# Kent bakery owner faces council refusal over flats plan amid heritage concerns



Simon Reynolds, the dedicated third-generation owner of A.E. Barrow & Sons Ltd in Sittingbourne, Kent, has found himself at an impasse following council refusal of his plans to construct a four-storey block of flats adjacent to his bakery. Established in 1931, this beloved local business has served the community for nearly a century, yet the proposed development was met with significant obstacles due to potential concerns regarding living conditions for future tenants.

The Swale Borough Council turned down Reynolds’s application last June, citing worries that new residents would be negatively impacted by the "odours and disturbance" emanating from the bakery's operations, which include the production of cakes, breads, pastries, and sandwiches. The council also raised alarms about the living conditions within the ground-floor flats, claiming they would experience "poor levels of light, outlook, and a sense of enclosure." Additionally, it argued that the proposed construction would not respect the historic townscape, as the portion earmarked for demolition possessed "heritage significance."

Despite Reynolds’s expressed disappointment, he also acknowledged the rationale behind the council's decision. “I do get it to a certain degree, but it is still disappointing as it would have future-proofed the business,” he remarked. He invested about £5,000 into pursuing the project and had believed that the new flats could reinvigorate his bakery's operations amid ongoing challenges facing high street retailers. His intent was to ensure the longevity of A.E. Barrow & Sons, as many similar establishments continue to struggle with declining foot traffic and competition from larger retailers.

In response to the council's decision, Reynolds is contemplating a revised plan that could potentially address the concerns raised. He hopes that a new application will be favourably received, allowing him to explore additional options for development. “I have ideas for a different plan but it is about which one to choose,” he stated, highlighting the importance of family input in deciding the bakery's future direction.

Historical context plays an essential role in the rejection of Reynolds's plans. According to the Swale Borough Local Plan 2017, developments must consider the impact on heritage assets and conservation areas, a mandate that reinforces the importance of local history and architectural integrity. This guideline reflects a broader prioritisation within planning policy of preserving the character of towns whilst balancing the need for new housing.

In the meantime, A.E. Barrow & Sons remains operational, continuing its legacy of serving high-quality, handmade bakery products to its loyal customer base. As the business adapts to modern consumer preferences, including the introduction of gluten-free options, Reynolds remains committed to maintaining his bakery's reputation within the community while also navigating the complexities of local regulations and urban planning.

Though the path forward is uncertain, Reynolds's determination to innovate and secure the future of A.E. Barrow & Sons aligns with a growing trend among traditional businesses seeking new revenue streams and operational pathways in an evolving market landscape.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060000/baker-plans-flat-application), [[2]](https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sittingbourne/news/they-say-i-can-t-build-flats-behind-my-bakery-because-of-th-308910/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060000/baker-plans-flat-application), [[3]](https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sittingbourne/news/bakery-boss-denies-closure-rumours-despite-demolition-flats-303356/), [[6]](https://swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/local-plans/adopted-local-plan-for-swale/submission-and-examination-in-public)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://publicnoticeportal.uk/notice/planning/65d32199c16660290c787b58), [[4]](https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sittingbourne/news/inside-the-bakery-that-s-survived-93-years-303778/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/local-plans/adopted-local-plan-for-swale/submission-and-examination-in-public)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060000/baker-plans-flat-application), [[4]](https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sittingbourne/news/inside-the-bakery-that-s-survived-93-years-303778/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060000/baker-plans-flat-application> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sittingbourne/news/they-say-i-can-t-build-flats-behind-my-bakery-because-of-th-308910/> - Plans to build flats behind A.E. Barrow & Sons bakery in Sittingbourne High Street were refused by Swale Borough Council. The council cited concerns that new residents would be 'subjected to odours and disturbance' from the bakery, which sells cakes, bread, pastries, and sandwiches. Additionally, the council argued that the ground-floor flats would have 'poor levels of light, outlook, and a sense of enclosure,' and that the proposed four-storey building would 'fail to respect the historic townscape.'
3. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sittingbourne/news/bakery-boss-denies-closure-rumours-despite-demolition-flats-303356/> - Despite plans to demolish part of A.E. Barrow & Sons bakery in Sittingbourne High Street to build flats, owner Simon Reynolds assured customers that the bakery would remain operational. He emphasized that the business would continue to serve customers at the same rate, even if the plans were approved, and that the bakery's larger building would allow for continued operations without the need for all the current space.
4. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/sittingbourne/news/inside-the-bakery-that-s-survived-93-years-303778/> - A.E. Barrow & Sons bakery in Sittingbourne High Street has been serving pastries and cakes since 1931. The bakery's success is attributed to its loyal customer base, quality handmade products, and its prominent location in the town center. The bakery has adapted over the years, including modernizing production methods and offering gluten-free products to meet changing consumer preferences.
5. <https://publicnoticeportal.uk/notice/planning/65d32199c16660290c787b58> - A public notice was issued for the demolition of the existing bakery at 38A High Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, and the erection of a four-storey block of six flats. The notice indicated that the application may affect a Conservation Area and a Listed Building or its setting, and invited public comments by 14th March 2024.
6. <https://swale.gov.uk/planning-and-regeneration/local-plans/adopted-local-plan-for-swale/submission-and-examination-in-public> - The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017 outlines policies and guidelines for development within the borough. The plan includes considerations for heritage assets, conservation areas, and listed buildings, which are relevant to planning applications affecting historic structures like A.E. Barrow & Sons bakery.
7. <https://www.theregister.com/2021/09/08/swale_council_bungles_planning_applications/> - Swale Borough Council faced criticism after a software test led to five erroneous planning application decisions being published as legally binding. The council acknowledged the mistake and stated that legal action would be taken to overturn the incorrect decisions before the correct ones were made.