IN THE VALUATION TRIBUNAL FOR ENGLAND
IN THE MATTER OF A 2023 RATING LIST APPEAL

Case No: CHG101272938

Sitting remotely using
Microsoft Teams on
24 August 2026

Date: 18 September 2026

SCHEDULE 11 TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988

2023 Rating List Appeal: Local Government Finance Act 1988; accuracy of the rateable value in the list as at 1 April 2023; office and premises; rental evidence; comparable assessments; appeal allowed.

Before:

MS A KALU
MS TM BLADES

Between:

SEPURA LIMITED **Appellant**

- and -

KAREN GILES
(VALUATION OFFICER) **Respondent**

Regarding:

SEPURA PLC 9000, CAMBRIDGE RESEARCH PARK, BEACH DRIVE, CAMBRIDGE CB25 9TL
(the "subject property")

Mr O Plumley, of Ryan Group for the **Appellant**
Ms M Brigden for the **Respondent**
Mr S Taylor Witness of Fact for the **Respondent**

DECISION AND STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION

1. The appeal is allowed.

2. The panel determined the rateable value (RV) of the subject hereditament to be £1,200,000 with effect from 1 April 2023.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Introduction

3. This appeal has been brought in respect of Sepura Plc 9000, Cambridge Research Park, Beach Drive, Cambridge CB25 9TL (the “subject property”), which was entered in the 2023 rating list as ‘offices and premises’ at RV £1,280,000 effective from 1 April 2023.

4. In accordance with regulation 13A of the Non-Domestic Rating (Alteration of Lists and Appeals) (England) Regulations 2009, an appeal was made to the Valuation Tribunal for England (VTE) on behalf of Sepura Limited. The appeal was made because the appellant did not agree with the Valuation Officer’s decision not to alter the 2023 rating list following the challenge. The appellant originally sought a reduction to RV £1,020,000 with effect from 1 April 2023, prior to the hearing he amended his valuation to £1,200,000.

5. The appellant’s representative, Mr Plumley, when appearing as expert witness, stated that he was on a conditional fee arrangement. However, he also stated that he understood and accepted that his first duty was to the VTE in giving his evidence, whether or not the evidence supported his client’s case.

6. The panel accepted this expert witness evidence on the above basis as the appeal is not complex and to do otherwise would be contrary to regulation 3 (Discharge of VTE functions – general) of the Valuation Tribunal for England (Council Tax and Rating Appeals) (Procedure) Regulations 2009 and is allowable due to the Tribunal’s rules on admissibility of evidence (regulation 17(2)(a) where the Tribunal can admit evidence whether or not it would be admissible in a civil trial).

7. It was therefore appropriate for the panel to consider the ‘expert’ evidence and assess what weight, if any, to give it in the context of the matters in issue before it.

8. Ms Brigden stated that she was appearing as both advocate and expert witness.

9. This statement of reasons is not and does not purport to be a full verbatim record of proceedings.

Background

10. The subject property is a modern purpose-built office in Cambridge Research Park; it was constructed in 2000 and grouped within the same scheme as similar office buildings. It has an area of 5890.3m^2.

11. The appeal to the VTE was made on the grounds that the valuation for the subject property was not reasonable.

12. The base level of value adopted for the subject property was not agreed. The Valuation Officer had adopted £230.00/m^2. In making the proposal the appellant's representative had sought a base rate of £183.42/m^2 resulting in an RV of £1,020,000. However, having reconsidered the valuation Mr Plumley sought a reduction to £215.00/m^2 in his revised analysis which resulted in an RV of £1,200,000.

Relevant Law

13. The term 'rateable value' is defined in Schedule 6 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended):

"The rateable value of a non-domestic hereditament (none of which consists of domestic property and none of which is exempt from local non-domestic rating) shall be taken to be an amount equal to the rent at which it is estimated the hereditament might reasonably be expected to let from year to year on these three assumptions –

a) the first assumption is that the tenancy begins on the day by reference to which the determination is to be made;

b) the second assumption is that immediately before the tenancy begins the hereditament is in a state of reasonable repair, but excluding from this assumption any repairs which a reasonable landlord would consider uneconomic;

c) the third assumption is that the tenant undertakes to pay all usual tenant's rates and taxes and to bear the cost of the repairs and insurance and the other expenses (if any) necessary to maintain the hereditament in a state to command the rent mentioned above".

Discussion

14. The panel had to determine the rateable value for the subject property, which represented a rent that a hypothetical landlord and tenant would agree, as at the AVD, 1 April 2021. This common date was used to ensure that every property was treated in a consistent way.

15. The Lands Tribunal judgment in *Lotus and Delta* v *Culverwell (VO) and Leicester City Council* [1976] RA 141 provided authoritative guidance on the weight to be attached to rental and assessment evidence. The rent on the subject property was considered to be the correct starting point but, where available, rents on similar properties were also to be taken into account. The assessments on other comparable properties may also be relevant. All of the evidence could then be weighted.

16. The panel noted that in this appeal the subject property was held on a lease originally effective from July 2015, following a rent review in July 2020, the rent had been agreed at £1,339,730 per annum. This was an index led rent review nearly a year prior to the AVD and consequently Mr Plumley had attached no weight to this rental evidence. Ms Brigden argued that the initial lease agreement provided for the subject rent to be reviewed at open market or 3% cap per annum, whichever being the lower amount. As the rent review was an index led rent, she contended that the 3% cap had been applied meaning the open market rent would have been higher than the £1,339,730 effective from 1 July 2020. The panel was aware that this rent review was based on a lease agreed in 2015 and may not reflect the open market conditions at the AVD, it therefore attached only moderate weight to this evidence.

17. In making his submission Mr Plumley argued that the subject property which has an area of 5890.30m^2 is by far the largest property on the research park by approximately 4,100m^2. All of the properties in Cambridge Research Park had been applied the same base rate which was £230/m^2. Mr Plumley argued that in the case of the subject property quantum should be applied because the other properties were significantly smaller ranging from 238.95m^2 to 1692.78m^2. He stated that quantum had been applied to the subject property in the 2017 rating list and its removal had resulted in a 78% increase in the rateable value between the two lists.

18. To support the reinstatement of quantum Mr Plumley referred the panel to 1 and 2 Cambridge Science Park; on this park a 12.5% adjustment had been applied to the larger properties in the scheme to reflect quantum. Mr Plumley went on to refer the panel to agreements on the Cambourne Business Park: 2nd Floor West and Part East 2030, Cambourne Business Park, which had an area of 948.19 m^2; and Ground Floor East Wing 1020, Cambourne Business Park, which had an area of 523.83m^2, had been reduced from £245/m^2 to 225/m^2 and the largest properties on the park which ranged from 1439.31m^2 to 4508.63m^2 had a base rate of £215/m^2.

19. Ms Brigden argued that the rate should not be reduced; this was based on the rent passing on the subject property which amounted to £1,339,730 and would have been higher had the 3% cap not been applied. The analysis of this rent was £239/m^2 which she argued supported the adopted tone of £230/m^2. The panel noted that in other rental analysis the Valuation Officer had not placed significant weight on rent reviews agreed remotely from the AVD, stating that '*Rent reviews often reflect historic lease terms and may not fully capture current market conditions, making them less reliable for benchmarking purposes*'.

20. Ms Brigden further argued that quantum had to be evidenced and there was no evidence of quantum on Cambridge Research Park given the subject rent.

21. Having considered the full basket of evidence before it, and attaching little weight to the subject rent, the panel found Mr Plumley's evidence and arguments to be the more persuasive in that the tone of £230.00/m^2 was unreasonable based on evidence from other parks. It determined that an RV of £1,200,000 based on £215.00/m^2 was fair and reasonable as follows:

UAR	£215.00

Line	Floor	Description	Area (㎡)	Relativity	Price (£/㎡)	Value (£)
1	Ground	Office	2150.80	1	£215.00	£462,422
2	Ground	Warehouse	565.70	0.5	£107.50	£60,813
3	First	Office	2586.90	1	£215.00	£556,184
4	Second	Office	586.90	1	£215.00	£126,184
		Total	**5890.30**		**Total**	**£1,205,602**

Total Value	**£1,205,602**
Rateable Value	**£1,200,000**

Conclusion

22. In view of the above findings and conclusions, the appeal was allowed.

Order

23. The Tribunal Panel orders under the provisions of regulation 38(4) of The Valuation Tribunal for England (Council Tax and Rating Appeals) (Procedure) Regulations 2009, the Valuation Officer to amend the entry in the rating list to show a revised assessment of £1,020,000 RV for the subject property, with effect from 1 April 2023.

24. Under regulation 38(9), the Valuation Officer must comply with this order within two weeks of the date of its making.

Refund of a fee

25. The appellant is also entitled to a full refund of the fee paid in accordance with regulation 13E(1)(a) of the Non-Domestic Rating (Alterations of Lists and Appeals) (England) Regulations 2009 (as amended) provided there is no review of the Tribunal's decision. The refund will take around six weeks to process.

Right of further appeal

26. Any party who is aggrieved at the Tribunal's decision, and who appeared or was represented at the hearing, has a statutory right of further appeal to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) pursuant to Regulation 42 of the Tribunal Procedure Regulations. A party does not require permission to appeal from the Tribunal. Any appeal must be made directly to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) using Form T385 (Notice of appeal) within **four weeks** of the date this decision and statement of reasons was issued.

27. Further information regarding this statutory right of further appeal, and the parties' other rights, is contained in the guidance booklet "*A guide to tribunal decisions*" available on the Tribunal's website at www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/guidance-booklets/.

Ms A Kalu, Senior Member (Chair)
Ms TM Blades, Senior Member
18 September 2026

Mrs H Beresford
Clerk to the Tribunal
Date issued to the parties: 18 September 2026