



**FIRST - TIER TRIBUNAL
PROPERTY CHAMBER
(RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY)**

Case Reference : **JM/LON/OOBK/F77/2022/0258**

Property : **Flat 127 Dibdin House, London W9 1QG**

Tenant : **Mr & Mrs B & D O'Neil**

Landlord : **Grainger Invest 1 LLP C/O Grainger PLC**

Type of Application : **Determination of a Fair Rent under section 70 of the Rent Act 1977**

Tribunal : **Chair Mr R Waterhouse MA LLM FRICS
Mr Miller**

HMCTS Code : **Hearing**
(paper, video, audio)

Date of Decision : **24th January 2023**

Date of Statement of Reasons : **24th January 2023**

Statement of Reasons

Background

The Tribunal gave formal notice of its decision by a Notice dated 24th January 2023 of the determined Fair Rent of £235.50 per week with effect from same date.

By way of application, dated 2nd September 2022 from the landlord of the property applied for re registration of a fair rent of £220.00 per week. Previously the Rent Officer had registered a rent of £185.00 per week on 11th November 2020.

The Rent Officer registered a fair rent of £227.00 per week, effective from 11th November 2022.

In an email dated 15th September 2022 objected to the rent registered and the matter was referred to the First –tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) (Residential Property).

Directions were issued by the Tribunal on the 22nd November 2022.

The tenancy is a statutory (protected) periodic tenancy. The tenancy (not being for a fixed tenancy of 7 years or more) is subject to section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 which sets out the landlords statutory repairing obligations; the tenant is responsible for internal decorations.

The Property

The property is a purpose-built flat comprising three rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom located on the third floor of a purpose built 1940s block. There is no lift.

The tribunal inspected on the morning of the hearing. The tenant has made a number of improvements to the flat, the kitchen has been refitted with modern units and white goods and cooker, with flooring and tiling. The bathroom has a replacement sink but original bath and WC. The tenant has installed an electric shower over the bath.

There are two rooms used as living rooms. There are fitted cupboards on the East flank wall.

The landlord has provided the flat with double glazing including trickle vents, and central heating. The block has uniform front doors.

Relevant Law

Provisions in respect of the jurisdiction of the Tribunal and the determination of a fair rent are found in Schedule 11, Part 1, paragraph 9(1) to the Rent Act 1977, as amended by paragraph 34 of the Transfer of Tribunal Functions Order 2013, and section 70 of the Rent Act 1977.

Rent Act 1977

Schedule 11, Part 1, paragraph 9 (as amended)

“Outcome of determination of fair rent by appropriate tribunal

9.-(1) The appropriate tribunal shall-

(a) if it appears to them that the rent registered or confirmed by the rent officer is a fair rent, confirm that rent;

(b) if it does not appear to them that that rent is a fair rent, determine a fair rent for the dwelling house.”

Section 70: Determination of fair rent (as amended)

“(1) In determining, for the purposes of the Part of this Act, what rent is or would be a fair rent under a regulated tenancy of a dwelling house, regard shall be had to all the circumstances (other than personal circumstances) and in particular to-

(a) the age, character, locality and state of repair of the dwelling-house, ...

(b) if any furniture is provided for the use under the tenancy, the quantity, quality and condition of the furniture [, and

(c) any premium, or sum in the nature of a premium, which has been or may be lawfully required or received on the grant, renewal, continuance or assignment of the tenancy.]

(2) For the purposes of the determination it shall be assumed that the number of persons seeking to become tenants of similar dwelling-houses in locality on the terms (other than those relating to rent) of the regulated tenancy is not substantially greater than the number of such dwelling-houses in the locality which are available for letting on such terms.

(3) There shall be disregarded-

(a) any disrepair or other defect attributable to a failure by the tenant under the regulated tenancy or any predecessor in title of his to comply with any terms thereof;

(b) any improvement carried out, otherwise than in pursuance of the terms of the tenancy, by the tenant under the regulated tenancy or any predecessor in title of his;

(c), (d) ...[repealed]

(e) if any furniture is provided for use under the regulated tenancy, any improvement to the furniture by the tenant under the regulated tenancy or any predecessor of his or, as the case may be, any deterioration in the condition of the furniture due to any ill-treatment by the tenant, any person residing or lodging with him, or any sub-tenant of his.”

Consequently, when determining a fair rent the Tribunal, in accordance with the Rent Act 1977, section 70, has regard to all the circumstances including the age, location and state of repair of the Property. It also disregards the effect of (a) any relevant Tenant’s improvements and (b) the effect of any disrepair or defect

attributed to the Tenant of any predecessor in title under the regulated tenancy, on the rental value of the Property.

In *Spath Holme Ltd v Chairman of the Greater Manchester etc. Committee* (1995) 28 HLR 107 and *Curtis v London Rent Assessment Committee* [1999] QB 92 the Court of Appeal emphasised:

- (a) that ordinarily a fair rent is the market rent for the property discounted for “scarcity” (i.e. that element, if any, of the market rent, that is attributable to there being a significant shortage of similar properties in the wider locality available for letting on terms- other than as to rent- to that of the regulated tenancy) and
- (b) that for the purposes of determining the market rent, assured tenancy (market rents) are usually appropriate comparables. (The rents may have to be adjusted where necessary to reflect any differences between the comparables and the subject property).

In considering scarcity under section 70 (2), the Tribunal recognises that:

(a) there are considerable variations in the level of a scarcity in different parts of the country and that there is no general guidance or “rule of thumb” to indicate what adjustments should be made; the Tribunal, therefore, considers the case on its merits;

(b) terms relating to rents are to be excluded. A lack of demand at a particular rent is not necessarily evidence of scarcity; it may be evidence that the prospective tenants are not prepared to pay that particular rent.

Fair rents are subject to a capping procedure under the Rent Acts (Maximum Fair Rent) Order 1999 which limits increases by a formula based on the proportional increase in the Retail Price Index since last registration.

The only exception to this restriction on a fair rent is provided under paragraph 7 of the Order where a landlord carries out repairs or improvements which increase the rent by 15% or more of the previous registered rent.

Preliminary matter

The Application requested an inspection and a hearing. At the inspection the tenant Mr O’Neil informed the tribunal that he may not be able to attend the tribunal in the afternoon. Neither the tenant nor the landlord attended the tribunal and so the matter was resolved on the papers.

Submissions

Landlord

No submissions from the landlord

Tenant

The tenant submitted a reply form noting the improvements carried out. Also noting; “damp to bedroom 2 still not addressed, mould growth on windows sealing mastic not addressed since windows fitted.

In the objection email, the tenant noted; the issue with the discolouration of the window sealing mastic, issues re landlord and tenant notification of works issues including replacement of the front door, roof cleaning and cold-water supply. Lack of full fibre cable to the estate.

Reasons for Decision

The tribunal considered all relevant material submitted including reference to previous decisions which are not binding on the tribunal but were considered for wider context.

The process for determining a fair rent is the application of Rent Act 1977 section 70 on the subject property and then comparison with the maximum rent permitted under the Maximum Fair Rent Order 1999. This means that comparison with other properties the subject of Fair Rent is not material.

Initially the Tribunal determined what rent the Landlord could reasonably be expected to obtain for the Property in the open market if it were let today in the condition that is considered usual for such an open market letting. Considering evidence submitted and the Tribunal acting in its capacity as an expert tribunal and using its general knowledge of market levels in the area, concluded that such a likely market rent, if a market rent is adopted would be £ 1800.00 per month or equivalent to £415.38 per week.

However, the Property when tenant’s improvements are excluded, is not in the condition considered usual for a modern letting at a market rent. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust the above hypothetical rent, a deduction of 10% is made.

In addition, the Tribunal determined that there should be a further deduction of 10% to reflect the fact the terms and conditions and goods supplied under the tenancy would differ from those of a contemporary assured shorthold tenancy, from which the rental comparables are derived.

Thereafter the Tribunal considered the question of scarcity in section 70 (2) of the Rent Act 1977. A figure of 20% was adopted.

Market derived rental level - £415.35 per week

Less 10% condition

Less 10% for terms and supplied goods inc white goods

Less 20% for scarcity.

The rent after this final adjustment was £ 249.23 per week.

Rent Acts (Maximum Fair Rent) Order 1999

The rent to be registered is limited by the Rent Acts (Maximum Fair Rent Order) 1999. The rent calculated in accordance with the Order is £235.50 per week. This figure is less than the figure calculated by reference to the market rent with adjustments, of £249.23 per week.

Accordingly, the sum of £235.50 per week will be registered as the fair rent with effect from 24th January 2023, being the date of the Tribunal's decision.

Valuer Chair: Richard Waterhouse FRICS

Decision Date: 24th January 2023

Extended reasons: 24th January 2023

Appeal to the Upper Tribunal

A person wishing to appeal this decision to the Upper Tribunal (Property Chamber) on a point of law must seek permission to do so by making a written application to the First-tier Tribunal at the Regional Office which has been dealing with the case which application must:

- a. be received by the said office within 28 days after the Tribunal sends to the person making the application written reasons for the decision.
- b. identify the decision of the Tribunal to which it relates, state the grounds of appeal, and state the result the party making the application is seeking.

If the application is not received within the 28 –day time limit, it must include a request for an extension of time and the reason for it not complying with the 28- day time limit; the Tribunal will then decide whether to extend time or not to allow the application for permission to appeal to proceed.