



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

Case Reference : **CHI/29UQ/MNR/2023/0074**

Property : **3 Lucas Close
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN2 3GJ**

Applicant Tenant : **Miss E Hunt**

Representative : **None**

Respondent Landlord : **Town & Country Housing**

Representative : **None**

Type of Application : **Determination of a Market Rent sections
13 & 14 of the Housing Act 1988**

Tribunal Members : **Mr I R Perry FRICS
Mr S J Hodges FRICS
Mr J S Reichel MRICS**

Date of Inspection : **None. Paper determination**

Date of Decision : **6th June 2023**

DECISION

Summary of Decision

1. On 6th June 2023 the Tribunal determined a market rent of £246.92 per week to take effect from 3rd April 2023.
2. The Tribunal is aware that this market rent is more than the amount requested by the Landlord who is providing Social Housing. The Landlord is not obliged to charge this higher figure.

Background

3. The case concerned the determination of a market rent for the subject property following a referral of the Landlord's notice of increase of rent by the Tenant pursuant to sections 13 and 14 Housing Act 1988.
4. On 8th February 2023 the Landlord served a notice under Section 13(2) of the Housing Act 1988 which proposed a new rent of £122.94 per week in place of the existing rent of £114.90 per week to take effect from 3rd April 2023. A service charge of £18.36 is payable in addition to the rent. The notice complied with the legal requirements.
5. On 28th March 2023 the Tenant applied to the Tribunal under Section 13(4) (a) of the Housing Act 1988.
6. The Tribunal does not consider it necessary and proportionate in cases of this nature to undertake inspections or hold Tribunal hearings unless either specifically requested by either party or a particular point arises which merits such an inspection and/or hearing.
7. The Tribunal issued directions on 14th April 2023 informing the parties that, unless either party objected, the Tribunal intended to determine the rent based on written representations. The parties were invited to make submissions which could include photographs or videos.
8. Both parties submitted papers by the specified dates which were copied to the other party.
9. Neither party objected to the matter being determined without an oral hearing, so the Tribunal determined the case on 6th June 2023 based on the written representations received.

The Property

10. From the information given in the papers and available on the internet the property comprises a ground floor flat in a modern purpose-built block of flats within a cul-de-sac about 1 1/2 miles northeast of the centre of Tunbridge Wells.
11. The accommodation is described as including a Living Room, Kitchen, two Bedrooms and a Bathroom. There is off-street parking and communal gardens.

12. The property has double-glazed windows and gas-fired central heating. No white goods or curtains are provided by the Landlord.

Submissions

13. Miss Hunt took occupation of the property on the 19th October 2020.
14. Miss Hunt states that the kitchen units are dated, that she has replaced kitchen and bathroom floor coverings and she provided the Tribunal with photographs of the bathroom which show some black mould growth caused by excessive moisture. Miss Hunt also says that the extractor fan is inadequate and that the kitchen units are dated.
15. Miss Hunt also provided the Tribunal with details of other properties available to rent. The two bedroomed properties had asking rents ranging from £99 per week, £429 per month, to £590 per month.

The Law

S14 Determination of Rent by First-tier Tribunal

- (1) Where, under subsection (4) (a) of section 13 above, a tenant refers to a First-tier Tribunal a notice under subsection (2) of that section, the Tribunal shall determine the rent at which, subject to subsections (2) and (4) below, the Tribunal consider that the dwelling-house concerned might reasonably be expected to be let in the open market by a willing landlord under an assured tenancy-
 - (a) which is a periodic tenancy having the same periods as those of the tenancy to which the notice relates;
 - (b) which begins at the beginning of the new period specified in the notice;
 - (c) the terms of which (other than relating to the amount of the rent) are the same as those of the tenancy to which the notice relates; and
 - (d) in respect of which the same notices, if any, have been given under any of Grounds 1 to 5 of Schedule 2 to this Act, as have been given (or have effect as if given) in relation to the tenancy to which the notice relates.
- (2) In making a determination under this section, there shall be disregarded-
 - (a) any effect on the rent attributable to the granting of a tenancy to a sitting tenant;
 - (b) any increase in the value of the dwelling-house attributable to a relevant improvement carried out by a person who at the time it was carried out was the tenant, if the improvement-
 - (i) was carried out otherwise than in pursuance of an obligation to his immediate landlord, or
 - (ii) was carried out pursuant to an obligation to his immediate landlord being an obligation which did not relate to the specific improvement

- concerned but arose by reference to consent given to the carrying out of that improvement; and
- (c) any reduction in the value of the dwelling-house attributable to a failure by the tenant to comply with any terms of the tenancy.
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (2)(b) above, in relation to a notice which is referred by a tenant as mentioned in subsection (1) above, an improvement is a relevant improvement if either it was carried out during the tenancy to which the notice relates, or the following conditions are satisfied, namely-
- (a) that it was carried out not more than twenty-one years before the date of service of the notice; and
- (b) that, at all times during the period beginning when the improvement was carried out and ending on the date of service of the notice, the dwelling-house has been let under an assured tenancy; and
- (c) that, on the coming to an end of an assured tenancy at any time during that period, the tenant (or, in the case of joint tenants, at least one of them) did not quit.
- (4) In this section "rent" does not include any service charge, within the meaning of section 18 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, but, subject to that, includes any sums payable by the tenant to the landlord on account of the use of furniture, in respect of council tax or for any of the matters referred to in subsection (1) (a) of that section, whether or not those sums are separate from the sums payable for the occupation.

Consideration and Valuation

16. The Tribunal first considered whether it felt able to reasonably and fairly decide this case based on the papers submitted only with no oral hearing. Having read and considered the papers it decided that it could do so.
17. The Tribunal is required to determine the rent at which the subject property might reasonably be expected to be let in the open market by a willing Landlord under an assured tenancy. The personal circumstances of the Tenant are not relevant to this issue.
18. Having carefully considered the representations from the parties and associated correspondence and using its own judgement and knowledge of rental values in Tunbridge Wells the Tribunal decided that the market rent for the subject property if let today in a condition that was usual for such an open market letting would be £1,200 per month. The Tribunal concluded that the rentals provided by the Tenant were for other Social Housing in the area which explained why they were lower than the open market rents..
19. Using its experience the Tribunal decided that this theoretical open market rent should be adjusted to take account of the Tenant's provision of white goods £30, dated Kitchen £50 and the dated bathroom affected by black mould £50. A total deduction of £130 per month.

20. The Tenant made no representation that the starting date for the new rent specified in the Landlord's notice would cause the Tenant undue hardship.

Determination

21. The Tribunal therefore decided that the rent at which the subject property might reasonably be expected to be let in the open market by a willing Landlord under the terms of this assured tenancy was £1,070 per month which equates to £246.92 per week.
22. The Tribunal directed that the new rent of £246.92 per week should take effect from 3rd April 2023.

RIGHTS OF APPEAL

1. A person wishing to appeal this decision to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) must seek permission to do so by making written application to the First-tier Tribunal at the Regional office which has been dealing with the case. Where possible you should send your application for permission to appeal by email to rpsouthern@justice.gov.uk as this will enable the First-tier Tribunal Regional office to deal with it more efficiently.
2. The application must arrive at the Tribunal within 28 days after the Tribunal sends to the person making the application written reasons for the decision.
3. If the person wishing to appeal does not comply with the 28-day time limit, the person shall include with the application for permission to appeal a request for an extension of time and the reason for 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.
4. The application for permission to appeal must 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.