



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

Case reference : **HS/LON/OOAP/MNR/2023/0386**

Property : **Flat 8 Mowbray Court, Ewart Grove,
N22 5NS**

Applicant : **Mr Mahmoud Zibara & Mrs Rebeka Tar**

Representative : **In Person**

Respondent : **Belverton Ltd**

Representative : **Lettings of London Too Ltd**

Type of application : **Market Rent under s13 & 14 of the
Housing Act 1988**

Tribunal member(s) : **Mr Richard Waterhouse MA LLM
FRICS
Judge Bernadette MacQueen**

Date and venue of hearing : **7th December 2023 Hearing and
Inspection**

Date of Decision : **7th December 2023**

DECISION

Decision of the tribunal

The tribunal determines the rent at £1500 per month. The rent to have effect from the date of the hearing that is the 7th December 2023.

Background

1. The tribunal received an application under section 13 of the Housing Act 1988 dated 12th September 2023. This included the landlord's notice dated 11th September 2023 proposing a new rent to commence on 30th October 2023. The previous rent being £1350.00 per month and the proposed £1850.00 per month from 30th October 2023.
2. The tenant requested an inspection and an oral hearing.
3. The property is a flat comprising one living room, two bedrooms, and one bathroom, and a kitchen.
4. The tenancy commenced on the 30th May 2020 for 12 months the last contractual day being 29th May 2020. The statutory periodic tenancy then commenced on the 30th May 2021.

Applicant submissions.

5. By application form section 6 furniture, the tenant noted, that included in the tenancy was;

1 two seater sofa , 1 three seater sofa, 1 dining table with 4 chairs, 2 wardrobes, 1 bedframe, 1 chest of drawers , 2 bedside tables with draws , 1 fridge with freezer, 1 washing machine, and one oven with stove

Under "Improvements" in the application form section 7 the tenant noted , " 2 wardrobes and dining table with chairs were purchased and dedicated [sic] from the rent plus we the tenants were assembled the new ones. The old ones were disassemble by us , the tenants also."

The, tenant also submitted a number of photographs and video evidence.

Respondents' Submission

6. The respondents submitted a number of documents:

- A "Property Inspection Report" running to 15 pages and dated 15th July 2022.
- A floor plan of the flat.

- An Inventory check 28th September 2020
- An e mail providing commentary on the 5 comparables submitted by the tenant.
- A completed Reply Form detailing the size of the rooms , that the property is centrally heated, has double glazing, carpets /curtains and white goods all supplied by the landlord. Additionally that a new boiler was fitted in August 2020.

Finally that the cheapest flat in area albeit one with only one bathroom, has an asking rent of £2100.00 per month.

The Inspection.

7. The tribunal inspected on the 7th December and found dampness and condensation present. Some of the double-glazed windows appeared defective and had tape surrounding them to minimise draughts. A number of rooms had water penetration from what appeared to be a defective roof. Additionally, the front door handle was loose, as was the handle to the external fire escape. There is cracking along the lintels of several of the windows in the property, additionally of potential concern is the longitudinal cracking in the ceiling of the flat in two places.

The Hearing.

8.The tenant reiterated their written submissions expressing concern over the condition of the property particularly with dampness, and that the front door and fire escape handles were loose. They contended that the appropriate rental level should be £1500 per month.

The landlord had had difficulty gaining access to the property and felt the mould if present was minimal and they were acknowledging of the efforts the tenants had gone to wipe down the mould.

9.The landlord acknowledged that the freeholder to the block had accepted the roof to the building was defective and that measures were under way to repair the roof. These it was felt should commence in the New Year. The delay in commencing had been outside the tenants' landlord's control. In respect of the handles the landlord contended they were unaware of this and now that they knew of the defects these would be rectified. Additionally the landlord was offering the use of a dehumidifier to address the dampness. With regard to the rental level, they felt the proposed figure of £1850 was reasonable and considered that a higher figure was achievable although they were not seeking it.

The Law

Valuation

10. Section 14 of the Housing Act 1988 requires the tribunal to determine the rent at which it considered the subject property might reasonably be expected to be let on the open market by a willing landlord under an assured tenancy.

The Decision

11. The tribunal inspection clearly identified a problem with dampness, humidity and condensation. The tribunal recognises that a significant part of this can be attributed to the defective roof causing water ingress. The tribunal has sympathy with the landlord that this is outside the best efforts of the landlord to address.

12. The flat has solid non insulated walls so there will be issues with condensation if adequate ventilation is not present. The windows appear not to have trickle vents but also may have in places defective seals.

13. Whilst the offer of the dehumidifier by the landlord may go so far to mitigate the issue, these devices utilise electricity and hence would cost the tenant money to run. Thereby paying additional money to achieve the original anticipated level of amenity.

14. Alternatively, the windows could be opened but again this would place an extra loading on the cost of heating to achieve the originally anticipated level of amenity.

15. For the reasons above the outcome is an environment which provides the conditions for mould growth unless ongoing active mitigation is undertaken, such as opening windows, but this would necessitate an increase in heating costs.

16. It is clear from the inspection findings that the specification of the flat as found leads to a propensity for mould growth, so falls considerably below that expected and therefore the rental bid for the accommodation must be lowered to adequately reflect this.

17. In coming to its determination under section 14, the tribunal relied on its own general knowledge of rental levels in the area and evidence supplied by the parties.

18. Given the size and nature of the accommodation, given the evidence of similar rental properties supplied by the tenant and the landlord, using its own knowledge of the area, the tribunal determines the rent at £1500.00 per month effective from the date of Notice of Increase.

19. The tenant made a case for hardship, and under the provisions of the Act, the tribunal can take this into account in setting the effective date of the rent increase. The tribunal determines that the rental increase should be effective from the date of hearing that is 7th December 2023.

Name: Chairman Waterhouse

Date: 7th December 2023

Rights of appeal

By rule 36(2) of the Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) Rules 2013, the tribunal is required to notify the parties about any right of appeal they may have.

If a party wishes to appeal this decision to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber), then a written application for permission must be made to the First-tier Tribunal at the regional office which has been dealing with the case.

The application for permission to appeal must arrive at the regional office within 28 days after the tribunal sends written reasons for the decision to the person making the application.

If the application is not made within the 28 day time limit, such application must include a request for an extension of time and the reason for not complying with the 28 day time limit; the tribunal will then look at such reason(s) and decide whether to allow the application for permission to appeal to proceed, despite not being within the time limit.

The application for permission to appeal must identify the decision of the tribunal to which it relates (i.e. give the date, the property and the case number), state the grounds of appeal and state the result the party making the application is seeking.

If the tribunal refuses to grant permission to appeal, a further application for permission may be made to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber).

THE LEGISLATION

Housing Act 1988

s.13.— Increases of rent under assured periodic tenancies.

(1) This section applies to—

(a) a statutory periodic tenancy other than one which, by virtue of paragraph 11 or paragraph 12 in Part I of Schedule 1 to this Act, cannot for the time being be an assured tenancy; and

(b) any other periodic tenancy which is an assured tenancy, other than one in relation to which there is a provision, for the time being binding on the tenant, under which the rent for a particular period of the tenancy will or may be greater than the rent for an earlier period.

(2) For the purpose of securing an increase in the rent under a tenancy to which this section applies, the landlord may serve on the tenant a notice in the prescribed form proposing a new rent to take effect at the beginning of a new period of the tenancy specified in the notice, being a period beginning not earlier than—

(a) the minimum period after the date of the service of the notice; and

(b) except in the case of a statutory periodic [tenancy—]

[

(i) in the case of an assured agricultural occupancy, the first anniversary of the date on which the first period of the tenancy began;

(ii) in any other case, on the date that falls 52 weeks after the date on which the first period of the tenancy began; and

]

(c) if the rent under the tenancy has previously been increased by virtue of a notice under this subsection or a determination under section 14[below—]

[

(i) in the case of an assured agricultural occupancy, the first anniversary of the date on which the increased rent took effect;

(ii) in any other case, the appropriate date.

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(3) The minimum period referred to in subsection (2) above is—

(a) in the case of a yearly tenancy, six months;

(b) in the case of a tenancy where the period is less than a month, one month; and

(c) in any other case, a period equal to the period of the tenancy.

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(3A) The appropriate date referred to in subsection (2)(c)(ii) above is—

(a) in a case to which subsection (3B) below applies, the date that falls 53 weeks after the date on which the increased rent took effect;

(b) in any other case, the date that falls 52 weeks after the date on which the increased rent took effect.

(3B) This subsection applies where—

(a) the rent under the tenancy has been increased by virtue of a notice under this section or a determination under section 14 below on at least one occasion after the coming into force of the Regulatory Reform (Assured Periodic Tenancies) (Rent Increases) Order 2003; and

(b) the fifty-third week after the date on which the last such increase took effect begins more than six days before the anniversary of the date on which the first such increase took effect.

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(4) Where a notice is served under subsection (2) above, a new rent specified in the notice shall take effect as mentioned in the notice unless, before the beginning of the new period specified in the notice,—

(a) the tenant by an application in the prescribed form refers the notice to [the appropriate tribunal] ; or

(b) the landlord and the tenant agree on a variation of the rent which is different from that proposed in the notice or agree that the rent should not be varied.

(5) Nothing in this section (or in section 14 below) affects the right of the landlord and the tenant under an assured tenancy to vary by agreement any term of the tenancy (including a term relating to rent).

s.14.— Determination of rent by [tribunal] .

(1) Where, under subsection (4)(a) of section 13 above, a tenant refers to [the appropriate tribunal] a notice under subsection (2) of that section, the [appropriate tribunal]³ shall determine the rent at which, subject to subsections (2) and (4) below, the [appropriate tribunal]³ 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.

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(3A) In making a determination under this section in any case where under Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 the landlord or a superior landlord is

liable to pay council tax in respect of a hereditament (“the relevant hereditament”) of which the dwelling-house forms part, the [appropriate tribunal] shall have regard to the amount of council tax which, as at the date on which the notice under section 13(2) above was served, was set by the billing authority—

- (a) for the financial year in which that notice was served, and
- (b) for the category of dwellings within which the relevant hereditament fell on that date,

but any discount or other reduction affecting the amount of council tax payable shall be disregarded.

(3B) In subsection (3A) above—

- (a) “*hereditament*” means a dwelling within the meaning of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992,
- (b) “*billing authority*” has the same meaning as in that Part of that Act, and
- (c) “*category of dwellings*” has the same meaning as in section 30(1) and (2) of that Act.

(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 of the dwelling-house concerned or are payable under separate agreements.

(5) Where any rates in respect of the dwelling-house concerned are borne by the landlord or a superior landlord, the [appropriate tribunal] shall make their determination under this section as if the rates were not so borne.

(6) In any case where—

- (a) [the appropriate tribunal] have before them at the same time the reference of a notice under section 6(2) above relating to a tenancy (in this subsection referred to as “the section 6 reference”) and the reference of a notice under section 13(2) above relating to the same tenancy (in this subsection referred to as “the section 13 reference”), and
- (b) the date specified in the notice under section 6(2) above is not later than the first day of the new period specified in the notice under section 13(2) above, and
- (c) the [appropriate tribunal]⁹ propose to hear the two references together, the [appropriate tribunal] shall make a determination in relation to the section 6 reference before making their determination in relation to the section 13 reference and, accordingly, in such a case the reference in

subsection (1)(c) above to the terms of the tenancy to which the notice relates shall be construed as a reference to those terms as varied by virtue of the determination made in relation to the section 6 reference.

(7) Where a notice under section 13(2) above has been referred to [the appropriate tribunal] , then, unless the landlord and the tenant otherwise agree, the rent determined by [the appropriate tribunal] (subject, in a case where subsection (5) above applies, to the addition of the appropriate amount in respect of rates) shall be the rent under the tenancy with effect from the beginning of the new period specified in the notice or, if it appears to [the appropriate tribunal] that that would cause undue hardship to the tenant, that that would cause undue hardship to the tenant, with effect from such later date (not being later than the date the rent is determined) as the committee may direct.

(8) Nothing in this section requires [the appropriate tribunal] to continue with their determination of a rent for a dwelling-house if the landlord and tenant give notice in writing that they no longer require such a determination or if the tenancy has come to an end.

(9) This section shall apply in relation to an assured shorthold tenancy as if in subsection (1) the reference to an assured tenancy were a reference to an assured shorthold tenancy.