

London Borough of Bexley

News Release

For Immediate Release

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SWIFT COUNCIL ACTION STOPS UNLAWFUL PROPERTY USE

London Borough of Bexley Enforcement Officers took swift action last week following a number of calls from concerned residents of Penhill Road, Blackfen on Friday (8 July) about the unlawful use of a property.

The calls concerned the unsuitable use of this property as Home Office accommodation. Neither residents or the Council were given prior notice of this and the Council had not approved this use of the property.

Enforcement Officers immediately inspected the property, a standard two storey house, following the calls. At that point the house was occupied by three people but evidence clearly showed that a much higher occupation was being planned. The accommodation provider was notified that the property was unsuitable for the proposed multiple occupancy and was provided with a list of works required. Despite this, without prior notice to the Council, the Home Office accommodation provider placed additional multiple people in the property over the weekend (9/10 July). Following representations from the Council they were removed and the Council will be demanding a further meeting to ensure that this does not happen again. The proposed use of the property for this scale of development would be unlawful under national legislation.

Leader of the London Borough of Bexley, Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE said; "We fully understand the concerns of residents in Penhill Road. Our Council Enforcement Officers acted quickly and were able to stop this property from being used in such an unlawful manner. We thank Penhill Road residents for highlighting this issue to us. However, we must take care when something like this arises not to inflame the situation with rumour and hearsay. Bexley has a proud tradition of community cohesion and partnership. We are a diverse and tolerant borough and I would hope we would all think twice before engaging in rumour that can quickly turn into something more serious."

We know residents have concerns about Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the Council is putting in place a range of measures including extending our licensing scheme to cover all HMOs, and a local Article 4 planning directive which would strengthen and improve our control. We are also actively lobbying local MPs and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on the issue of HMOs.

The Council's enforcement officers have the power to visit properties and take action if they believe a development exceeds what is permitted and we regularly use these powers and take action.

ENDS

Please contact: Jane Parson on 020 3045 4868
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Attachments

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