



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

Case Reference : **CHI/29UM/MNR/2021/0012**

Property : **17 Homeview
Sittingbourne
Kent
ME10 3NE**

Applicant : **Ms J Gifford**

Representative : **None**

Respondent : **Mr M and Mrs C Goldhawk**

Representative : **None**

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

Tribunal Members : **Mr I R Perry BSc FRICS
Ms C D Barton BSc MRICS
Mr J S Reichel BSc MRICS**

Date of Inspection : **None, case decided on papers**

Date of Decision : **10th May 2021**

DECISION

Summary of Decision

1. On 10th May 2021 the Tribunal determined a market rent of £780 per month to take effect from 20th April 2021.

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 9th January 2021 the Landlord served a notice under Section 13(2) Landlord and Tenant Act 1988 increasing the rent with effect from 20th March 2021.
4. On examination the Tribunal took the preliminary view that this notice was defective as it was not signed by the Landlord.
5. On 15th March 2021 the Landlord served a second notice under Section 13(2) of the Housing Act 1988 which proposed a new rent of £850 per month in place of the existing rent of £725 per month to take effect from 20th April 2021. The notice complied with the legal requirements.
6. The Coronavirus pandemic and considerations of health have caused a suspension of inspections and Tribunal hearings in person until further notice.
7. The Tribunal issued directions on 7th April 2021 informing the parties that it deemed the Applicant to have objected to the Notice and that 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 had been copied to the other parties.

The property

9. From the information given in the papers and available on the internet the property comprises an inner-terraced house built flush to the front pavement. It is situated in a cul-de-sac less than one mile from the centre of Sittingbourne with access to all main amenities.
10. The accommodation is described as including a Living Room, Dining Room, Kitchen, three Bedrooms (one walk through), Bathroom and rear Garden. Windows are double-glazed and there is gas-fired central heating.
11. Carpets are included but the Applicant supplies the white goods.

Submissions

12. The initial tenancy began in April 2011.
13. The Tenant has replaced a bathroom cabinet and carried out some redecoration where walls have shown evidence of damp. The Landlord has taken steps to remedy the dampness.
14. The Landlord referred the Tribunal to rents achieved for other properties in Sittingbourne.

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 to 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 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 Sittingbourne the Tribunal decided that the market rent for a property with similar accommodation if let today in a condition that was usual for such an open market letting would be £900 per month.
18. The Tribunal decided that an adjustment to this rent should be made to reflect the difficult parking in such a narrow street where the house stands flush to the pavement. Further deductions should be made to reflect that one bedroom is accessed through another room and that the Applicant provides the white goods.
19. Using its experience the Tribunal decided that the following adjustments should be made:

Tenant's provision of white goods	£45
Access to bedroom through another room	£50
Narrow street and parking	£25
TOTAL	<u>£120</u>

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 £780 per month.
22. The Tribunal directed that the new rent of £780 per month should take effect from 20th April 2021 this being the date specified in the Notice.

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.