

	FIRST - TIER TRIBUNAL PROPERTY CHAMBER (RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY)
Case Reference	BIR/31UG/MRA/2026/0019
Property	Highfield Cottage, Main Street, Freeby , Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE14 2RZ
Tenants	Carolyn Vale & Mark Goodman
Tenants' Representative	None
Landlord	The Rt. Hon Robert Richard Guy Baron Alvingham
Landlord's Address	c/0 Rural Insight Land & Development, 4 Burrough Court, Burrough-on-the- Hill, Leicestershire LE14 2QS
Landlord's Representative	Rural Insight Land & Development
Date of Application	1 July 2026
Type of Application	Determination of a Market Rent sections 13 & 14 of the Housing Act 1988
Tribunal Members	Colin Green (Legal Chairman) Andy Churchill BSc, MRICS (Valuer Member)
Date of Decision	14 September 2026
Rent Determined	£1,450.00 per calendar month
Date the new rent takes effect	1 October 2026

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Background

1. Under a tenancy agreement between the parties dated 7 July 2025, an assured tenancy was granted of the Property for a term of one year from the date of the agreement. The rental period is monthly with the rent payable in advance on the first day of each month. Under s. 4A of the Housing Act 1988 (as amended) the tenancy will have been converted to a monthly periodic tenancy from 1 May 2026.
2. On 18 June 2026, the Landlord served a notice under Section 13(2) of the Housing Act 1988 (as amended) which proposed a new rent of £1,525.00 per calendar month (pcm) in place of the existing rent of £1,400.00 pcm to take effect from 1 September 2025.
3. On 1 July 2026, under Section 14 (A3) of the Housing Act 1988, the Tenants referred the Landlord's notice proposing a new rent to the Tribunal for determination of an open-market rent.

Allocation of Repairs between Landlord and Tenant

4. As per the tenancy agreement and section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Services Charges or furniture provided by Landlord (other than any carpets and curtain and white goods specified below) and the costs relating to the same

5. There is a variable service charge in respect of chimney sweeping, currently £80.00 per annum. Under s. 14(4) of the 1988 Act the market rent determined by the Tribunal will not include such service charge.

Liability for Council Tax

6. The Tenant is responsible for the payment of Council Tax in respect of the Property. The rent determined is exclusive of Council Tax.

Any other terms of the tenancy taken into consideration in determining the rent

7. None.

Hearing & Inspection

8. Neither party requested an oral hearing or an inspection. The Tribunal is satisfied that it can properly consider this case based on the papers provided by the parties and its own knowledge and specialist expertise.

The Property

9. The Property is a is an end of terrace property, offering the following accommodation:

Internally:

Ground Floor

- Entrance Hall
- Open plan kitchen diner with log burning stove, range cooker, integrated dishwasher, integrated fridge & plumbing for a washing machine. French doors open to south facing patio & garden
- Living Room with log burning stove
- Downstairs cloakroom
- Stairs leading to the First Floor

First Floor

- Landing
- Double Bedroom (1)
- Double Bedroom (2)

- Bathroom with bath & separate walk in shower
- Stairs leading the Second Floor

Second Floor

- Double Bedroom (3)
- Storage Eaves

Externally

- Large south facing garden.
- Patio area
- Large brick-built outbuilding with electricity
- Off street parking

Evidence

10. The parties completed the relevant MR1 (Tenant), MR2 (Landlord) and MR3 (Tenant's reply) forms.
11. As regards the condition of the Property, no issues were raised by the Tenants, save for the following two matters:
 - a) The separate shower in the bathroom is less than adequate. It is unclear what is meant by this: is it the size of the shower, the water pressure, or the temperature?
 - b) Wifi: the Tenants can no longer work from home, as the speed is between 2-20 mbps. It is unclear if this is a reference to the internet feed over the telephone line to the router in the Property, or the wi-fi signal from the router around the Property. If the former, presumably other properties in the area will suffer from

this. If the latter, slow speeds can usually be remedied by a booster and/or additional wi-fi discs within the Property.

12. The Landlord supplied a detailed inventory with photographs dated 25 July 2025, which contains the following summary:

Schedule of Condition & Cleanliness Summary	
Property in general	
Summary of Cleanliness	Good domestic clean
Decorative Order	Good / Fair condition
Carpets and Flooring	Good condition
Windows	Good condition
Doors	Good condition
Curtains / Blinds / Nets	Good condition
Woodwork	Good condition
Lights / Shades	Good condition

13. No issue has been taken with this by the Tenants, and the Tribunal concludes that the above summary remains correct.
14. Concerning comparables, the Tenants makes the following observations. They object to the proposed rent increase on the basis that it exceeds the market rent for the Property. The proposed increase from £1,400.00 to £1,525.00 is £125.00 pcm, being an increase of approximately 8.93 percent. The Property is situated in a village with very limited amenities. There are no shops, schools, or comparable local services. This adversely affects its rental value. Comparable properties in the Melton Mowbray and Vale of Belvoir area, including Waltham on the Wolds and Woolsthorpe, are in superior locations with better local amenities and infrastructure. In neighbouring villages with shops and schools, three-bedroom semi-detached properties with features such as fast broadband and gas central heating are available at around £1,200.00 per month. By contrast, the Property is less attractive to the market because it lacks those local amenities and relies on oil heating, which is materially more expensive to run. The cost of filling the oil tank has increased significantly, from about £600.00 to about £1,200.00. The Tenants also understand that other three-bedroom,

one-bathroom properties on the same estate are rented at around £1,200.00 per month. Those are strong comparables for the purpose of assessing market rent. The Property was also initially marketed at a higher rent and remained available for a substantial period before being let, which indicates that the earlier asking price was above market level. In the circumstances, the proposed rent of £1,525.00 pcm is above the open market rental value for the Property and the Tribunal is asked to determine a lower market rent consistent with comparable properties in the area and on the same estate. The figure suggested is £1,350.00 pcm.

15. The Tenants rely on the following asking rents for comparables taken from Rightmove, all three-bedroom houses unless stated otherwise:

- a) Watt Avenue, Colsterworth, Grantham, at £1,00.00 pcm;
- b) High Street, Waltham on the Wolds, at £1,100.00 pcm;
- c) Melton Road, Waltham on the Wolds (detached bungalow), at £1,150.00 pcm;
- d) Launder Street, Orston, Nottingham, at £1,150.00 pcm;
- e) Edmonthorpe Road, Wymondham, Melton Mowbray (two bedrooms), at £1,250.00 pcm;
- f) Church Street, Cropwell Bishop, Nottingham, at £1,300.00 pcm;
- g) Paulson Close, Frisby on the Wreake, at £1,350.00 pcm;
- h) Main Street, Freeby, Melton Mowbray, at £1,500.00 pcm.

16. The Tenants also state that the last property is a detached house with an asking rent of £1,500.00 pcm, which is lower than the rent being requested for the semi-detached house they currently occupy. They do not feel that direct comparisons within the village are entirely fair, as much of the housing there is owned by the same estate, which appears to set its own rental levels. In

addition, the current rent is already proving difficult for some residents in the area. Their neighbours, for example, have decided to leave because the cost has become too high, and they also pay an additional £70.00 per month for grass cutting.

17. In addition, the Tenants have relied on a further property recently listed on Rightmove, on Main Street, Freeby, apparently known as “Spring Villa”. They state that council tax is a band D and the asking price is £1,100.00 for a three-bedroom, one bathroom property, which is £425.00 less than the Landlord’s proposed rent increase for a similar property in the same road. The Landlord has responded that Spring Villa was last refurbished in 2005 and is dated, provides no off-road parking, there is one bathroom (downstairs) with a shower over the bath, a small kitchen, two double bedrooms, and one single bedroom, no fridge, no dishwasher, and EPC (E).
18. The Landlord’s comparables are set out in the following two tables, with commentary:

Rental Comparables in the Freeby Village			
Property	Brief Description	Condition	Rent (pcm)
Highfield Cottage	3-bedroom semi-detached cottage, south facing garden, off street parking, open plan kitchen diner, living room, cloakroom, no. 3 double bedrooms bathroom with bath & separate shower. Outbuilding.	The property has been refurbished & renovated in recent years and has been finished to a high standard.	£1,525 (proposed)
No. 1 Primrose Cottage	3-bedroom semi-detached cottage, south facing garden, off street parking, open plan kitchen diner, living room, cloakroom, no. 3 double bedrooms bathroom with bath & separate shower. Outbuilding. Property is identical to Highfield Cottage	The property has been refurbished & renovated in recent years (at the same time as Highfield Cottage) and has been finished to a high standard.	£1,450.00 (Let in November 2024, has been reviewed upwards, annually, in line with inflation. Inflationary Figure to date = £1,540.00)
Laburnum Cottage	3-bedroom detached cottage, south facing garden, off street parking, utility room, kitchen, living room, dining room, small reception room, no. 2 double bedrooms, no. 1 single bedroom, bathroom.	Internally the property is dated, particularly the kitchen and bathroom. No downstairs cloakroom. No external storage.	£1,500 – Let Agreed Subject to Contract (July 2026)
Woodbine Cottage	2-bedroom semi-detached cottage, south facing garden, off street parking, small utility room, kitchen diner, living room, , no. 1 double bedroom, no. 1 single bedroom, bathroom.	The property has been refurbished & renovated in recent years and has been finished to a high standard.	£1,200 (Let in April 2026)
Brook Cottage	3-bedroom semi-detached cottage, garden, off street parking, kitchen diner, living room, bathroom, no. 1 double bedroom, no. 2 single bedrooms.	The property has been refurbished & renovated in recent years and has been finished to a high standard. Downstairs bathroom only, the garden is however exposed and visible from Main Street.	£1,200 (Let in June 2026)

No. 1 Primrose is identical to Highfield Cottage, having been refurbished at the same time using the same contractors and materials. Arguably the garden at No. 1 Primrose is slightly more exposed than Highfield Cottage, however provides a direct comparable, having been Let in November 2024 for £1,450 and has subsequently been reviewed upwards and agreed by the existing Tenants.

Other Comparable Evidence

We have also had regard to comparable evidence in the surrounding villages to Freeby. We have had particular regard to the property at Edmondthorpe Road, Wymondham. Having been let at £1,620, the property has been renovated to a very similar standard to Highfield Cottage. Please see further details & other comparable evidence below.

Rental Comparables in Surrounding Villages			
Property	Brief Description	Condition	Rent (pcm)
Main Street, Wymondham	3-bedroom detached cottage, garden, kitchen diner, living room, utility room, cloakroom, study, no. 3 double bedrooms, no. 3 bathrooms	The property is in good condition. The property has the benefit of two additional bedrooms, a utility room & study.	£1,750 (Let Agreed June 2026)
Edmondthorpe Road, Wymondham	3 bedroom mid-terraced cottage, garden, off- street parking, kitchen diner, living room, small study, no. 2 double bedrooms, no. 1 single bedroom, bathroom.	The property has been recently been refurbished, the property has no cloakroom, external storage and only no. 2 double bedrooms	£1,620 (Let Agreed June 2026)
The Row, Stapleford	3 bedroom end of terraced cottage, garden, off-street parking, living room, no. 2 double bedrooms no. 1 single bedrooms, bathroom.	Internally the property is dated throughout. No wood burning stoves, only no. 2 double bedrooms. Would benefit from modernisation.	£1,250 (Let Agreed January 2026)
Sycamore Lane, Wymondham	3 bedroom end of terraced cottage, small patio garden, kitchen diner, living room, no. 1 double bedroom, no. 2 single bedrooms, bathroom. Small outbuilding.	The property is in good condition. No off street parking available, small garden, only no. 1 double bedrooms.	£1,200 (Let Agreed October 2025)
Hall Lane, Eastwell	3 bedroom detached cottage, small courtyard garden, off street parking, kitchen diner, living room, cloakroom, no. 3 double bedrooms, no. 1 with ensuite shower, bathroom. Outbuilding	The property is in good condition. No oven provided. Does benefit from a ensuite.	£1,550 (Currently Advertised)

We remain of the view that £1,525.00 is an appropriate Market Rent. The Estate has been managed by James Brown at Rural Insight Land & Development for c. 20 years. Both James and I are Chartered Surveyors and RICS Registered Valuer and therefore confirm we have the relevant experience to undertake this review.

19. The Tenants responded in respect of Laburnum Cottage as follows. Although it is a detached house, recently decorated with an outbuilding, and located approximately 50 meters from the Property it is in Council Tax band E compared to the Property, which is in Council Tax band C. This is available to rent at £1,500.00 pcm and added to Rightmove on 9 June 2026. As of 3 August, it was still listed as available to rent, although this is not inconsistent with the Landlord's statement that as 28 July 2026 a let had been agreed at £1,500.00, subject to contract. An advertised letting will not be removed until a tenancy agreement has been signed. As the Property is an end-terrace house in a lower

council tax band, the Tenants do not believe that an increase to £1,525.00 is justified or reasonable.

20. In respect of No. 1 Primrose Cottage, the Landlord has updated matters. The tenants of that property have given notice as they are purchasing another property, and No 1 Primrose Cottage is currently on the market for £1,550.00 pcm. It is stated that it is a mirror image of the Property with identical kitchen and appliances, bathroom, multi-fuel stoves, two reception rooms, three bedrooms, off-road parking, a private secluded garden etc.
21. The Tenants' response is that they agree the properties are similar, but do not agree that the rent sought for No. 1 Primrose is a fair reflection of the market. The Property was previously advertised at £1,500.00 pcm but after discussion the asking rent was reduced to £1,400.00 which was acceptable to the Tenants. This shows that the initial advertised figure was not necessarily the true market rent and reductions may be made where the asking rent is considered too high.

Determination and Valuation

22. Under section 14(1) of the Housing Act 1988 (as amended), the Tribunal is required to determine the rent at which the Property might reasonably be expected to let in the open market by a willing Landlord at the beginning of the new period specified in the Landlord's notice. Relevant Tenants' improvements or failure of the Tenants to comply with the terms of the tenancy are to be disregarded. Historic issues relating to the tenancy or the personal circumstances of the Landlord are not taken into account. The personal circumstances of the Tenants are only considered in respect of the date of commencement of the new rent if an application for hardship has been made.
23. In the Tribunal's view, the best comparables to the Property are those from Freeby village itself, in particular No. 1 Primrose Cottage, which the Tenants agree is similar, though the asking rent is not an achieved rent. This is a fair observation and the Tribunal accepts that the rent could be negotiated down from £1,550.00 by £100.00 to £1,450.00. The Tribunal considers that the market rental of the Property modernised and in good order would be in the order of that figure.

24. The Tribunal is not minded to make any deductions in respect of the matters mentioned in paragraph 11 above as there is insufficient information and they are not considered value-significant in respect of a market rent.

Undue Hardship

25. The new rent takes effect from the date which is the beginning of the first new period of the tenancy which begins on or after the date of the determination (here, 1 October 2026) unless that would cause undue hardship to the Tenants. In cases of undue hardship, the Tribunal has a discretion to fix a later starting date up to two months after it makes its determination (here, up to 14 November 2026).
26. The Tenants have claimed they will be caused undue hardship because, with an increase in heating, oil and electricity hitting an all-time high (they cannot pay for oil in instalments) and with an unreasonable increase in rent, they will find it increasingly difficult to afford the hike in cost of living. They wanted to spend the rest of their lives in the Property but will have no choice but to move if they cannot have a reasonable rent.
27. The Landlord responded to the issue of undue hardship as follows. Reliance is placed on referencing reports undertaken in June 2025 for both Tenants. The Landlord is unaware of any change in circumstances since the tenancy commenced. It is understood that the Tenants own their own let residential property but accepted that there is no reference to this within the reports at the time the tenancy agreement was entered into.
28. As a result of the Tribunal's decision, the rent will increase by £50.00 pcm. Based on the figures in the Income and Affordability checks, which the Tenants have not claimed are now unreliable, the Tribunal does not consider that for the increase to take effect from 1 October 2026 would cause undue hardship.

Decision

29. Therefore, the Tribunal determines the new rent at £1,450.00 pcm with effect from 1 October 2026 as this is lower than the proposed rent of £1,525.00 pcm. The rent is net of the service charge for chimney sweep services.

APPEAL PROVISIONS

If either party is dissatisfied with this decision, they may apply for permission to appeal to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) on any point of law arising from this Decision. Prior to making such an appeal, an application must be made, in writing, to this Tribunal for permission to appeal. Any such application must be made within 28 days of the issue of this statement of reasons (regulation 52 (2) of The Tribunal Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) Rules 2013) stating the grounds upon which it is intended to rely in the appeal.