AUSTIN BELLE
LETTINGS

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Effective from: 29 September 2026
Review date: 29 September 2027

Document control

Reference	ABL-CP-01
Version	1.0
Issued	29 September 2026
Supersedes	— (first controlled version)
Status	Draft for approval
Approved by	Lauren Goodacre – Director

At Austin Belle Lettings, we are committed to providing a professional, transparent and high standard of service to our landlords, tenants, applicants, contractors and other customers.

We recognise that occasionally things may not go as expected. If you are unhappy with any aspect of the service you have received from us, we encourage you to tell us as soon as possible.

We take complaints seriously and will investigate them fairly, objectively and as promptly as reasonably possible.

Our complaints procedure is designed to provide a clear process for raising concerns and, where possible, resolving them.

1. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?

A complaint may be made by:

- a current or former landlord;
- a current or former tenant;
- a prospective landlord;
- a prospective tenant or applicant;
- a property owner or occupier;

- a contractor or other relevant third party; or
- an authorised representative acting on behalf of one of the above.

Where someone is making a complaint on behalf of another person, we may require appropriate authority before discussing confidential information or personal data.

2. SUPPORTING OUR CUSTOMERS

We aim to ensure that our complaints process is accessible and fair to everyone.

Where appropriate, Austin Belle will consider reasonable adjustments for customers who may require additional assistance because of their individual circumstances.

This may include circumstances relating to:

- disability;
- illness;
- age;
- bereavement;
- financial circumstances;
- literacy or numeracy difficulties;
- limited knowledge of the lettings process;
- language or communication difficulties; or
- other circumstances which may place the customer at a disadvantage.

Reasonable adjustments may include, where appropriate:

- allowing additional time to respond;
- communicating by an alternative method;
- arranging telephone or face-to-face communication;
- allowing a representative to assist;
- providing information in an alternative accessible format; or
- providing additional explanation of the complaints process.

If you require a reasonable adjustment or assistance in making a complaint, please tell us when you contact us.

3. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

We encourage customers to raise concerns with the member of the Austin Belle team who is dealing with the matter in the first instance, as many issues can be resolved quickly without the need for a formal complaint.

If the matter cannot be resolved, or you wish to make a formal complaint, please submit your complaint to us in writing.

Complaints can be sent by:

Email: Lauren@simongoodacreproperty.co.uk

Post:
Austin Belle Lettings
27 Castle Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 3PL

For the attention of: Complaints / Director

Please include, where possible:

- your full name;
- contact details;
- the property address;
- your relationship to the property or tenancy;
- details of the issue;
- the date(s) on which the issue occurred;
- the person or department involved;
- any relevant correspondence or supporting documents; and
- what you believe would resolve the matter.

We will make reasonable efforts to assist customers who are unable to submit a complaint in writing.

4. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE RECEIVE YOUR COMPLAINT?

Our formal complaints procedure consists of the following stages.

STAGE ONE – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We will acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint in writing within three working days of receiving it.

Our acknowledgement will:

- confirm that your complaint has been received;
- identify the person responsible for handling it, where appropriate;
- provide a copy of this Complaints Procedure; and
- explain what will happen next.

5. STAGE TWO – INVESTIGATION

Your complaint will be investigated thoroughly and fairly.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, our investigation may include:

- reviewing the property or tenancy file;
- reviewing correspondence and emails;
- reviewing telephone or communication records;
- reviewing inspection reports;
- reviewing repair and maintenance records;
- reviewing relevant financial records;
- speaking with members of our team;
- obtaining relevant information from contractors or other third parties; and
- considering any evidence provided by you.

Where appropriate, the person investigating the complaint will be someone who was not directly responsible for the matter being complained about.

We will provide a formal written response within 15 working days of receiving your original complaint.

Our response will explain:

- the matters we have considered;
- the outcome of our investigation;
- our reasons for reaching that outcome;
- any action we propose to take; and
- how you can request a review if you remain dissatisfied.

6. STAGE THREE – INTERNAL REVIEW / FINAL VIEWPOINT

If you remain dissatisfied with our Stage Two response, you may request an internal review.

Your request should explain:

- which aspects of our response you disagree with;
- why you remain dissatisfied; and
- any additional information you would like us to consider.

Where reasonably practicable, the review will be undertaken by a senior member of the business who was not directly involved in the original decision or complaint.

We will provide our final viewpoint in writing within 15 working days of receiving your request for a review.

Our final viewpoint will explain our position and will confirm the details of the independent redress scheme available to you.

7. INDEPENDENT REDRESS – THE PROPERTY OMBUDSMAN

If you remain dissatisfied after completing Austin Belle's internal complaints procedure, you may be entitled to refer your complaint to:

The Property Ombudsman (TPO)

Telephone: 01722 333 306

Website: www.tpos.co.uk

TPO provides an independent review of eligible complaints concerning property professionals.

TPO's current consumer process requires consumers to complain to the business first before referring the matter to TPO.

TPO can consider complaints about how a letting agent has acted, including matters such as whether the agent gave reasonable advice, followed appropriate procedures and communicated clearly and accurately.

TPO does not, however, determine whether a landlord, tenant or agent has breached the law. Where a complaint concerns an alleged breach of legislation, the appropriate enforcement authority, court, tribunal or other relevant body may need to consider that issue.

8. TIME LIMIT FOR REFERRAL TO TPO

Where applicable under TPO's rules, a complaint should normally be referred to TPO within 12 months of the date of Austin Belle's final viewpoint letter.

In addition, if we have not issued our final viewpoint within eight weeks of receiving your formal complaint, you may refer your complaint to The Property Ombudsman without waiting for our final viewpoint, in accordance with TPO's rules.

Customers should provide TPO with copies of relevant correspondence and supporting documentation.

TPO's own rules and Terms of Reference will determine whether a particular complaint is eligible for consideration.

9. COMPLAINTS ABOUT LANDLORDS OR TENANTS

Austin Belle acts as a letting and/or property management agent and this complaints procedure principally concerns complaints about Austin Belle's service or conduct.

Where a complaint concerns the conduct or legal obligations of a landlord or tenant rather than Austin Belle's actions, we will explain, where appropriate, the relevant route for raising that issue.

For example, certain disputes concerning landlords, tenants, rent, property conditions or statutory rights may need to be dealt with by:

- the local authority;
- Trading Standards;
- the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber);
- the courts;
- another relevant regulator; or
- an appropriate legal adviser.

TPO confirms that complaints concerning an agent's actions can fall within its remit, whereas it cannot determine whether the underlying law has been breached.

10. URGENT REPAIR OR SAFETY ISSUES

A complaint is not a substitute for reporting an urgent repair or safety issue.

If you are a tenant and have an urgent repair, emergency or safety concern, please contact Austin Belle immediately using the emergency or maintenance contact details provided to you.

Examples may include:

- suspected gas leak;
- carbon monoxide concern;
- serious electrical hazard;
- major water leak;
- loss of essential services;
- serious security issue; or
- another immediate risk to health or safety.

Such matters will be dealt with under our maintenance and emergency procedures as appropriate.

11. DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Austin Belle will handle complaints and associated personal information in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and our Privacy Notice.

Information will only be disclosed where appropriate and lawful.

Where a complaint is made by a third party or representative, we may need to verify their authority before disclosing personal or confidential information.

12. COMPLAINT RECORDS

Austin Belle will maintain appropriate records of formal complaints, including:

- the date the complaint was received;
- the complainant's details;
- the nature of the complaint;
- relevant correspondence;
- investigation undertaken;
- outcome;
- any remedial action;
- dates of responses; and
- any referral to an external redress body.

Complaints will be reviewed periodically to identify recurring issues, training requirements and opportunities to improve our service.

13. FAIR AND RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

Austin Belle will treat complainants fairly and respectfully.

We ask customers to communicate with our staff in the same manner.

We will not tolerate threatening, abusive, discriminatory or intimidating behaviour towards our employees or contractors.

Where a customer's behaviour becomes unreasonable, Austin Belle may take proportionate steps to manage communications while ensuring that legitimate complaints continue to be handled appropriately.

14. COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

Following investigation, a complaint may be:

Upheld

We accept that the complaint is justified, in whole or in part.

Partially upheld

We accept some aspects of the complaint but not others.

Not upheld

Having investigated the matter, we do not consider the complaint to be justified.

Where appropriate, Austin Belle may offer:

- an explanation;
- an apology;
- corrective action;
- remedial action;
- reimbursement where appropriate and legally due; or
- changes to our procedures.

An outcome will depend upon the individual circumstances of the complaint.

15. NO RETALIATION

Austin Belle will not treat a customer unfairly simply because they have made a genuine complaint.

Making a complaint will not, of itself, affect a person's right to receive services or exercise their lawful rights.

16. REVIEW OF THIS PROCEDURE

Austin Belle will review this Complaints Procedure periodically and whenever there is a significant change to relevant legislation, regulatory requirements or our redress scheme's requirements.

Effective date: 29 September 2026
Next review: 29 September 2027

AUSTIN BELLE CONTACT DETAILS

Austin Belle Lettings

Complaints: Lauren@simongoodacreproperty.co.uk

Telephone: 01234 866775

Address: 27 Castle Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 3PL

Website: www.simongoodacreproperty.co.uk