.	Repairs Manager
Ceiling tiles	These should not be agreed due to the challenges of removing and potential additional fire hazard	Neighbourhood Manager
External taps	Internal pipework must be insulated and fitted with a balofix valve to isolate the external water supply.	Repairs Manager
Slabbing	Slabbing works must have a minimum of 100mm hard core to support the slabbed area and be free from any trip hazards. The slabbed area must also be maintained by the current customer. Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Repairs Manager
Fitted wardrobes	No structural changes allowed and room must be reinstated to original layout if tenancy ends.	Neighbourhood Manager
Internal doors	Fire doors must be replaced with doors of equal or approved fire rating and the specification approved prior to works taking place. Any glazed doors must have regulation safety glass. Unsafe doors will be removed and the cost of removal and the replacement will be recharged. There will be no opportunity provided for the customer to put this right should works have proceeded without prior approval.	Repairs Manager
Windows and external doors	Specification must be approved by the Association. Must be like for like. No structural changes to the fabric of the building or canopies over doors. This must also comply with any Building Controls requirements and any requirements related to Conservation Areas/ Listed Buildings	Repairs Manager
Electrical charging points	These can only be installed where the driveway is in curtilage to ensure that there are no trip hazards, issues with parking in common areas and no billing issues. Charging points must be able to be billed directly to the house requesting the installation. The installation should be undertaken by a qualified electrician and a Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificate will be required post installation Are not in contradiction to any Conservation area requirements, as set out by SBC.	Repairs Manager
Decking	This will be approved only if this is not bolted or otherwise fixed to the property. Details of the installation of the decking should be submitted.	Repairs Manager
Radiator change where the property has ASHP	As the radiators will have glycol in them this needs to be done by a suitably qualified engineer	Repairs Manager

Alterations that are not permitted

- Any structural alterations to dwelling or relocation of internal partitions
- Any non-structural alterations to partition walls, doorways or archways
- Laminate, or wooden flooring in flats which are not ground floor
- Removal of level access or wet-floor shower rooms for bath
- Relocation of radiators or installation of fireplaces / gas fires etc.
- Any alterations to loft spaces
- 'Velux' windows
- Solar panels
- Satellite dish or flag poles where attached to building or fencing
- Patio doors
- Conservatories
- Garages or carports
- Removal of significant (more than 50%)(grassed areas or garden ground to lay stones, unless part of agreed measure to remedy problematic land drainage
- Tiled flooring) (stone or ceramic)
- Log burner/ stoves
- Electrical charging points where the drive is not in curtilage
- Catflaps
- Vinyl wrapping of kitchen units/ worktops
- Ceiling fans – due to potential conflicts with ventilation and flues
- Spray Loft insulation – this could impact the insurance and fire rating of the property
- Suspended ceiling tiles/ ceiling tiles
- Woodchip or cork wallpaper
- Removal of trees – permission will not be given unless these present a hazard as ascertained by an independent tree surgeon due to poor tree health and only then if there is no Tree Preservation Order or this is agreed with SBC due to condition
- Ponds – permission will not be provided given the extensive work needed to remove these

Where a specific situation has not been covered in the above, the Neighbourhood Manager or Repairs Manager will be assigned the task and will give due consideration to the following:

- Statutory permissions including Conservation status
- Technical standards relating to the requested works and the ability of customers to carry out that work
- The quiet enjoyment of other customers of their homes
- Future maintenance requirements
- Ease of removal