



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

Case Reference : **MAM/LON/OOAW/F77/2023/0345**

Property : **16 Ovington Street, London SW3 2JB**

Tenant : **Duchess of St Albans**

Landlord : **Northumberland & Durham Property Trust
Ltd , C/O Grainger PLC**

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

Tribunal : **Mr R Waterhouse BSc (Hons) MA LLM
FRICS**

HMCTS Code : **Determination on papers only.**

Date of Decision : **10 May 2024**

Date of Statement of Reasons: **10 May 2024**

Statement of Reasons

Application for Permission to Appeal

The Tenant through their representative Mr P Northam, made an Application for permission to appeal received on the 3 June 2024. Two grounds were cited the first that the Tribunal has given insufficient weight to the fact the Tenant is responsible for all repairs and second that the Tribunal was not in possession of a document namely a Reply form completed by the Tenant that had been submitted to the Tribunal.

Rule 53(1) of the Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) 2013 provides that on receiving an Application for permission to appeal the Tribunal must first consider, taking into account the overriding objective in rule 3, whether to review the decision in accordance with rule 55 (review of a decision).

Rule 55(1) provides that the Tribunal may only undertake a review of a decision—

- (a) pursuant to rule 53 (review on an Application for permission to appeal); and
- (b) if it is satisfied that a ground of appeal is likely to be successful.

We are satisfied that the grounds of appeal were likely to be successful.

Decision

1. The decision of the tribunal is that a fair rent of **£7200.00 per quarter** , is determined with an effective date of **10 May 2024**.

Background

2. An Application was made to re-register a fair rent, dated **28 June 2023**, by the landlord of the property **Northumberland & Durham Property Trust Ltd**, proposing a fair rent of **£7350 per quarter**. Prior to the Application to re-register a fair rent, the Rent Officer had registered a rent of **£6125.00 per quarter** , with effect from **19 September 2021**.

3. Subsequently the Rent Officer registered a fair rent of **£6300.00 per quarter** with effect from **19 September 2023**.

4. In an email of **12 September 2024**, the landlord objected to the rent registered and the matter was referred to the First –tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) (Residential Property).

5. Directions were issued by the Tribunal on the **13 November 2023** and amended **12 December 2023**. Thereafter, the Directions made provision for the filing with the Tribunal of the parties' respective written submissions and, in particular, for the completion of a reply form giving details of the Property and including any further comments the parties wished the Tribunal to take into account in making its determination.

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

6. The Tribunal did not inspect the property. The property comprises a terraced house, with full central heating comprising, in the basement one room and a kitchen, on the ground floor one room and a WC, on the first floor 2 rooms and a bathroom WC, on the second floor one attic store.

Relevant Law

7. 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.

Submissions

Landlord

8. No submissions from the landlord were received, other than the Application to Register a Fair Rent and the Objection to the rent registered. The Application noted at box 11 that the Tenant was responsible for all repairs internal external and decorations, and that the tenancy had commenced in 1975.

Tenant

9. The Tenant's representative Mr Peter Northam completed a Reply Form. This was supplied to the Tribunal at the date of the first determination but not made available to the Tribunal at the date of the determination. The Reply Form was available at the date of the subsequent determination. The Reply Form noted that neither an inspection nor a hearing was requested. The property is partially centrally heated, and that the central heating was provided by the landlord, the kitchen not having a radiator. There is no double glazing, and that carpets and curtains were supplied by the Tenant. Improvements carried out by the Tenant comprise a new WC installed in 1992 and the boiler being replaced by the Tenant. Finally, from the Reply Form the Tenant notes that access to the attic is via a ladder which is said to be a hazard this makes access effectively unusable.

The Determination

10. The property was not inspected.

Reasons for Decision

11. The rent to be determined must reflect the condition found on the date of the hearing disregarding all Tenants' improvements.

12. 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.

13. 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 the rent was **£5000 per month or £15,000 per quarter** if let on a contemporary assured shorthold basis.

14. The Property is not , as let, 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 20% 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.

The calculation

15. The rent prior to adjustment for condition, terms and scarcity;

£15,000 per quarter

Less 20% condition (as let in 1975)

Less £3000 per quarter

£ 12,000 per quarter

Less 25% for terms and supplied goods inc white goods and repairing obligations

£3000 per quarter

£9,000 per quarter

Less 20% for scarcity.

£1800 per quarter

17. The rent after this final adjustment was **£7200 per quarter.**

Rent Acts (Maximum Fair Rent) Order 1999

18. The rent to be registered is not limited by the Rent Acts (Maximum Fair Rent Order) 1999. The rent calculated in accordance with the Order is **£7907.50 per quarter.** This figure is higher than the figure calculated by reference to the market rent with adjustments, of **£7200.00 per quarter.**

19. Accordingly, the sum of **£7200.00 per quarter will** be registered as the fair rent with effect from **10 May 2024**, being the date of the Tribunal’s decision.

Valuer Chair: Richard Waterhouse FRICS

Decision Date: 10 May 2024 reviewed

Extended reasons: 10 May 2024 reviewed

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.

