



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

Case Reference : **CHI/21UH/MNR/2023/0215**

Property : **21 Michael Fields, Forest Row, East
Sussex RH18 5BH**

Applicant Tenant : **Mr R & Mrs Y Lyon**

Representative : **None**

Respondent Landlord : **Mr I & Mrs D Miller**

Representative : **None**

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

Tribunal Members : **Mr D Jagger MRICS
Mr J Reichel BSc MRICS
Mr S Hodges FRICS**

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

Date of Decision : **25th October 2023**

DECISION

Summary of Decision

1. On the 25th October 2023 the Tribunal determined a market rent of £1,800 per month to take effect from 1st September 2023.

Background

2. 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.
3. On the 31st July 2023 the Landlord served a notice under Section 13(2) of the Housing Act 1988 which proposed a new rent of £1,900 per month in place of the existing rent of £1,750 per month to take effect from 1st September 2023. The notice complied with the legal requirements.
4. On the 31st August 2023 the Tenant appealed to the Tribunal under Section 13(4) (a) of the Housing Act 1988.
5. The Tribunal does not consider it necessary and proportionate in cases of this nature to undertake inspections or hold Tribunal hearings unless either are specifically requested by either party or a particular point arises which merits such an inspection and/or hearing.
6. The Tribunal issued directions on 20th September 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.
7. The Tribunal received representations from each party and the rent appeal statements were completed.
8. Neither party objected to the matter being determined without an oral hearing, so the Tribunal determined the case on the 25th October 2023 based on the limited documents received.

The Property

9. From the information given in the papers and available on Rightmove and Google maps, the property comprises an end of terrace two storey house evidently built during the 1980s with brick elevations under a pitched roof lined with copper sheets. The accommodation comprises three bedrooms, living room, kitchen, bathroom/WC and cloakroom and conservatory. There is a garage. This property forms part of an established estate comprising 30 dwellings lying adjacent Michael Hall Steiner Waldorf School located close to village amenities.
10. There is gas central heating, double glazed windows. Carpets, curtains and white goods were provided at the commencement of the tenancy.

Submissions

11. The current assured shorthold tenancy agreement was provided which commenced on the 1st August 2022 for a period of 12 months at a monthly rental figure of £1,750.
12. As previously mentioned, the parties completed the Rent Appeal Statements together with photographic evidence.
13. In Appendix 2 of the tenants submissions there is schedule of 11 rented properties obtained via Zoopla. The rental values range between £1,500 and £2,000 and the property styles include a maisonette through to a detached house. Although the Tribunal found this generic schedule helpful it was only able to place limited weight on the evidence as there was no confirmation of whether these properties have been let and if so, the agreed value.
14. The Energy Performance Rating for the property confirms an energy rating of D55, average and it is confirmed the floor area is 112m².

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

- 15. 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.
- 16. 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 Landlord and Tenant are not relevant to this issue.
- 17. Having carefully considered the representations from the parties and associated correspondence and using its own judgement and knowledge of rental values in the Forest Row area, 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 £2,000 per month.
- 18. However, the property is not let in such a condition as would command this full rent and the Tribunal needs to make some adjustment to this full rent to allow for the slightly dated condition of the fittings and leaking roofs.
- 19. The Tribunal has considered very carefully each parties submissions and using its own expertise, considers that a deduction of £200 is appropriate in order to

take account of the general lack of refurbishment and the leaking roofs to the main house and conservatory. This reduces the rental figure to £1,800 per month. It should be noted that this figure cannot be a simple arithmetical calculation and is not based upon capital costs but is the Tribunal's estimate of the amount by which the rent would need to be reduced to attract a tenant.

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 £1,800 per month.
22. The Tribunal directed that the new rent of £1,800 per month should take effect from 1st September 2023, this being the date specified in the Notice.
23. In reaching its decision the Tribunal is aware that the average rate for rental properties in the South East has increased every quarter since 2019, according to the online property portal Rightmove. The increase in rents has been accentuated by a lack of supply and significant demand.

D Jagger MRICS Valuer Chair 25th October 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 by email to rpsouthern@justice.gov.uk to the First-tier Tribunal at the Regional office which has been dealing with the case.
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.