

London Borough of Bexley

News Release

For Immediate Release

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COUNCIL WORKING HARD TO MANAGE INCREASE IN HMOs

Bexley is actively working to manage the rapid increase in the number of smaller residential properties in the borough being converted into houses in multiple occupation.

As the law stands, this type of development is legal, provided the converted property has no more than six occupants and the property contains shared facilities, such as a kitchen. Rear extensions are also allowed without the need for planning permission, if they are not more than three metres deep.

The Council is working to implement a range of new controls to take firm control of the issue. It wants to ensure that smaller properties that are converted to HMOs provide suitable accommodation and reduce the risk that they create problems for other residents.

“We have heard people’s concerns and we are treating them very seriously,” said David Bryce-Smith, the Council’s Deputy Director for Public Protection, Housing and Public Realm. “This is something which has only recently started to cause concern and we are taking steps to ensure we have the powers we need to protect the occupiers of the properties and their neighbours.

“London is growing fast and the demand for housing far exceeds the supply. It’s important to remember that these properties help meet people’s genuine need for housing. If they are properly managed, they do not generally cause problems.”

The Council has been actively looking at all the powers available to it and is developing a comprehensive response to the issue that will include –

- A selective licensing scheme for all private rented properties for parts of the north of the borough;
- Securing powers to licence small two-storey Houses in Multiple Occupation throughout the borough;

- The future adoption of a local planning policy directive (known as an Article 4 directive) which would remove planning permitted development rights for smaller HMOs. If the Council takes this option, it would take around 12 months to come into force.

Bexley's planning enforcement officers have the legal powers to visit properties and take action if they believe a development exceeds that which is permitted, or if the property is occupied by more than six people. If they know of any such cases, residents are asked to call or email the planning department.

Full details of the Council's plans to crackdown on HMOs will be announced in July.

'ENDS'

Bexley currently has the same powers to control smaller HMOs as Bromley and Greenwich.

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