



a  
better  
arlington

## Arlington House Handbook \*

\*previously Dan Thompson's Hacker's Guide - cheers Dan

September 2021

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# THE BASICS

## **The Site**

There are two pedestrian entrances: one via the foyer at street level and the other at the first floor level from the residents' car-park.

There are 142 flats in the building, mostly occupied so you have plenty of neighbours. Flats 1A - 1E are accessible by the outside walkway from the carpark. All other flats are reached by stairs or lift.

Residents' parking is on the top level up the North-Eastern ramp. Exit is down the ramp to All Saints Avenue next to Arlington House. Vehicle access is via the public car-park entrance by the railway bridge. Be careful of pedestrians and at the top of the ramp in case vehicles cross.

The bin room (where rubbish from the chutes ends up) and an electricity substation are under the tower. There is machinery for the lifts, water tanks, and a lot of phone mast kit on the roof.

The undercroft is the area underneath the residents' car park, and can be reached through the door opposite the office in the foyer. This is where you will find a larger bin, the recycling and the caretaker's room.

The building has a fantastic history and now has its own website for the general public and residents - [arlingtonhousemargate.co.uk](http://arlingtonhousemargate.co.uk)

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## **Building Management**

The freehold of the building is owned by Thanet District Council and leased to Metropolitan Property Realizations Limited (part of the Freshwater group).

The building is managed by Parsons Son and Basley (PS&B) who are based in Brighton. Whether you own your flat, rent privately, or rent from Freshwater, you'll need to deal with PS&B at some point. The maintenance staff you see in Arlington House are contracted by PS&B.

Michael Barber is the Director of Surveying and Estate Management - michaelb@psandb.co.uk  
Pauline Marsh is the Building Manager - paulinem@psandb.co.uk

As either leaseholder or renter, you can also inform the Leaseholder Association of issues.

The caretaker, Mitch Doyle, is employed and managed by them.

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### **The Caretaker**

Mitch Doyle is a full time caretaker who oversees cleaning, repairs and building security (see Reporting Repairs below).

His hours are:

Monday - Thursday 7am - 4pm

Friday 7-3pm

He also pops in on Sunday from 8am - 9am to change the bins over so that the chute doesn't block.

His work number is 07395 796415. His email is mitchd@psandb.co.uk

but he does not check this phone outside his work hours.

PS&B provide an out of hours emergency number : 01273 947718

Mitch uses the caretaker's room in the undercroft - that's the area that you reach from the foyer, through the door opposite the glass fronted office.

Definitely introduce yourself to him and there are certain things that he can sort out for you:

Door Fobs

Programming Door Entry System

Car Park Permits

Mitch is incredibly helpful but he doesn't take in packages for people or do repairs inside flats.

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## **A Better Arlington Residents Association**

A new Residents Association formed in 2021 called A Better Arlington.

It represents both leaseholders and renters and is currently seeking official recognition from Freshwater having signed up over 50% of leaseholders.

Please join us - [arlingtonhousemargate.co.uk](http://arlingtonhousemargate.co.uk)

There are notice boards by the lifts at ground floor and on level one which contain notices from A Better Arlington, PS&B and fellow residents.

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## **Arlington Alerts Text Service**

The Residents Association runs a WhatsApp alert service called Arlington Alerts. This gives instant updates on major issues such as why the lifts are not working and when they will be fixed, or the reason why the fire alarm is going (or not going in the case of the regular Monday morning fire alarm at 9.30am).

To join you need a smartphone and to have downloaded WhatsApp. You can then point your phone's camera at this QR code.



Only the admins who include the caretaker Mitch can post to keep it streamlined to urgent matters only. Anyone can use the app to report an urgent fault to Mitch and A Better Arlington, who will monitor reports, verify, and share with the whole group.

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## **Other Residents Communities**

### *Hello Neighbour!*

is a mutual aid platform for all residents in the building, full-time or part-time, leaseholder or tenant. For an invitation to the Hello Neighbour Mutual Google Group, email [helhelloneighbourarlington@gmail.com](mailto:helhelloneighbourarlington@gmail.com) stating which floor you are on and start saying hello to all your neighbours.

### *Leaseholders google group*

A google group set up by leaseholders after the March 2020 residents meeting. Initially as a trial to try to improve communication between leaseholders, as previously only one-way communication by email was available, preventing discussion. The google group allows for an online forum. To ask for an invitation, leaseholders should contact [arlingtonhouseCT9@gmail.com](mailto:arlingtonhouseCT9@gmail.com)

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## **Dreamland**

### **Events & Noise**

Dreamland is our closest neighbour. While they're generally not a problem, when they have big events they can dominate the neighbourhood. Dreamland can generate a lot of noise for residents on the Eastern side which the Western side is unaware of unless its residents go into the car park for a free concert. There are strict rules fixed by Thanet District Council about when noise from inside the Dreamland area must end. If you have any concerns relating to noise, email them on [office@dreamland.co.uk](mailto:office@dreamland.co.uk)

## Parking

Dreamland's parent company also owns the main car park which is now managed by Smart Parking since summer 2021. There have been various problems with incorrect tickets being issued (see Parking for more).

## Ownership of Dreamland

In December 2021 the freehold of Dreamland was sold by Thanet District Council to leaseholder Sands Heritage Ltd.

Sands Heritage Ltd also owns Cinque Ports pub, the old cinemas and Sunshine cafe, 8 flats in Arlington House, the carpark and the derelict shops underneath the building, which back onto Arlington Square, the original entrance to the park.

The complex investment and ownership history to the site is covered in this piece:

<https://theisleofthanetnews.com/2021/02/22/dreamland-estate-7-million-sale-price-confirmed/>.

Sands Heritage Ltd is itself owned by [Margate Estates Limited](#) an offshore company, backed by Arrowgrass Hedge Fund. Margate Estates Ltd are currently re-financing as Arrowgrass the hedge fund is closing down. They have published this PDF investment plan

<https://www.margateestates.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/margate-brochure.pdf> which was discussed in another Isle of Thanet News site and can be googled.

*It should be noted that this plan set out that Margate Estates Limited also has an option to buy the Head Lease of Arlington House from Freshwater.*

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## SAFETY & SECURITY

### Entrance Foyer and Fobs

The front door and car park door should remain locked and closed. Please don't let people you don't know into the building for the security of all.

Intercoms in the entrance foyer and at the car park level can be programmed to call your phone, and you press # to open the door.

The code for each flat is the floor number followed by a number to stand in for each flat's letter. So the door code for 14A is 141 and the door code for 14H is 148.

Speak to Mitch the caretaker to ensure that one or more telephone numbers are programmed in (you can have multiple numbers that are called in turn). If you have difficulty getting to the phone in time, ask for the same number to be input twice (or more).

If you still have an intercom handset in your flat it's completely redundant.

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## **Disability Access**

The building is currently only partly accessible.

Wheelchairs and mobility scooters can access the ground floor entrance if someone holds the doors open for them. The entrance from the carpark currently has a door with a high concrete step making access impossible.

The Residents Association is prioritising investigation of improved access as there are a number of residents currently denied easy access to their home.

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## **Lifts**

Our lifts are as old as the building. One lift has been out of service for some time and the other has periods of being extremely cranky. Leaving aside the question about why the lifts have been allowed to get in such disrepair, the key information is that the building is in the process of getting new lifts installed (see below) but there is no clear timeline quite yet. So in the



meantime, treat the lift well. Be patient when you press buttons and don't force the doors. If you carry rubbish or rubble down, please clean the lift afterwards.

### *Lift Down*

If you call a lift and it doesn't come - listen at the door and check that you can't hear it moving and it's not just slow. If it's genuinely not coming - or if it's stuck on the ground floor with the doors open this is what to do:

- During Mitch's hours - let him know in person or by phone
- Outside Mitch's hours, if you have Arlington Alerts WhatsApp group - send a message to that group to let us know. Don't worry, that message only goes to the admins not to the 60 people signed up. If the lift is stuck at ground with doors open, it can usually be fixed at no cost by a resident with the know-how.

- Failing the above; report it to the PS&B out of hours line: 01273 947718

They will call the lift company out and should update you - once again pls share this update with the WhatsApp group Arlington Alerts so we can let others know.

### *Stuck in The Lift*

The lift is really secure - big cables and serious old brakes so don't worry. But if you're stuck in a lift (and it has happened) press the emergency button. This goes to a call centre, so you may need to explain which building you're in! If you can't get a response from the emergency button, call 999. The Fire Brigade can access the lift machine room and manually lower the lift to the next floor. Don't use the lifts if the fire alarm has sounded.

### *New Lifts*

The installation of new lifts has been seriously delayed by several factors. Freshwater increased the cost of the replacement of the lifts by over £250,000 without consultation with residents and so were taken to tribunal by two determined residents, John Moss and Sue Kenton, whose case was backed by a further 60 leaseholders. This was successful and so Freshwater will be limited to the original budget. However how quickly they now move forwards and whether they will wait until all fees are collected before proceeding is still to be seen.



## Fire Safety

### *Fire Alarm Test*

The fire alarm is tested every Monday morning for about a minute and the local fire brigade carry out periodic drills at the building. On Bank Holidays the test is Tuesday mornings.

### *Fire Readiness*

Residents should familiarise themselves with the detail of the Fire Action Plan as displayed by the lifts. For your own safety and the safety of others, ensure that all fire doors (including your flat front door) are kept closed.

The Fire Action Plan also states that “ *Residents must not:*

- *Block or obstruct exit routes and corridors within the communal areas*
- *Store combustible materials in communal areas including service cupboards*
- *Damage or tamper with any fire equipment provided in communal areas”*

### *If You See, Hear or Smell a Fire*

Call the Fire Brigade by ringing 999 and asking for the Fire Service.

### *When The Alarm Sounds*

When the fire alarm gets triggered outside of a test, the fire brigade attend within minutes. They check the building and in most cases shut the alarm off. This process takes about half an hour but the alarm is sometimes left ringing after they have left. Arlinton is a shelter in place building.

The Fire Action Plan states “ *The building is designed to contain a fire in the flat or other point of origin where it starts. This means it is usually safe for you to stay in your own flat if the fire is elsewhere”*

### *When to evacuate?*

- You are free to evacuate if you prefer when the alarm sounds.
- The Fire Action plan states: “ *If safe to do so, you must leave immediately if smoke, flames or heat affect your home or if you are told to evacuate by the fire service*”
- The Fire Action plan states: “ *If you are in any doubt, get out*”.

### *Do Not Use The Lifts*

If you have reported a fire or if the fire alarm is sounding. Remember there are two staircases at Arlington House - at the front by the sea and at the back by the lifts. The Fire Action plan states “*if the fire is between you and the nearest exit, use an alternative escape route. There are two exit routes at Arlington House at either end of the corridors. If both are blocked by fire, return to your flat and close the front door.*”

### *Can't Use The Stairs?*

Arlington House is home to many people with a disability who cannot use the stairs. If you are unable to use the stairs, but need to evacuate your home because it is affected, the Fire Action Plan says “ *If you cannot use the stairs, you should position yourself in a sign posted refuge area, if your building has one*”. Arlington House does not have signed posted refuge places on the floors but the lift lobby and the stairwell may provide potential places of refuge until the Fire Brigade arrive.

There is a list of people who can't evacuate by stairs kept in the fire panel for the fire brigade to use in the case of an evacuation. If you would like to be added to this list, please contact Mitch the caretaker.

### *False Alarms & How to Avoid Them*

The alarm gets triggered quite often when there is no emergency, often in the night. The alarm is very loud, particularly in the majority of flats that have alarms inside the flats, not just outside . Many residents are unable to stay in their flats if the alarm keeps sounding and retreat to their cars, taking children and pets with them.

If the alarm sounds outside the working hours of the caretaker, a committee member from A Better Arlington will wait for the fire brigade outside the building, to ensure that they shut the alarm off when they leave after attending a false alarm.

Residents can prevent false alarms by being aware of the alarm system: Smoke detectors in common areas (e.g. corridors) are sensitive and will respond to cigarette smoke (it is illegal to smoke in these areas) *and if flat doors are opened to let out cooking smoke* - open windows instead. System detectors in flats are heat sensitive and will trigger if a flat is ablaze. There are some other detectors, e.g. in the stairwells and at the top of the rubbish chute.

### *Fire Safety Changes*

There are regular fire safety reviews and these have led, over recent years, to a number of changes. Flats were fitted with smoke detectors some time ago but these are not connected to the system. Owners and occupiers may have changed or altered these or added others. All flats were also fitted with door-closers, internal metal flap letter-boxes and brush strips round the front doors.

All pot plants and other potential obstacles were removed from the corridors. These are safety items and should not be compromised. Door mats were initially banned but are now permissible if they are non-slip. The notice boards are currently required to stay locked.

Advice may change so please ensure you keep up to date.

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### **Dogs**

Dogs are wonderful, obviously, and Arlington House is home to a great many great canine characters (although some renters will find that their landlords have prohibited pets in their leases).

There have been some issues over the years with dog mess not being picked up from the undercroft and the car park which means it stays there - as a hazard for the kids in the building - until Mitch has to pick it up which is obviously a massive imposition.

If you own a dog, clean up everytime and pls remind other dog owners to do the same.

Also you know your dog, if it needs to be on a leash in and around the building, (particularly the car park where there are moving vehicles) please make sure you keep your dog and everyone else safe by doing so.

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## AMENITIES

### **Carpark**

The main public car park is managed by Dreamland with the residents' deck managed by PS&B.

You'll need a Resident Permit, provided by Dreamland and available from the caretaker, as you have to drive through the Dreamland car park to access the residents' deck. Visitors Permits are also available.

Dreamland contracted Smart Parking in summer 2021 to run the main car park. The car park attendant was replaced by cameras. In theory cars entering the Residents' Car Park should have their number plates removed from the system. In practice there have been many incorrectly issued tickets and Smart Parking have been quite unhelpful in getting them cancelled, escalating many to debt collectors. A Better Arlington have been liaising with the British Parking Association to get these cancelled. If you get a ticket please let us know at [abetterarlington@gmail.com](mailto:abetterarlington@gmail.com)

There is a door from the carpark into the building but it is currently not accessible for wheelchairs. This is being reviewed.

If you walk your dog up here, please clean up after them.

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## **Rubbish**

The bin chutes are narrow and only take carrier bags or swing bin bags of the same size. Everything should be bagged and preferably not packed tightly. Black sacks or rubble bags are too big. The chutes aren't a straight drop - they bend. So anything big will get caught in a bend, rubbish will pile up, and nobody can use the chutes!

There is a larger rubbish bin in the undercroft near the caretakers room. No rubbish can be left anywhere on the ground in that area without Mitch's consent - or it will be treated as fly tipping.

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## **Recycling**

Arlington House now has recycling bins after a resident-led initiative. There is a super clear sign above the bins to explain what goes where. Nothing can be left on the ground or it will be treated as fly tipping. Please be exact with your recycling or the scheme may be removed by the council.

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## **Water**

Sinks, showers and bath outlets leave your flat and access a main stack pipe. The join is very narrow and blocks easily so be careful what goes down the sink.

Floors 1-9 get water up from the mains, floor 10-18 down from tanks in the roof.

When the water tanks on the roof are emptied during maintenance the roof can become flooded and water can leak into the top floor flats (it's a roof, not a swimming pool). So PS&B have been asked to ensure that the contractors prevent this.

Unless you have combined the bathroom and kitchen pipework into a single feed, Southern Water will not fit a water meter.

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## **Electricity**

Each flat has its own consumer unit, with a flat fuse box in the metal cupboard outside your door. Each flat should have the key to open this box.

It is possible for a flat to 'blow' a fuse outside of that circuit in a fusebox that is on each floor. To reset this there must be a caretaker from PS&B and a representative from the electricity company.

If you're on a key meter, the nearest places to top it up are the yellow convenience store on Canterbury Road (turn left along the seafront) or Londis on Marine Terrace (turn right along the seafront).

If undertaking work on the floors, be aware that the lighting wiring for the flat below is embedded in the screed.

NB - There is no gas in Arlington House.

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## **Television Reception**

The satellite distribution system runs down a riser opposite the C flats, each floor installation comprising a pass-through tap and two eight-outlet boxes. This enables a typical two cable feed for each of the eight flats on the floor. If more feeds are needed, a further multi-way outlet box could potentially be installed. On installation of the system, feeds to flats were only installed on subscription to Sky but can now be cabled by a local installer (and a Freesat box used).

Higher floor flats can usually get terrestrial reception, especially if on the Eastern (harbour) side. Lower, Western flats can sometimes pick up a reflected (horizontal) signal off the buildings opposite.

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# TROUBLESHOOTING

## Reporting Repairs and Issues

You can report common area issues by filling out [this form](#)

That feeds into a [public spreadsheet](#) which is managed by The Residents Association who liaise with PS&B.

You also have a right to discuss any repairs directly with PS&B - including in person to Mitch.

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## Noisy Neighbours

Generally the noise separation between flats is good. If you do have a problem - make sure you note the date, time and duration of the problem each time it happens.

AirBNB is not allowed in the building for this reason. If you think that any flats are being used in this way, please drop a line to A Better Arlington - [abetterarlington@gmail.com](mailto:abetterarlington@gmail.com).

If the noise is from a resident, try to talk to the neighbour first, then contact PS&B via Mitch the caretaker or talk to Hello Neighbour! group. Usually the problem is fixed amicably.

If you need you escalate it further, Thanet District Council have a team to help:

<https://www.thanet.gov.uk/info-pages/noise-nuisance/>

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## Window Cleaning

Our beautiful 1960s aluminium windows on floors 2-18 give the building its streamlined look and make sure our flats are light and airy. First floor windows are by Crittall.

You can clean the 2-18 floor windows from inside using a long squeegee and sliding the windows past each other, but obviously - be careful! Windows can be cleaned with only a narrow enough slice of window open to allow your arm and shoulder out but to make it impossible to fall

through. Residents should bear in mind that there was a death by falling from Arlington a few years back and another death by falling when cleaning windows elsewhere in the town more recently.

If you'd like to get in a window cleaner, go that route. At time of writing there is an advert from a window cleaner on the residents' notice board.

It's worth regularly cleaning the channels they run in and you can use a bit of WD40 to make them run smoothly.

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## **Windy Days**

Arlington is a great place to watch storms, and they usually roll in from the west so residents on the station side can see them coming.

Any whistling or roaring wind noise from your windows means they're not quite shut tight (see Windows section for hints).

Gurgling noises from plugs are made when air is being forced into the building's plumbing by a strong wind: running a tap usually removes the air bubble and stops the noise.

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## **Strange Sounds**

Off across the Estuary, is Qinetiq's Shoeburyness Range, where they test weaponry. The bangs that rattle windows on the west side of the building come from there. You can find announcements on Twitter:

[https://twitter.com/SHB\\_Alerts?s=09](https://twitter.com/SHB_Alerts?s=09)

On the other side, the Combined Services Fire Training School blow things up at Manston. You'll see big clouds of thick black smoke. Watch out - if the wind is right, they blow our way.

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# RIGHTS & SERVICES

## **For Leaseholders**

The freehold of the building is owned by Thanet District Council and leased to Metropolitan Property Realizations Limited (part of the Freshwater group) who let leases on individual flats. Freshwater let 36 flats directly. Other flats are privately owned and let.

Another Freshwater company - Highdorn - handles the property. PS&B are the managing agents, dealing with most day-to-day issues including issuing the service charge demands; Highdorn collects the ground rent.

### *Lease Extensions*

All flat leases were to expire in 2075 but some leaseholders have extended their leases - either for a negotiated period within the head-leaseholder's lease or beyond that into the freehold reversion. As non extended leases now have less than 80 years left on them, they are more expensive.

Once you have owned a flat for 24 months you have a statutory right to extend leases by 90 years but it comes at a high cost as Freshwater have, so far, chosen to always make this as difficult a process as possible. You should expect them to force the issue to a tribunal, meaning that you have to spend several thousand pounds on a solicitor and your own valuation and negotiator and for the process to drag on for months. Expect the costs to be in the range of £25,000 - £35,000

More information about the process here:

<https://www.lease-advice.org/article/12-good-rules-on-extending-your-lease/>

It is possible that the law will change and make it easier for leaseholders to extend. But nothing is certain yet. [This article](#) addresses the question of whether to wait or not.

## *Service Charges*

A priority for leaseholders is getting service charge value for money. Of course this is also an issue for renters since they inevitably pay for increased or wasted service charges through their rent.

The Financial Times wrote an article in 2021 about the high prevalence of overcharging of service charges, which currently do not have to be audited by independent assessors. Their article was entitled [Fixing England's home service charge scandal](#). And it is possible that the government may pass reforms in time.

In the meantime, Arlington House residents are left, as are residents across the country, with the unenviable task of reviewing the charges in detail themselves once accounts are published for previous years and disputing charges which they find to be wrong. This burden has historically fallen on one or two long standing residents. One determined resident in particular has taken the managing agents to tribunal more than once to win back charges,

A Better Arlington is going to be working with PS&B to try to find a less exhausting way to approve legitimate charges. If anyone now joining the building can contribute financial oversight skills, we'd love to hear from you.

## *Future of the Freehold*

Freshwater has had the head lease since the 1960s after contracting Thanet Council. It seems highly unlikely that Thanet District Council would take back the Head Lease of the building but Dreamland's umbrella company currently has an option to buy the head lease from Freshwater as part of their consolidation [See Dreamland].

## *Future Bills*

The building is in need of major repairs, not simply the lift replacement which (see above) has cost each flat owner several thousand pounds.

Leaseholders should expect future bills as a result of the 10 year Plan for the building. This makes it even more vital that we have a vibrant, democratic residents association to negotiate on

behalf of everyone, and give protection to residents on lower incomes whilst making sure that Arlington House continues to be improved.

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## **For Tenants**

There are a large number of tenants in the building and tenants have additional rights some of which are noted here: <https://www.gov.uk/private-renting>

For instance, Arlington flats can be cold but [since 2020 landlords have a responsibility](#) to make sure their flats are energy efficient which will make your home warmer and lower your energy bills.

Freshwater owns 36 flats in the building making them the biggest landlord.

Tenants should take note of their emergency out of hours number: 020 8662 8870

They asked us to include “Please note if there's an unnecessary emergency call out, the tenants will be asked to pay this call-out charge. Please note this on your FAQ's. Thank you”.

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That's it folks.

Please send amendments and corrections to us at [abetterarlington@gmail.com](mailto:abetterarlington@gmail.com)

A Better Arlington - the residents association for Arlington House.