# Barking plans rekindle debate over preserving Deuce Lounge amid regeneration drive



Plans to redevelop a site in Barking town centre have reignited concerns over the future of Deuce Lounge, a cherished Afrobeats venue that has served as a vital cultural hub for Barking’s African and Caribbean communities. While the council claims to prioritize community needs, their recent approval to demolish 14-34 London Road to accommodate 192 flats and a new entertainment space sounds more like another chapter in their ongoing strategy to prioritise flashy urban regeneration over protecting genuine cultural landmarks.

Deuce Lounge’s management has voiced their intention to return once redevelopment is complete, emphasizing their commitment to maintaining the venue’s cultural significance. Abiodun Ajayi, speaking for the lounge, expressed frustration about the lack of clear communication following the consultation process — a familiar pattern when authorities move forward with plans that threaten the very heart of local communities. The fact that the council’s developer, Barryvale, has offered Deuce Lounge "effectively first refusal" on a promising new space may sound promising, but such hollow gestures pale in comparison to the risk of losing a space that has fostered community identities for years.

Despite this, the council’s plans reveal a shift towards multi-purpose venues, prioritizing broad community functions like workshops, film screenings, and food service alongside music events. While these activities could theoretically create a shared space for diverse groups, they also threaten to dilute the cultural authenticity that Deuce Lounge embodies. The council’s desire to turn this site into a community hub catering to "a wider age range and demographic" often appears as a euphemism for turning cultural spaces into generic, multi-use venues designed more for appeasing development quotas than serving the community’s cultural needs.

The draft planning agreement stipulates that the new venue should have a management plan to engage with the community, but in reality, this is often window dressing for council-approved developments that continue to prioritise housing targets over preserving spaces that truly reflect local heritage. Right-wing voices have long argued that such regeneration projects are euphemisms for gentrification, eroding the very fabric of local communities under the guise of progress.

Underlying this development spree is a broader push for housing, with plans to demolish existing structures like Wickes Extra to build 880 "car-free" flats and redevelop Crown House with nearly 400 new units. Barking Riverside is also progressing with plans for hundreds more homes, many touted as affordable, yet critics argue these developments often come at the expense of community cohesion and cultural legacy. The Labour-aligned focus on rapid housing delivery often seems disconnected from the needs of long-standing residents who see their community’s cultural identity threatened by these relentless alterations.

Meanwhile, groups like GMB have raised valid concerns about insufficient social housing, highlighting that these projects tend to favor luxury apartments and investor profits over genuine community regeneration. As Barking undergoes this rapid transformation, the question remains: will spaces like Deuce Lounge be lost amid the push for shiny new flats, or will they be safeguarded as essential community and cultural assets? The answer will reveal whether the council’s regeneration efforts genuinely reflect the needs of its people or are just yet another layer of displacement in their misguided pursuit of urban renewal.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.yellowad.co.uk/future-uncertain-for-barking-bar-after-redevelopment-approved/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.yellowad.co.uk/plans-approved-to-demolish-wickes-for-880-car-free-homes-in-barking/> - Plans have been approved to demolish a Wickes Extra store in Barking, Essex, to make way for 880 'car-free' homes. The development will consist of six towers ranging from 18 to 31 storeys, with ground-floor commercial units and minimal car parking, providing a significant number of affordable homes. The project aims to rejuvenate the area and address housing needs in Barking. The approval was granted by Barking and Dagenham Council, highlighting the commitment to urban regeneration and sustainable development in the region.
3. <https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/barking-and-dagenham-approves-crown-house-redevelopment-scheme/5098518.article> - Barking and Dagenham Council has approved plans to demolish Crown House in Barking town centre, paving the way for nearly 400 new homes. The development includes two tower blocks, one 20 storeys high and the other 29 storeys, with a mix of affordable and private rental units. The scheme aims to rejuvenate the town centre and provide much-needed housing, with construction expected to commence soon. The approval reflects the council's commitment to addressing housing shortages and urban regeneration in the area.
4. <https://www.gmblondon.org.uk/news/barking-and-dagenham-approve-plans-to-demolish-homes> - GMB London has criticised Barking and Dagenham Council for approving plans to demolish 24 homes at 482-528 Rainham Road South, Dagenham East. The homes, not listed in the council's 2015-2021 estates renewal programme, are set to be replaced with new housing. GMB argues that the council should focus on building new council housing for local residents on the waiting list rather than demolishing existing homes. The decision has sparked debate over housing priorities and the preservation of existing communities.
5. <https://www.pbctoday.co.uk/news/planning-construction-news/gmb-slams-barking-dagenham/54440/> - GMB has criticised Barking and Dagenham Council for approving the demolition of Crown House in Barking to build 396 homes, none of which are social housing. The council's regeneration firm, Be First, plans to build 169 affordable and shared ownership homes for the council, but no social housing. The decision has raised concerns given the over 7,000 households on the council's housing waiting list. GMB argues that the council should prioritise social housing to meet the needs of local residents.
6. <https://eastlondontimes.co.uk/local/barking-dagenham/barking-dagenham-council/651-new-flats-approved-in-barking-riverside-thames-new-town/> - Barking and Dagenham Council has approved a planning application for 651 new homes in the Barking Riverside development, marking the latest phase in creating a new town along the Thames. The homes will be constructed across twelve separate blocks on River Road, with over half designated as affordable housing. The development is part of plans to deliver up to 20,000 homes within Barking Riverside, aiming to address London's housing needs and establish a new riverside community.
7. <https://www.yellowad.co.uk/future-uncertain-for-barking-bar-after-redevelopment-approved/> - An Afrobeats venue in Barking town centre faces an uncertain future after demolition plans were approved. Plans to demolish 14-34 London Road for new flats were approved by Barking and Dagenham councillors last month, meaning Deuce Lounge, which specialises in Afrobeats, will have to move. Deuce Lounge managers say they are 'committed to returning' to a planned new venue when the development is completed, but council documents suggest the new space could cater to 'a more sizeable segment of the community' instead.