



Newsletter – March 2021



Periodic maintenance

Priority external work finished in early December. This included urgent repairs to flat block brickwork, roofs and wood that could not wait to avoid further deterioration, repairing a leak and replacement of rotten wood in the clock tower. Remaining work is being spread out as agreed at the 2020 AGM to save cost and has been further delayed because of another pandemic lockdown.

Quotes are being obtained from local firms to paint the flat block porches at ground level separately from work at height. This will save access, site facility and surveyor costs. **If you know suitable local decorators, please tell us.**

The surveyor will tender delayed work needing contractors qualified to work at height in the spring, after lockdown ends. Open windows, oriels (bays) and eaves will be redecorated in late summer and autumn, once most people have been vaccinated. **If you know contractors qualified to work at height, please tell us.**

For up to date information, see the Estate website: <https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/periodic>.



Maintenance

Work is updated monthly on the Estate website at <https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/maintenance>.

Repair work by the insurer's contractors is nearly finished at 21-26 Abbey Drive. Investigations are still underway at 31-45 Church Lane to support an application for Council consent to fell the nearby protected sycamore tree.

The Council has granted consent to reduce the size of two oak trees near houses in Carlisle Way considerably and some small trees may also be removed. This is in line with the policy ratified at the 2020 AGM to require justification for such work based on monitoring over a period.

→ Property managers

Yasmin Spence has left Rendall and Rittner so please contact Angela Petts, our senior property manager, and bear with her if reply takes longer. Email: angela.petts@rendallandrittner.co.uk. Phone: 07800 628907 (weekdays 9am - 5:30pm)

→ Parking permits

Replacement of parking permits was delayed because of the latest pandemic lockdown. Current lilac permits dated 28 February 2021 will remain valid until further notice. New permits will be printed and distributed when possible.



Roof repairs

73-87 St Benedicts Close has a serious roof leak that requires urgent repair. Temporary work from the loft to reduce the leak was not successful. Quotes are being obtained for permanent repair, needing safe high access. The Section 20 consultations required by law because of the cost are underway with flat owners in that block.

13-27 and 29-43 St Benedicts Close require investigation of damp at high level, also needing safe access. If a hoist is used for the roof repair, it will be used for this investigation. Otherwise, we were advised this investigation does not justify high access costs, so will be done with redecoration at height which will provide access at no additional cost (see *Periodic Maintenance*).

→ Fly-tipped asbestos

Fly-tipped asbestos roofing by Church Lane was reported to the police and Council and cordoned off for safety. Our contractors are not licensed, so cannot lawfully handle it. **Do not touch it!**



Communal electric work

This spring, remaining life-expired external Estate security lights will be replaced to reduce maintenance and electricity use. This summer, it is planned to upgrade communal electrics and lights to the latest standards in a pilot block then test if lights can switch on just when someone is nearby instead of all night to cut use and cost.

→ Flat communal areas

Residents of flats may not store anything in the communal areas because of the fire risk and the obstruction of emergency exits. Any items found will be removed without notice and a note left. Removed items not claimed will be disposed of.



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Electrical testing

Landlords are required by law to carry out electrical testing in rented properties every 5 years. This applies to new tenancies from 1 July 2020 and existing tenancies from 1 April 2021. It applies to both flats and houses.

Flat sub-letting consent required by head leases from 1 April 2021 will be conditional on testing and any remedial work being carried out.

The Management Company will request a copy of the Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) for one in four applications chosen at random. This matches sample testing on new tenancy agreements and tenancy references.

One flat owner who upgraded their consumer unit recently advised that the wiring behind it was charred and had been a hidden fire risk.

Flat and house owner-occupiers on the Estate are also strongly recommended to have electrical installations tested every 5 years. Owners with old consumer units are strongly recommended to replace these with modern ones that have residual current devices, which are much safer.



Overdue charges

Rendall and Rittner has advised increased charges for its additional work pursuing unpaid charges. Flat head leases and house freehold agreements require charges to be paid in full in advance by 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October. Flat charges become overdue after 14 days and house charges after 21 days.

First reminders remains free of charge. Second reminders now cost £5 + VAT. Charges still overdue after 3 months may be referred to solicitors for debt recovery at a cost of £150 + VAT. Under the flat leases and house agreements, owners are liable for these costs.

→ Disposal of waste

Waste must be stored in bins with lids, preferably with locking lids to prevent vermin access and scattering rubbish across the Estate. It is property owners' responsibility to provide these, which can be obtained locally for under £15.

→ Dumped waste removal

As advised with the budget in June 2021, dumped waste can only be collected quarterly. This and other cuts were essential to limit the charge increases from insurance premiums.



Japanese knotweed

When plants start to grow again in spring, house owners are again asked to check for Japanese knotweed, since an outbreak has been found in Abbey Drive. The house owner advised that it spread from the grounds of the adjacent care centre, which our solicitors have contacted.

This plant is very invasive and its roots can cause severe damage to buildings. If any is found, you must report it immediately to Rendall and Rittner. There are legal restrictions on the handling and disposal of Japanese Knotweed material, waste and soil in which it has grown. Anyone breaking these laws is liable to a fine up to £5,000 and a prison sentence up to two years.

Japanese Knotweed identification courtesy of Non-native Species Secretariat

