

## Written evidence submitted by Alex Shinder to The Renters' Rights Public Bill Committee (RRB18).

1. I believe that there will be too big and too sudden a withdrawal of private landlords in the PRS with the discretionary ASB grounds ; if LA licensing continues when landlords are required to join a redress scheme and when fines increase; and when rent increases are dated from the FTT hearing .
2. **Introduction and how I am affected** My name is Alex Shinder and I am 65 years old. I write as a small landlord with 10 lets whose family has been in renting residential property in Camden for 70 years at the highest professional standard we can deliver. My tenants are a mix including retired people who have been with us for many years and professional and business people staying just a few years in London and while here contributing massively to our economy. Tenants' satisfaction levels are very high as shown in the appendix. If someone like me is concerned about the changes as one of the least impacted operating at the premium end and a very good landlord then almost all landlords will be at least as concerned. **As a result of the changes I will sell a development I am doing which would have increased my business by about 20pc and rather than rent it out to perhaps six renters to 3 owner occupiers (half to 60pc the number of people) and I will do no more development. I will also be more careful in my tenant selection to ensure that my loss of control impacts my business least. If minor antisocial behaviour becomes an issue I can't deal with I will retire and sell. Equally if I fail one of the innumerable regulations and get fined disproportionately I will also sell up. I will seek at that point to maximise my consideration.**
3. **Importance of small landlords to the sector** I think you should not be too dismissive of small landlords. We represent 70% by number of landlords and 30% of rentals. We also offer higher utility than larger landlords as we offer collectively more choice and a better service than can be provided by large organisations. We also employ less well qualified people than big business and often very local people too so we help our local economies. We also can be mobilised as investors. Individuals make little difference but collectively a vast amount. In summary we will become more risk averse and take far greater care in choosing tenants; and will not invest in more stock.
4. **Only net investment will result in more property being available** . This last point of para 3 might be of particular interest. Distinguishing between need and demand; demand has funding and need may not -resulting in no investment. Both demand and need are required to get things going . Funding comes form social housing capital budgets which have in recent years been negative and will remain at best weak; owner occupiers and in particular first time buyers who provide a steady stream in an economy with no productivity growth; and thirdly investors who are the key variable in this mix. By focussing on BTR and eliminating the desire of millions of smaller investors to make direct investments you end up with a few large schemes that will take years; upset a lot of neighbours or equivalent; and a product customers have to put up with rather than what they want. You also remove the accelerator on local business and vast amounts of shorter term supply of new build from small landlords.

- 5. Removing levers to stop minor anti-social behaviour will make letting much harder and more stressful and result in some exits.** I am concerned in my top end offering if a tenant indicates a low level of antisocial behaviour which I will no longer be empowered to stop. Let's say a tenant smokes (illegal in common parts); plays loud music; is sloppy with refuse ; parks in someone else's space and annoys neighbours in a block. As I have the ultimate sanction of being able to dismiss the tenant without a third party deciding for me I can stop the behaviour. It doesn't get to the level of a threat but the fact that it could is important. The anti-social practices stop immediately when I have the final say. I have gently nudged many tenants over the years to behave in a tenant like manner and have never had to threaten them. I fully understand that you want to stop landlord power abuse but a fairer balance would entail a lower evidence bar. Afterall most minor anti-social behaviour will not go to court, or if it does it shouldn't and at any rate there is gridlock in the courts. In owner occupied properties there are RTM companies that can stop minor anti-social behaviour for the reduction of harm to the majority. There is a parallel with redundancy of people in businesses; many bosses don't make employees redundant but if you take away the right to dismiss nobody would hire and the smaller businesses would fail straightaway. I understand that I won't win this argument but you could modify your proposal to at least provide some degree of comfort. Mediation is scant comfort with the balance of power resting with the tenant. How about a majority decision from occupants of a block or a scale of compensation to such a tenant you want to evict for minor ASB much as you might pay someone you were making redundant?
  
- 6. Compliance cost combined with fines will be unsustainable for small landlords. When they exit they sell to owner occupiers not other landlords in the main.** There is a disproportionate compliance cost of being a small landlord as you need to know as much about practice as someone who can leverage resource over a large portfolio. You are now likely to have to pay both a local authority for a license and a fee to a redress scheme covering much the same ground. Fines of £40,000 and RROs of 2 years are no doubt going to incentivise LAs to deploy more resource on investigation and enforcement. Small landlords have no leverage with LAs and the speed at which this is coming down the pipe is likely to mean some landlords will be caught completely unawares. Bear in mind the existing regime of ASTs has been in place more or less since 1988. The existing style of doing business has been around for more than 30 years and is the way of doing things. All change by next Summer is a tall order. Large landlords are able to dedicate resources to all of this and rogue landlords who flout the law by remaining in the shadows are going to continue to do so. Nothing in this legislation will change that. So the soft target will be the small landlord attempting to provide an excellent and personal service who has so many trip wires they will as a result, exit.
  
- 7. Rent reviews will become adversarial and make this a miserable business to be in.** This brings me on to the issue of rent tribunals. The bill is designed to encourage tenants to challenge rent increases. So with notice going up from one to two months and it taking say four months for a hearing probably it is expected that a rent review can only take place after six months. Then only after the determination does the clock reset for the next twelve month period (effectively losing 6 months potentially each year if it is

abused by the tenant). Thus rent controls are not being avoided completely nor therefore some of their adverse consequences. What concerns me more is the encouragement of an adversarial relationship from what has been quite a close and cooperative one that professional small landlords value greatly. The satisfaction factor of serving a tenant should not be underestimated. This factor is diluted with larger landlords where the relationship is more impersonal. I believe the testimonials shown in the appendix underline the point.

8. **Recommendation** My recommendation is that these matters need addressing to provide a more practical balance of the needs of renters and landlords and to encourage investment from a large number of small investors who can produce rapid and dramatic impact. Small landlords like many other small businesses can make a huge difference to the economy if they invest which is in the national interest versus if they withdraw.

Yours faithfully

Alex Shinder

#### **Appendix references (names only redacted)**

"Alex was exceptional throughout all the years we rented from him—personable, communicative, and always going above and beyond to support his tenants. His genuine care for both the property and the people living in it is truly commendable. I highly recommend him"

"Renting from Alex was an outstanding experience, especially during the challenging COVID period when his support was remarkable. On the few occasions we needed assistance, he responded immediately, always attentive to both the tenants' needs and the flat. Even after all these years, we've kept in touch, which speaks to the lasting impression he's made."

From 2016 to 2023, we were tenants in one of Alex's properties. The length of our stay says it all. Great flat in a beautiful house that was well kept and well maintained. Great, responsive landlord.

"We rented a house from Alex during the years 2017 to 2022. Prior to this we had spent many years in the rental market so have had the experience of both good and not so good landlords. Hand on heart Alex ranks number one as our favourite landlord because he genuinely cared not

only about his properties but also about us the tenants and our enjoyment during our stay. We had very few issues during our rental period because Alex's ensured that the property was ready for new tenants and also spotlessly clean, it was like moving into a new home. If anything did arise during our time as things do in a house, then Alex was incredibly efficient at dealing with things immediately. Always polite and respectful it was by far our best experience of renting."

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We had the pleasure of living in two of Alex's flats for three years, and we couldn't have asked for a better landlord or living experience. Alex's apartments are of exceptional quality, with top-notch finishes that made our time there comfortable and enjoyable.

What stood out the most was Alex's responsiveness and pragmatic approach. Whenever we had any issue, no matter how small, he ensured that it was resolved promptly. His team was always on hand, arriving quickly to investigate and address any concerns, which gave us peace of mind throughout our stay.

Alex, along with his entire family, are incredibly kind and welcoming. They created a warm, supportive atmosphere, making us feel valued as tenants. Moreover, Alex carefully selects tenants, which helps to maintain a positive, and respectful environment for everyone living in the building.

We feel fortunate to have lived in Alex's properties and highly recommend him as a landlord.

Sincerely,

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I have lived in two gorgeous properties owned by Alex between the beginning of 2009 to 2012 in the first and then to the end of 2014 in the second. I have fond memories of both, and am grateful for his facilitation of an important family transition from a larger property on the Heath to an apartment across the borough. The first house was wonderfully positioned by the heath; we loved the design, the garden, and atmosphere, all were perfectly suited to our needs. When it came time to downsize we ended up in a wonderful garden apartment on the other side of Hampstead. Alex made sure it was freshly painted before we moved in, and helped me with the move by temporarily offering a garage for storage. He looked after us really well throughout our tenure at both of his houses, and always acted in our best interest.

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**October 2024.**