

Barnoldswick Town Square, Pendle, Lancashire

Planning and Public Realm Strategy Review

Prepared for: Barnoldswick Town Council

Prepared by: Yorkshire Town Planners Limited

Date: 26 August 2026

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Purpose of the Review

1.1.1 Yorkshire Town Planners Limited was instructed by Barnoldswick Town Council on 03/08/2026 to undertake an Initial Planning and Public Realm Potential Review of Barnoldswick Town Square.

1.1.2 The agreed scope comprises a planning-led assessment of the Town Square, including its existing public realm and amenity, potential uses and activities, principal opportunities and constraints, and recommendations for possible short- and longer-term improvements. The purpose of the work is to provide an evidence base to assist the Council in subsequently developing a Town Square Usage Policy.

1.1.3 The assessment is intentionally narrower than the Barnoldswick Town Centre Masterplan published in June 2024. The Masterplan is a multidisciplinary, town-centre-wide regeneration document prepared through urban-design, transport, property, economic and public-engagement work. This report instead focuses specifically on the Town Square as a civic asset now managed by the Town Council, considering how it presently functions, how its use might be broadened, and what degree of physical intervention is proportionate.

1.2 Headline Findings

1.2.1 The Town Square is not considered to be a failing public space. It occupies a central and recognisable position within Barnoldswick, benefits from an attractive historic town-centre setting, contains established seating and landscaping, and already performs a valuable civic and event function. The 2024 Masterplan similarly identified it as an attractive and characterful space which accommodates community activity, dwell space and spill-out from local businesses, and regarded the Square itself as a higher-quality area of public realm than several of the adjoining streets.

1.2.2 The principal issue identified through this review is therefore not a fundamental absence of activity. Rather, there is an unevenness in how that activity is distributed. During programmed events the Square can perform particularly successfully as a family, cultural or community space. At other times, the presence of a number of surrounding licensed premises and associated outdoor activity can cause parts of the Square to function informally as an extension of the surrounding hospitality economy. Between these conditions, there appears to be comparatively limited provision giving other groups a positive reason to occupy and remain within the space.

1.2.3 This creates an important distinction between a Square which is **busy** and one which is consistently **inclusive**. A successful civic square should be able to accommodate organised events, commercial activity and hospitality uses without becoming dependent upon them. It should equally provide ordinary, unprogrammed opportunities for residents and visitors of different ages and circumstances to sit, meet, wait, converse, eat, play or simply spend time without being required to attend an event or purchase goods or drinks.

1.2.4 Councillors have also reported concerns regarding antisocial behaviour associated with the Town Square and its evening economy. No detailed incident records, police data, CCTV analysis or complaint schedule have been provided as part of this assessment. It would therefore be inappropriate to attribute antisocial behaviour directly to any particular surrounding business or category of user. The concern is nevertheless relevant as a matter of perceived amenity and should inform the management, lighting, surveillance and programming of the space.

1.2.5 The existing hospitality businesses should themselves be recognised as important contributors to the vitality of the Square. They create footfall, activity, passive surveillance and economic value. The planning objective should therefore not be to suppress

successful lawful businesses, but to maintain an appropriate balance between commercial spill-out and the Square's wider civic function.

1.2.6 The Town Square also lies within Barnoldswick Conservation Area. The adopted Conservation Area Character Appraisal specifically identifies the Square as a social focus and records the contribution made by its sympathetic materials, street furniture, trees and planters. Accordingly, existing landscaping should not be regarded simply as residual space available for redevelopment: it forms part of the established public-realm character which future interventions should either retain or demonstrably improve upon.

1.3 Recommended Direction

1.3.1 On balance, this review does not identify a present justification either for leaving the Town Square wholly unchanged or for undertaking comprehensive redevelopment. The preferred approach lies between these extremes: **retain the successful underlying structure of the Square, improve how it is managed and programmed, introduce reversible and adaptable improvements first, and undertake targeted permanent works only where a clear need has been demonstrated.**

1.3.2 In the immediate term, the Council should prioritise management and programming measures alongside modest, reversible public-realm interventions. These should seek to broaden the range of people for whom the Square offers an everyday purpose, while preserving the openness and adaptability which allow larger events to take place.

1.3.3 Potential measures include a broader programme of community activities; clearer management of business and event spill-out; additional flexible seating and tables; improvements to planting, lighting and wayfinding; opportunities for temporary art or play; infrastructure which makes temporary events easier to accommodate; and periodic trials of different spatial arrangements before permanent works are commissioned.

1.3.4 A second tier of targeted capital improvements may follow where justified by experience. These could include permanent event servicing infrastructure, carefully integrated lighting, additional accessible seating, improved power or water provision, cycle parking, waste facilities and selective improvements to surfaces, planting or the interfaces with adjoining streets.

1.3.5 The permanent performance stage presently under consideration should be treated as an option rather than as the assumed end state. Public information describes the current proposal as replacing an existing stone planter with a metal stage structure. The principle of permanent performance infrastructure is not inherently inconsistent with the civic role of the Square; however, there are presently unresolved questions concerning the reported restrictive covenant, loss of established landscaping, heritage character, design, flexibility, noise, maintenance and the extent to which a permanent structure would solve the Square's principal everyday-use deficiencies.

1.3.6 The Council already demonstrates that performances can be accommodated using temporary arrangements. A permanent stage should therefore only be progressed if a sufficiently strong operational case can be demonstrated, and after the title position, planning route and heritage implications are established. A temporary or demountable stage arrangement may offer a useful means of testing demand, orientation, dimensions and effects before irreversible change is undertaken.

1.3.7 Comprehensive redesign of the Town Square is considered a legitimate longer-term option, but not one presently justified by the available evidence. Were major redevelopment eventually pursued, it should ideally consider the Square and its adjoining streets together and be prepared with specialist urban-design, landscape, highways, accessibility and cost-planning input, together with meaningful public and stakeholder engagement.

2. Introduction and Scope

2.1 Instruction

2.1.1 Barnoldswick Town Council has recently acquired the square from The Borough Council of Pendle and is considering how the Square should be managed and developed over the coming years.

2.1.2 Yorkshire Town Planners Limited was instructed to undertake a planning-led assessment of the Town Square, dated 3 August 2026. The agreed professional service specifically requires consideration of the existing public realm and amenity, potential uses and activities, principal opportunities and constraints, and recommendations for short- and longer-term improvements to assist the development of a future Town Square Usage Policy.

2.1.3 A site visit and inception meeting were undertaken on 05/08/2026, attended by Cllr Leanne Barrett, Cllr Angela Moran, Cllr Chris Church and others. The visit included inspection of the Town Square and discussion of its present operation, previous and current activities, perceived problems and aspirations for future use.

2.2 Purpose of the Report

2.2.1 This report is intended primarily for Barnoldswick Town Councillors. It is strategic and advisory rather than a document submitted for determination by the Local Planning Authority.

2.2.2 Its purpose is to assist the Council in answering three related questions:

- a. how well does the Town Square presently perform as a piece of public realm and civic space;
- b. what realistic opportunities exist to broaden or improve its use; and
- c. what degree of physical intervention, management or further professional work is proportionate to those opportunities.

2.2.3 The review deliberately considers a broad spectrum of possible approaches, extending from retention of the present arrangement with minimal intervention, through management and reversible public-realm changes, to targeted permanent works and, at the furthest end of the spectrum, comprehensive redesign.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 The review has been informed by:

- a. a site inspection and discussions with Town Councillors;
- b. the agreed information supplied by Barnoldswick Town Council;
- c. the Barnoldswick Town Centre Masterplan, June 2024;
- d. the statutory development plan, principally the Pendle Local Plan Fourth Edition 2021–2040;
- e. the National Planning Policy Framework published in August 2026;
- f. the Barnoldswick Conservation Area Character Appraisal;
- g. relevant permitted-development legislation;
- h. publicly available Council information concerning historic and current events and investment proposals; and
- i. other publicly available planning and public-realm information considered proportionate to this initial assessment.

2.4 Scope and Limitations

2.4.1 This assessment does not constitute a detailed architectural, landscape architectural or engineering design exercise. No measured survey, topographical survey, utilities survey, structural assessment, acoustic assessment, highway safety audit or detailed cost plan has been undertaken.

2.4.2 No formal public or stakeholder consultation has been undertaken as part of this commission. Observations concerning public preferences are therefore restricted to

existing published engagement evidence, principally that contained within the 2024 Masterplan, together with matters reported by councillors during the site visit.

2.4.3 The report does not provide legal advice upon the title, restrictive covenants, licensing powers or land-management rights of Barnoldswick Town Council. Where these matters affect the apparent feasibility of an option, the relevant issue is identified and legal confirmation is recommended.

2.4.4 The report does not itself constitute the Town Square Usage Policy. Rather, its findings are intended to inform the subsequent preparation of such a policy.

2.4.5 The site visit coincided with “Barlick Beach” (21/07/2026 – 27/08/2026), during which a substantial temporary tent and sandpit installation occupied part of the Town Square. This provided useful evidence of the Square’s capacity to accommodate intensive temporary activity, but did not represent its ordinary everyday configuration. The assessment therefore also draws on published photographs, historic event information and the 2024 Masterplan when considering ordinary conditions.

2.4.6 The transfer documentation supplied identifies the property as registered title **LA629649**, described as land on the south east side of Albert Road, Barnoldswick, and records the proposed transfer from the Borough Council of Pendle to Barnoldswick Town Council. The copy supplied does not contain a completed date in Panel 3 and the execution fields appearing within the supplied document are incomplete. Accordingly, while the document provides substantive evidence of the terms upon which the transfer was intended to proceed, the date and completion of the transfer should be confirmed against the current official copy of the register and completed transfer. The accompanying title plan should also be used to establish the precise physical extent of the Town Council’s ownership.

3. Site and Strategic Context

3.1 Barnoldswick Town Centre

3.1.1 Barnoldswick is an established market town serving the northern part of Pendle and a wider rural catchment. The adopted Local Plan identifies Barnoldswick alongside Nelson and Colne as one of Pendle's three Tier 1 Town Centres, intended to provide a focus for retail, leisure, services, employment and recreation. Although smaller and less well served by public transport than Nelson and Colne, the Local Plan recognises its particular importance to the rural north of the borough.

3.1.2 The Town Square performs a role disproportionate to its physical size. It is both a piece of public realm serving everyday movement and dwell time and a recognisable civic venue at which organised public events can be concentrated.

3.1.3 The Square's continuing success is consequently relevant not only to visual amenity but to town-centre vitality. Activity within it can support surrounding businesses, strengthen Barnoldswick's identity, provide space for community interaction and give residents and visitors reasons to spend longer within the centre.

3.2 The Town Square

3.2.1 Barnoldswick Town Square is situated on Albert Road at the historic commercial core of Barnoldswick. It is enclosed and overlooked by a mixture of independent shops, hospitality businesses and other town-centre uses, with pedestrian connections towards the surrounding retail streets.

3.2.2 The 2024 Masterplan describes the Square as attractive and characterful and distinguishes it from the poorer-quality public realm of several adjoining streets. It also identifies an important physical issue: while the Square itself provides a strong civic focus, the quality and arrangement of adjoining streets can weaken its relationship with the buildings and wider town centre around it.

3.2.3 This distinction remains important to the present review. The Council has acquired and assumed control of the Square, but the experience of the Square is affected by areas beyond the boundary of title ownership. A comprehensive long-term public-realm project

would therefore require coordination with the relevant highway authority and other landowners rather than treating the Council's red-line ownership as an isolated design parcel.

3.3 Ownership and Private Restrictions

3.3.1 Title and Transfer

3.3.1.1 The transfer documentation supplied by Barnoldswick Town Council relates to registered title **LA629649**, described as "**Land on the south east side of Albert Road, Barnoldswick**".

3.3.1.2 The TRI identifies the Borough Council of Pendle as transferor and Barnoldswick Town Council as transferee. The stated consideration is £1.00 and the property is transferred with full title guarantee.

3.3.1.3 The copy provided for this assessment is undated and does not appear to contain completed execution details. The current registered title and completed transfer should therefore be retained with the Council's property records and used to confirm the completion date and precise ownership position.

3.3.2 Covenants Contained within the Transfer

3.3.2.1 Panel 11 of the TRI contains a series of covenants given by Barnoldswick Town Council to the Borough Council of Pendle with the stated intention of binding the property and every part of it.

3.3.2.2 In summary, Barnoldswick Town Council covenants:

- a. to observe and perform the covenants contained, mentioned or referred to in the register of title LA629649 and to indemnify the Borough Council of Pendle in respect of any breach;
- b. not to use the property for any purpose other than its defined "**Established Use**", namely a **town square**;

- c. not to dispose of, transfer or otherwise assign the property without first obtaining the written consent of the Borough Council of Pendle, such consent not to be unreasonably withheld or delayed;
- d. not to erect any additional buildings, walls, fences or other erections without the prior written approval of the Borough Council of Pendle, with any such approval remaining separately subject to the necessary planning and Building Regulations consents; and
- e. to repair and maintain the property and keep it clean and free from obstruction.

3.3.3 Strategic Implications

3.3.3.1 These provisions materially reinforce the civic purpose of the land. The Council has not acquired an unrestricted development site: the transfer expressly preserves its use as a **town square**.

3.3.3.2 This does not mean that change or development is prohibited. A town square can reasonably accommodate a broad variety of civic, cultural, recreational, event and ancillary commercial activities while remaining a town square. The restriction does, however, indicate that proposals which materially change the dominant character or permanently appropriate substantial parts of the land for a different use warrant particular caution and, where necessary, legal advice.

3.3.3.3 This is relevant to the strategic approach recommended by this report. Measures which broaden and improve the Square's civic function are more readily aligned with the express terms of the transfer than interventions which substantially reduce the availability of the land as flexible public space.

3.3.4 Buildings and Other Erections

3.3.4.1 The fourth covenant is particularly relevant to proposals for permanent physical development. The Town Council may not erect additional buildings, walls, fences or other erections without the prior written approval of the Borough Council of Pendle.

3.3.4.2 The covenant is therefore **not an absolute prohibition on a permanent stage or other structure**. Rather, it establishes an additional consent mechanism in favour of Pendle Borough Council.

3.3.4.3 This private approval operates independently from the statutory planning system. A structure may potentially constitute permitted development, or subsequently receive express planning permission, without satisfying the covenant. Conversely, written approval under the transfer would not itself grant planning permission.

3.3.4.4 Accordingly, any proposal for a permanent stage, pavilion, fixed shelter, substantial enclosure or comparable structure should first establish whether Pendle Borough Council is willing to provide the necessary approval under the transfer before significant expenditure is committed to detailed design or planning work.

3.3.4.5 The position of temporary structures is less certain and depends upon the construction, duration and particular interpretation of the transfer. This report does not provide legal advice on whether individual temporary installations constitute an "erection" for the purposes of the covenant.

3.3.5 Existing Registered Covenants

3.3.5.1 The transfer also expressly requires the Town Council to observe and perform the covenants contained, mentioned or referred to in the existing register of title LA629649.

3.3.5.2 The TRI cannot therefore be treated as the complete statement of private restrictions affecting the land. Before substantial permanent development is progressed, the Council should obtain and review the current official register and any deeds referred to within it.

3.4 Surrounding Businesses and the Evening Economy

3.4.1 A notable characteristic of the Town Square is its direct relationship with surrounding commercial uses, including a number of licensed hospitality premises. These businesses contribute substantially to footfall and activity and help ensure that the Square remains overlooked beyond conventional daytime retail hours.

3.4.2 This relationship is capable of being mutually beneficial. Attractive public realm can increase dwell time and support local businesses, while active frontages can make a public space feel populated and informally supervised.

3.4.3 There is nevertheless a distinction between supporting surrounding businesses and allowing a civic space to become functionally indistinguishable from commercial premises. Councillors reported that, at certain times, outdoor drinking and hospitality activity can result in the Square operating as an informal or de facto pub garden. This may make the space appear less obviously available to people who are not customers of surrounding businesses.

3.4.4 No conclusion is reached that lawful hospitality activity is intrinsically harmful or responsible for reported antisocial behaviour. Indeed, Policy P4 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026), “Impact of development on existing activities”, requires development proposals to integrate effectively with existing businesses and community facilities, expressly including pubs and music venues, and provides that such established activities should not be subject to unreasonable restrictions on their current or permitted operation as a result of subsequently approved development.

3.4.5 The appropriate strategic objective is therefore coexistence: maintaining the economic and social benefits of active licensed premises while ensuring that substantial areas of the Town Square remain legibly and practically available as free civic space.

3.5 Heritage and Townscape

3.5.1 The Town Square lies within the Barnoldswick Conservation Area. The character of the surrounding town centre is derived from its historic street pattern, traditional buildings and shopfronts, local materials, varied enclosure and the close relationship between buildings and streets.

3.5.2 The Conservation Area Character Appraisal expressly identifies the Town Square as making a positive contribution to the conservation area and providing a social focus. It records that the Square was created on the former Co-operative store site using sympathetic materials and street furniture and specifically recognises trees and planters as enhancing its appearance and usability.

3.5.3 The heritage sensitivity of the Square therefore does not mean that change should be resisted. Public squares are inherently functional places and their ability to adapt is part of their continuing civic value. The relevant test is whether change preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and whether the design quality and public benefits justify any loss of existing positive features.

3.5.4 Particular care should be taken with permanent structures. Scale, form, materials, siting, visual permeability and their relationship with the surrounding building frontages will be material to the effect upon the Conservation Area.

3.5.5 The heritage setting of the Square is therefore defined principally by the cumulative character of the Conservation Area rather than by the immediate presence of an individually designated building. The 2024 Town Centre Masterplan identifies three statutory listed buildings within the wider town-centre area: 15 and 17 King Street, Grade II (NHLE 1258850; Lancashire HER PRN 16993); Old Chapel House, Walmsgate, Grade II (NHLE 1361703; HER PRN 16997); and the Independent Methodist Church, Walmsgate, Grade II* (NHLE 1273192; HER PRN 16998).

3.5.6 Of these, 15 and 17 King Street are the closest to the Town Square and represent surviving early eighteenth-century development within the historic core. The two Walmsgate assets are more distant, although the Grade II* Independent Methodist Church is of particular architectural significance and is identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal as one of the more prominent landmark buildings within Barnoldswick. Their relationship with the Square is consequently primarily one of wider townscape setting rather than direct enclosure.

3.5.7 The significance of these designated assets does not impose a general constraint on alteration of the Town Square. Their relevance would, however, increase with the scale, height, permanence and visual prominence of any proposed intervention. Modest alterations to street furniture or temporary uses would be unlikely to affect their significance in the same manner as a substantial pavilion, stage, canopy or comprehensive redevelopment capable of altering wider views or the established character of the historic centre.

3.5.8 For most interventions within the Square, the more immediate heritage consideration is likely to be the contribution made by the surrounding unlisted buildings and streetscape. The Conservation Area Appraisal specifically identifies the Majestic Buildings on Albert Road as a notable example of Barnoldswick's more decorative Edwardian architecture and also draws attention to the contribution of trees in this part of Albert Road. Traditional commercial buildings and shopfronts around the Square and its approaches similarly contribute collectively to the historic character and enclosure of the space.

3.5.9 No property immediately adjoining the Square has been confirmed through the publicly available material reviewed as a formally adopted Local List asset. This should not be interpreted as an absence of heritage significance. Buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area remain relevant to the assessment of development irrespective of whether they are separately designated or locally listed. The Majestic Buildings and other surviving traditional frontages should therefore be treated as positive townscape contributors without overstating their formal designation status.

3.5.10 The historic interest of the site itself also provides useful context. The present Town Square occupies the former site of the Barnoldswick Co-operative Society's Albert Road emporium and head office, constructed in the early twentieth century and subsequently demolished before creation of the present civic space. The Town Square therefore represents a comparatively modern layer within the continuing development of Barnoldswick's historic commercial centre rather than an historic open space surviving unchanged from an earlier period.

3.5.11 The Lancashire Historic Town Survey records the nearby listed buildings under HER references PRN 16993, 16997 and 16998 and demonstrates the considerably greater antiquity of the surrounding settlement. No Scheduled Monument is identified within the Conservation Area, and the known twentieth-century redevelopment of the Square means that archaeological potential should not be overstated. Nevertheless, substantial proposals involving significant below-ground disturbance should be checked against the current Lancashire Historic Environment Record as part of any later detailed design or application process.

3.5.12 Taken together, the heritage evidence supports an approach which allows the Square to continue evolving while retaining those characteristics which presently make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The principal heritage considerations are therefore not simply whether change occurs, but its scale, permanence, material quality and effect upon the openness of the Square, its established planting and street furniture, and the surrounding historic building frontages.

3.5.13 This is particularly relevant to proposals for permanent structures. A well-designed contemporary intervention is not necessarily incompatible with the Conservation Area, but the greater its physical and visual presence, the stronger the justification and design response required. Conversely, temporary or readily reversible interventions provide

considerably greater scope for adaptation without materially changing the established townscape.

3.5.14 The heritage context consequently reinforces the broader strategic approach identified within this assessment: positive existing features should ordinarily be retained unless their alteration can be demonstrated to secure a superior overall public-realm outcome, while more substantial permanent interventions should be informed by proportionate heritage assessment once their precise form and siting are known.

3.6 Existing Public Realm

3.6.1 The Square currently comprises a predominantly hard-landscaped pedestrian civic space containing established seating, planters and planting, with access from surrounding streets and commercial frontages.

3.6.2 The existing arrangement has the significant advantage of flexibility. The central space can be adapted for relatively modest performances, public ceremonies, temporary installations and larger programmed events without requiring the everyday environment to be dominated by permanent event infrastructure.

3.6.3 The site inspection also indicates that the existing planters perform more than a decorative role. They contribute enclosure, visual relief and differentiation within an otherwise hard-surfaced environment, while helping the Square relate to the historic townscape at a human scale.

3.6.4 Any proposal to rationalise or remove planting should consequently be assessed in terms of the total public-realm balance rather than simply the floor area released. Where removal is justified, compensatory or enhanced green infrastructure should normally form part of the design response.

3.7 Existing Events and Temporary Activity

3.7.1 The Town Square already accommodates a broad programme of public events. Activities identified through the Council and site visit include brass-band performances,

the Christmas lights switch-on, seasonal and themed events and the temporary summer installation present during the site inspection.

3.7.2 Publicly available Council records also demonstrate use of the Square for organised events and confirm that prospective organisers are directed to the Town Council. This indicates that the Council already exercises a significant practical role in programming and coordinating use of the space.

3.7.3 Over the past 12 months the square has hosted Barlick Beach (21st July – 27th August 2026); Pirates of Barnoldswick Fair (28th March 2026); Community Iftaar (18th March 2026); Barnoldswick Ice Trail (31st January 2026); Christmas Light Switch-On (15th November 2025); Remembrance Day Commemoration (9th November 2025), and Barlick Beach (22nd July – 29 August 2025); as well as hosting a small number of vendors over the year.

3.7.4 The temporary summer installation inspected during the site visit comprised a sizeable covered structure containing an approximately 5 metre by 5 metre sand area. Its presence is strategically significant. It demonstrates that the Square can accommodate a substantial temporary intervention and temporarily acquire a very different identity without permanent reconstruction.

3.7.5 That adaptability should be treated as an asset. Temporary use provides a comparatively low-risk way to test public demand, spatial layouts, target groups and management arrangements before capital expenditure is committed to permanent infrastructure.

3.8 Relevant History of Public-Realm Proposals

3.8.1 The aspiration to enhance the Town Square predates the current commission. In 2019, public regeneration material referred to proposals to remodel the Square to support the market, events and the night-time economy, together with heritage-style street furniture.

3.8.2 More recently, public-realm investment has been considered in association with the Town Square and surrounding streets. Pendle Borough Council's March 2024 West Craven Committee papers included UK Shared Prosperity Fund public-realm work for the Town Square area, Ellis Street, Newtown and Rainhall Road.

3.8.3 The current Pride in Place proposal for a permanent performance structure represents the most specific presently identified capital intervention. Barnoldswick Town

Council's July 2026 public information records a proposal to remove the existing stone planter and replace it with a metal stage structure.

3.8.4 Detailed drawings, dimensions and specifications for that proposal were not available to Yorkshire Town Planners at the time of drafting.

3.8.5 The town square is subject to the following planning-application history:

Date	Reference / Status	Proposal or Action	Outcome / Position	Relevance to Present Review
2000–2017	No formal planning application identified	No planning application relating specifically to the Town Square has been identified through the publicly searchable records reviewed. Historic imagery confirms the Square was already substantially established in its present civic form by 2005.	Existing civic use continued.	Provides no identified planning precedent for substantial permanent development within the Square during this period. A 2005 photograph shows the established Square well before the later improvement programmes.

March–April 2018	Premises Licence application – proposed replacement of existing licence PEN(N)0390; not a planning application	Barnoldswick Town Council applied for a premises licence covering outdoor plays, films, live and recorded music, dance and similar entertainment between 09:00 and 23:00, together with limited alcohol sales.	Application considered by Pendle Licensing Committee following representations from nearby residents. The application documentation included event-management, security, litter and noise provisions.	Important evidence that organised entertainment and performance were already established functions of the Square, including use of elevated temporary staging for Bands on the Square.
February –July 2019	Council capital programme / High Streets Heritage Action Zone expression of interest; not a planning application	Funding was allocated towards a Town Square reflagging scheme. A subsequent Heritage Action Zone proposal envisaged remodelling the Square to support the market, existing events	£51,171 was carried forward for reflagging, with additional funding streams subsequently identified. Pendle also reported that £100,000 had already been secured for Town Square works.	Demonstrates a longstanding aspiration for incremental improvement and intensified civic/event use rather than a fundamental change in the Square's function.

and the evening economy, together with heritage-style street furniture.

2020	Barnoldswick Town Square Improvement Programme; no formal planning application identified	Approximately £200,000 public-realm scheme including reflagging, a water-bottle filling station, new noticeboards, relocation of the flagpole and memorial bench, pavement improvements and replacement lighting columns.	Scheme tendered and works commenced in 2020. November minutes record the public-realm works as underway and additional funding being directed towards the reflagging scheme. An extension of the existing public-realm works contract was subsequently approved for further works up to £200,000.	This appears to be the most substantial recent physical intervention in the Square. Its delivery without an identified conventional planning application is relevant when considering the range of works potentially achievable through local-authority powers and permitted development, although the lawfulness of any new proposal must be
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considered
independently.

2021

Continuing
Town Square
reflagging /
event
infrastructure
; not a
planning
application

The original
reflagging
scheme
remained
within Pendle's
capital
programme
because works
were still
outstanding.
Committee
minutes also
record that a
**mini stage for
town-centre
events** had
been
purchased
using
alternative
funding.

Continued
implementation
of previous
public-realm
programme;
temporary/mobil
e stage provision
acquired.

Particularly
relevant to the
current
permanent-stage
proposal: the
historic response
to performance
requirements
included provision
of
non-permanent
stage
infrastructure
rather than
dedication of part
of the Square to a
fixed
performance
structure.

2024	UK Shared Prosperity Fund public-realm programme; not identified as a planning application	Pavement improvements were developed for the Town Square area, Ellis Street, Newtown and Rainhall Road. West Craven Committee additionally resolved that a performance area/storage space should be created at the rear of the Town Square, with detail to be determined.	Public-realm drawings were being prepared for tender and the Committee endorsed the programme subject to available funding.	Establishes a more recent political aspiration for dedicated performance provision, but the Committee resolution itself did not constitute planning permission. It also shows that the concept predates the current Pride in Place proposal.
2024	Publicly indexed planning register search	No application recorded against "Town Square, Barnoldswick" within the indexed Pendle 2024 planning dataset. Applications 24/0220/FUL	No site application identified.	Helps distinguish changes to surrounding commercial premises from development of the Town Square itself.

and
24/0221/ADV
relate instead
to the
adjoining
Majestic
Buildings,
Albert Road.

2025	Publicly indexed planning register search	No application identified for the Town Square itself. 25/0427/FUL , concerning change of use of 25 Albert Road from retail to a pub, relates to a surrounding property rather than the Square.	No site application identified.	The surrounding application is relevant to the evolving hospitality/night-t ime context but should not be presented as part of the Square's own planning history.
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March 2024–20 26	Town-centre strategy / funding development	The 2024 Masterplan continued to promote public-realm improvements around the Town Square and its approaches. The March 2024 West Craven Committee explicitly identified a performance area/storage space at the rear of the Square.	Strategic/project development rather than planning permission.	Provides the strategic lineage of the present performance-space proposal. The Masterplan itself describes the Square as an existing higher-quality public realm asset, suggesting enhancement rather than wholesale redevelopment.
2026	Pride in Place Impact Fund proposal; no formal planning application identified as at August 2026	Creation of a small permanent performance space at the rear of the Town Square. Town Council material describes removal of an	Current proposal/funding project. Designs had been requested and the Town Council publicly stated that the proposal did not include storage facilities. No corresponding	The most directly relevant prospective development. Its planning status remains to be established separately, including the potential applicability of

existing stone
planter and its
replacement
with a metal
stage
structure.

planning
application has
been identified
through the
sources reviewed.

Part 12
permitted-develo
pment rights and
the additional
approval required
under the transfer
covenant.

4. Planning and Strategic Policy Context

4.1 Statutory Development Plan

4.1.1 The Pendle Local Plan Fourth Edition 2021–2040 was formally adopted on 18 December 2025 and now forms part of the statutory development plan for the borough.

4.1.2 Any future proposal requiring planning permission would therefore fall to be determined principally against the Fourth Edition Local Plan, together with any other relevant components of the development plan and material considerations.

4.1.3 The 2024 Barnoldswick Town Centre Masterplan remains a relevant strategic and design document, but it predates adoption of the Fourth Edition Local Plan and the August 2026 NPPF. Its baseline planning-policy references should therefore not be treated as the current statutory policy position.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework 2026

4.2.1 Status and Sustainable Development

4.2.1.1 A new National Planning Policy Framework was published on 17 August 2026, replacing the December 2024 version. It is therefore the relevant national planning-policy framework at the date of this assessment.

4.2.1.2 The NPPF's concept of sustainable development is particularly relevant to a civic public space because its economic, social and environmental objectives converge. Successful public realm can support town-centre businesses and economic activity; provide safe, accessible spaces which support social and cultural well-being; and conserve and enhance the built, natural and historic environment.

4.2.2 Town-Centre Vitality

4.2.2.1 TC4: 2 of the NPPF seeks long-term town-centre vitality and viability, including adaptation to changing community and business needs, diversification of activity and support for markets. It also gives substantial weight to development which supports the overall vitality and viability of existing centres and access to local facilities.

4.2.2.2 This supports an approach to Barnoldswick Town Square which regards social use, events, public realm and surrounding commerce as interdependent rather than competing policy objectives.

4.2.3 Design, Inclusivity and Public Space

4.2.3.1 NPPF Policy DP3 requires development to respond to its history, character and context. For public space specifically, it promotes places which are safe, secure, inclusive and accessible to different ages and abilities and which facilitate social interaction, play and healthy lifestyles. Natural surveillance, lighting and a coherent approach to materials and planting are identified as important components of well-designed places.

4.2.3.2 The relevance to the present commission is direct. The objective should not simply be to increase the number of activities occurring in the Square, but to improve its liveability and inclusive everyday function without eroding the character which gives it identity.

4.2.4 Noise, Existing Businesses and Public Safety

4.2.4.1 National policy requires consideration of noise and other environmental effects upon users, including groups potentially more vulnerable to those effects. It also recognises the importance of the lawful operation of established businesses and specifically includes pubs and music venues within the activities which new development should be capable of accommodating.

4.2.4.2 Consequently, a future permanent stage or intensified events programme should consider cumulative evening noise and its relationship with surrounding businesses and any nearby residential accommodation. Equally, the solution should not be framed in a manner which imposes unreasonable restrictions upon existing lawful businesses.

4.2.4.3 Policy P5 additionally recognises the importance of designing for public safety, particularly in places where people congregate and in contexts associated with the night-time economy.

4.2.5 Heritage

4.2.5.1 HE6 of the NPPF requires substantial weight to be given to conservation of designated heritage assets and any harm to be accorded considerable importance and

weight. Where development affects a Conservation Area, the contribution of the existing site and the public benefits of change therefore require careful consideration.

4.3 Pendle Local Plan Fourth Edition

4.3.1 Town-Centre Role

4.3.1.1 Policy SP06 places Barnoldswick within the highest tier of Pendle's retail hierarchy and identifies it as a focus for retail and leisure serving both the town and a wider rural catchment. This gives strong strategic support to measures which reinforce the centre as a destination for social, cultural and economic activity.

4.3.2 Healthy and Vibrant Communities

4.3.2.1 Policy SP12 seeks healthy and vibrant communities and expressly supports improvements to the quality and accessibility of open space and green infrastructure.

4.3.2.2 This is relevant when considering both the physical environment of the Square and its practical accessibility to a wider range of users. Retention or enhancement of meaningful green infrastructure should form part of that assessment.

4.3.3 Design and Placemaking

4.3.3.1 Policy DM16 requires high-quality design which responds to townscape, heritage, vegetation, open space and other aspects of context. It seeks retention of positive environmental characteristics alongside improvement of poorer ones and requires spaces to be accessible and usable across age, gender and disability.

4.3.3.2 For the Town Square, this points towards selective enhancement rather than indiscriminate replacement. Existing elements which make a positive contribution should have a presumption towards retention unless a demonstrably better overall public-realm outcome can be secured.

4.3.4 Historic Environment

4.3.4.1 Policies SP11 and DM18 seek conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of Pendle's historic environment. They require proposals to be informed by an understanding

of context and significance, with attention to scale, materials and architectural detail and to the wider public benefits that heritage can provide.

4.3.4.2 The policies do not preclude contemporary additions. They do, however, require a permanent stage, pavilion, shelter or other structure to demonstrate that its design responds positively to the conservation-area setting.

4.3.5 Environmental Protection

4.3.5.1 Policy DM13 addresses environmental protection, including noise and lighting. This is especially relevant where changes could intensify evening events or introduce new lighting into a historic public space.

4.3.6 Vibrant Town Centres and Licensed Uses

4.3.6.1 Policy DM42 reflects an adopted recognition that successful town centres require more than retail alone. Its supporting text identifies green infrastructure as capable of creating safe spaces and promoting social interaction. The policy also recognises the role of diversified uses while seeking to prevent unacceptable effects from noise, litter, disturbance and antisocial behaviour and to promote public safety.

4.3.6.2 Although DM42 principally governs development proposals rather than the day-to-day management of existing lawful businesses, its policy balance is instructive: vitality and diversity are encouraged, but not at the expense of amenity, safety or the overall environmental quality of the centre.

4.4 Emerging Pendle Local Plan Fifth Edition

4.4.1 Pendle Borough Council commenced preparation of a Fifth Edition Local Plan in 2026. Its published timetable identifies a scoping consultation running from 14 August to 14 September 2026, with substantive proposed-plan content not expected until later stages.

4.4.2 At this very early stage, the Fifth Edition does not provide a substantive alternative development-management policy basis for the Town Square and carries limited weight compared with the recently adopted Fourth Edition.

4.4.3 Its relevance is principally one of horizon scanning. The Council should remain aware that the strategic planning framework will evolve during the period over which any longer-term comprehensive public-realm project might be developed.

4.5 Barnoldswick Town Centre Masterplan 2024

4.5.1 Status and Purpose

4.5.1.1 The June 2024 Barnoldswick Town Centre Masterplan was commissioned by Pendle Borough Council as a regeneration toolkit. It was prepared through multidisciplinary urban-design, transport, property, economic and engagement work and identifies projects intended to guide longer-term regeneration.

4.5.1.2 The Masterplan is therefore materially broader than this review. It asks how Barnoldswick town centre should evolve as a whole. This report asks a narrower operational and planning question: how the Town Council should understand and incrementally improve the particular civic space under its control.

4.5.2 Findings Relevant to the Square

4.5.2.1 Importantly, the Masterplan did not diagnose the Town Square itself as a poor-quality space. It regarded the Square as an attractive, characterful and comparatively high-quality part of the centre, while identifying poorer public realm and connectivity in the streets surrounding it.

4.5.2.2 Its public-engagement findings recorded support for seating around the Square, heritage-sensitive street furniture and lighting, enhanced greening and additional public events, including activities aimed at younger people.

4.5.2.3 The Masterplan consequently provides useful support for an evolutionary approach. Its evidence does not suggest that the Square's fundamental spatial arrangement is incapable of functioning; rather, it points towards improvements in connection, seating, greening, event use and the surrounding public realm.

4.5.2.4 The Masterplan should continue to inform any larger subsequent design exercise, but its former planning-policy baseline should be updated against the adopted Fourth Edition Local Plan and 2026 NPPF.

4.6 Barnoldswick Conservation Area Character Appraisal

4.6.1 The Conservation Area Character Appraisal provides particularly relevant site-specific heritage evidence because it addresses the Town Square directly.

4.6.2 Its identification of the Square as a positive social focus, together with express recognition of its sympathetic materials, street furniture, trees and planters, means that the existing public realm carries an established degree of heritage value in its own right.

4.6.3 Any redesign which removes established planting, changes the proportion of hard landscaping or introduces a permanent structure should therefore demonstrate not simply that the new element has utility, but that the resulting composition sustains or improves the character and usability of the Square as a whole.

4.7 Permitted Development and Other Consent Routes

4.7.1 General Position

4.7.1.1 Not every intervention considered in this report would require a conventional planning application. Some activities may not amount to development at all, while others may benefit from permitted-development rights under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended.

4.7.1.2 Permitted development should nevertheless be treated as a legal route to carrying out qualifying development rather than as a substitute for good planning or design. The heritage, amenity and operational effects of an intervention remain relevant to the Council's own decision-making even where express planning permission is unnecessary.

4.7.2 Part 12 Class A – Development by Local Authorities

4.7.2.1 Part 12 Class A of the GPDO provides a potentially important route for qualifying development by or on behalf of a local authority. For the purposes of Part 12, the definition of local authority expressly includes a parish council. A town council is the style of a parish council rather than a distinct tier with different planning powers, and is therefore capable in principle of falling within this provision.

4.7.2.2 Class A includes certain small ancillary buildings, works or equipment on land belonging to or maintained by the authority where required for a function exercised on that land. The definition of 'small' is subject to a maximum height of 4 metres or capacity of 200 cubic metres.

4.7.2.3 This may potentially be relevant to items such as certain shelters, seating, bins, small ancillary event infrastructure or a modest structure connected with the Council's functions on the Square.

4.7.2.4 It should not, however, be assumed that any structure erected by the Town Council automatically benefits from Class A. The ownership or maintenance of the land, ancillary character of the development, dimensions, purpose and relationship to a function exercised by the Council all need to be established.

4.7.2.5 A proposed permanent stage may merit assessment against Class A once final dimensions, design and function are known. If the Council intends to rely upon permitted development for a significant permanent structure, obtaining a Certificate of Lawfulness from Pendle Borough Council would provide greater certainty than proceeding solely on an informal interpretation.

4.7.2.6 In the case of Barnoldswick Town Square, any reliance upon Part 12 Class A must additionally be distinguished from the private restrictions contained within the transfer of title LA629649. The Town Council's ability to undertake qualifying development under the GPDO does not disapply its covenant to obtain the Borough Council of Pendle's prior written approval before erecting an additional building, wall, fence or other erection.

4.7.2.7 There is no Article 4 restriction in place preventing the exercise of permitted development rights.

4.7.3 Part 12 Class BA – Local-Authority Markets

4.7.3.1 Part 12 Class BA provides a specific permitted-development route for use of land for a market by or on behalf of a local authority together with moveable structures associated with that use, subject to the applicable exclusions. This provides the Town Council with potentially useful flexibility should regular markets form part of the future Usage Policy.

4.7.3.2 Planning permission is only one regulatory consideration. Market operation, highways, licensing, food safety and land-management requirements may continue to apply separately.

4.7.4 Part 4 Class B – Temporary Use of Land

4.7.4.1 The GPDO also contains a general temporary-use right under Part 4 Class B, ordinarily permitting use of land for temporary purposes for up to 28 days in a calendar year, subject to exclusions and detailed limitations.

4.7.4.2 This is potentially relevant to temporary installations, exhibitions, events or short-lived uses which amount to a material change of use. However, not every event constitutes development in the first place, and recurring or longer-term installations require fact-specific consideration.

4.7.4.3 Where the Council proposes a recurring seasonal installation occupying the Square for a prolonged period, it would be prudent to record the planning basis relied upon rather than assume that temporary status alone removes planning control.

4.7.5 Other Consents

4.7.5.1 Planning permission or permitted development does not displace other statutory or private controls. Depending on the intervention, these may include premises or event licensing, highway consent, advertisement consent, tree controls within the Conservation Area, building regulations, accessibility requirements, public-safety obligations and restrictive covenants.

4.7.5.2 Historic licensing information from 2018 demonstrates that the Square has previously been subject to a premises-licensing regime accommodating outdoor plays, films, music, dance and limited alcohol provision. The current licence, licensed area and conditions should be confirmed rather than relying upon the historic record.

5. Existing Function and Amenity Assessment

5.1 Civic Role

5.1.1 The Town Square's most significant characteristic is its civic neutrality. Unlike a shop, pub, community hall or private attraction, a public square can be occupied without a predetermined activity and without payment. That quality gives it value even during periods when relatively little appears to be happening.

5.1.2 Future changes should therefore be judged partly by whether they preserve the ability of the Square to accommodate uses which cannot easily be anticipated in advance.

5.1.3 Permanent infrastructure can improve a square where it addresses a recurring need, but excessive specialisation can reduce civic flexibility. The objective should be to enable activity without prescribing too narrowly what that activity must be.

5.1.4 The civic character described above is not solely a planning or placemaking aspiration. It is reinforced by the terms upon which the land has been transferred to Barnoldswick Town Council, which expressly restrict its use to the established use of a **town square**. The strategic objective of maintaining an adaptable and recognisably public space is therefore consistent both with planning policy and with the private framework governing the Council's ownership.

5.2 Everyday Use

5.2.1 Outside programmed events, the Square currently provides seating, pedestrian circulation, meeting space and commercial spill-out. These are legitimate and valuable town-centre functions.

5.2.2 The principal identified deficiency is not necessarily physical deterioration but the relatively limited range of positive everyday reasons for different groups to remain within the Square.

5.2.3 A resident buying lunch, an older person resting between errands, a parent with a young child, a teenager meeting friends, a worker taking a break, a visitor orientating themselves and customers of nearby hospitality businesses should all be able to understand that the Square is available to them.

5.2.4 Increasing the range of such ordinary uses would make the Square more resilient than relying predominantly upon scheduled events to generate civic activity.

5.3 Events and Temporary Uses

5.3.1 Event use is one of the Square's established strengths. Brass bands, seasonal celebrations, the Christmas lights switch-on and temporary family-oriented events demonstrate that the space is already culturally productive.

5.3.2 The temporary sandpit installation observed during the site inspection is particularly illustrative. It radically altered the use and demographic character of part of the Square without requiring permanent reconfiguration.

5.3.3 This provides a useful model for future experimentation. If the Council is uncertain whether a use will attract demand, a temporary pilot can generate evidence before permanent investment is made.

5.3.4 An expanded programme should not simply seek a greater number of events. Programming should instead address gaps in the present offer: activities for adolescents and young adults, older residents, community organisations, informal cultural activity and events which do not require substantial expenditure or alcohol consumption.

5.4 Commercial Spill-Out and Hospitality Uses

5.4.1 Commercial spill-out is not inherently inconsistent with good public realm. Café tables and well-managed hospitality activity can animate edges, increase surveillance and contribute to a sense of conviviality.

5.4.2 The difficulty arises where the visual or functional extent of commercial activity becomes such that members of the public reasonably perceive the wider space as belonging to a particular business or category of business.

5.4.3 This perception can occur even where there is no physical exclusion. A concentration of pub furniture, customers and drinking activity may signal to a family, an older resident or a non-customer that the space is not primarily intended for them.

5.4.4 The future Usage Policy should therefore seek a legible balance between areas available to surrounding businesses and areas which remain unmistakably public. Subject to land ownership and licensing arrangements, commercial furniture should be managed so that principal movement routes and meaningful areas of free seating and dwell space remain available.

5.4.5 A successful policy should be cooperative rather than punitive. Surrounding businesses have an interest in an attractive, well-used Town Square and should be regarded as partners in maintaining vitality and passive surveillance.

5.5 Inclusivity and Range of Users

5.5.1 The observations provided by the Council indicate that the Square can oscillate between two relatively strong identities: a family-oriented community/event space and an informal extension of surrounding hospitality activity.

5.5.2 Neither identity is problematic in isolation. The strategic weakness is that there is comparatively little built-in provision addressing users who fall between them.

5.5.3 Particular consideration should therefore be given to:

- a. older people who benefit from comfortable seating with backs and arms;
- b. adolescents and young adults who need legitimate informal social space without necessarily participating in organised children's activity;
- c. people with mobility or sensory impairments;
- d. people using the Square alone;
- e. workers and shoppers seeking short-duration seating;
- f. community organisations requiring modest temporary space;
- g. visitors requiring orientation, wayfinding and information; and

h. people wishing to occupy civic space without purchasing from an adjoining business.

5.5.4 It would be inappropriate to seek to remove younger people simply because groups of teenagers can sometimes be perceived as disorderly. Providing legitimate reasons and places for different age groups to occupy a well-overlooked civic space can itself contribute to a broader and more self-regulating public realm.

5.6 Antisocial Behaviour and Perceptions of Safety

5.6.1 Councillors reported antisocial behaviour as a concern affecting the Square, particularly in association with its evening context.

5.6.2 No sufficiently detailed objective evidence has been provided to determine the scale, timing, location or causes of those incidents. This report therefore treats antisocial behaviour as a reported management and perception issue rather than attributing causation to the surrounding licensed premises.

5.6.3 Before substantial physical works are justified principally as an antisocial-behaviour intervention, the Council should seek proportionate evidence from police, CCTV records, incident logs, complaints and cleansing or damage records.

5.6.4 In public-realm terms, the most appropriate response is generally to create conditions which favour legitimate use: good visibility, appropriate lighting, active frontages, clean and maintained surroundings, clear movement routes and a broad mix of users throughout the day.

5.6.5 Design should avoid unnecessarily hostile responses which diminish the amenity of legitimate users. Measures which make seating deliberately uncomfortable or remove places to gather can displace activity without improving the civic quality of the Square.

5.7 Flexibility

5.7.1 Flexibility is one of the Town Square's strongest existing qualities and should be treated as an explicit design criterion.

5.7.2 A useful test for every proposed permanent addition is therefore:

Does this intervention enable more valuable uses than it prevents?

5.7.3 Items which support several functions—such as accessible seating, event power, lighting, planting, movable furniture and well-positioned anchor points—are likely to provide stronger value than single-purpose infrastructure unless the latter responds to a clearly evidenced recurring need.

5.8 Heritage and Visual Amenity

5.8.1 The historic setting provides Barnoldswick with an advantage over more generic modern public spaces. The Square should not seek distinctiveness through unnecessary visual novelty where its existing townscape already provides identity.

5.8.2 New furniture or structures need not reproduce historic forms, but should demonstrate material quality, coherent proportions and an understanding of their conservation-area setting.

5.8.3 Planting should form part of this identity. The Conservation Area Appraisal's express recognition of trees and planters strengthens the case for retaining green infrastructure as a meaningful component of any future scheme.

5.9 Summary of Strengths

5.9.1 The principal strengths of Barnoldswick Town Square are assessed as follows:

Strength	Strategic significance
Central town-centre position	High accessibility and visibility; natural civic focus
Established identity	Residents already understand the Square as a public venue
Attractive historic setting	Provides character and destination value
Flexible open layout	Allows adaptation for different event scales

Existing events programme	Demonstrates proven demand and organisational capacity
Surrounding active businesses	Footfall, economic activity and passive surveillance
Existing seating and planting	Everyday amenity and human-scale character
Town Council management	Allows programming and incremental intervention
Existing strategic support	Masterplan and planning policy favour town-centre vitality and improved public realm

5.10 Summary of Weaknesses

5.10.1 The principal weaknesses are assessed as follows:

Weakness	Strategic significance
Uneven everyday demographic appeal	Limited reasons for some groups to remain in the Square
Reliance on programmed events for some forms of activity	Periods between events can have a narrower civic function
Hospitality spill-out can visually dominate	Risk that public space appears commercially controlled
Reported antisocial behaviour	Can affect perception and willingness to dwell

Limited evidence on ASB causes and timing	Makes targeted response difficult
Constraints from title/covenants	May limit permanent physical interventions
Heritage sensitivity	Requires high-quality and proportionate change
Boundary between Square and surrounding streets	Wider public-realm issues cannot be solved by Town Council land alone
Potential tension between permanent infrastructure and flexibility	Poorly chosen additions could reduce the space's adaptability

6. Options Appraisal

6.1 Assessment Approach

6.1.1 The options below are deliberately arranged from least to most physically interventionist. They are not mutually exclusive and the preferred strategy may combine elements from several.

6.1.2 Each has been considered against the following principles: civic inclusivity, flexibility, heritage impact, support for surrounding businesses, public safety, likely planning complexity, capital commitment and ability to respond to the deficiencies identified above.

6.2 Option A – Retain the Existing Arrangement

6.2.1 Description

6.2.1.1 The least interventionist option would retain the Square substantially as existing, relying upon routine maintenance and the established events programme without material changes to management or physical provision.

6.2.2 Advantages

6.2.2.1 This option would involve minimal capital expenditure, preserve the established conservation-area character, avoid title and planning complications and retain maximum flexibility for events.

6.2.3 Disadvantages

6.2.3.1 It would not address the identified imbalance in everyday use, reported concerns regarding the evening environment or the perceived dominance of hospitality spill-out at certain times.

6.2.4 Assessment

6.2.4.1 Retention of the existing physical framework is supported, but simple continuation without any management or amenity intervention is not recommended as the Council's long-term strategy.

6.3 Option B – Management and Programming-Led Change

6.3.1 Description

6.3.1.1 This option would prioritise how the Square is used rather than how it is physically rebuilt.

6.3.1.2 Measures could include a more diverse annual events programme, clearer event-booking requirements, identified areas for commercial spill-out, defined expectations for furniture and reinstatement, programming aimed at underrepresented age groups, and stronger coordination between the Town Council, businesses and event organisers.

6.3.2 Opportunities

6.3.2.1 Programming has the advantage of being comparatively inexpensive and adaptable. Activities can be discontinued or adjusted if unsuccessful.

6.3.2.2 The Council could use the Usage Policy to promote a balanced calendar rather than simply processing event requests reactively.

6.3.2.3 Possible activities might include small markets, community exhibitions, book or craft events, heritage interpretation, youth-oriented cultural events, outdoor games, low-volume performances, food events, public art, community-group showcases and temporary installations.

6.3.3 Assessment

6.3.3.1 This option is strongly recommended and should form the foundation of the Council's immediate approach.

6.4 Option C – Light-Touch and Reversible Public-Realm Intervention

6.4.1 Description

6.4.1.1 A second level of intervention would introduce modest physical changes which remain movable, temporary or easily reversible.

6.4.2 Potential Measures

6.4.2.1 Examples include:

- a. movable chairs and tables supplementing fixed benches;
- b. additional accessible seating with backs and arms;
- c. temporary planting or movable planters;
- d. seasonal shade or shelter;
- e. temporary art or heritage installations;
- f. low-key games or playable furniture;
- g. trial performance layouts;
- h. temporary market infrastructure;
- i. flexible event furniture; and
- j. temporary wayfinding or interpretation.

6.4.3 Advantages

6.4.3.1 This approach enables the Council to observe how people actually respond before committing to permanent works.

6.4.3.2 It is particularly well suited to the identified strategic problem because the objective is to diversify users rather than remedy a fundamental physical failure.

6.4.4 Heritage and Management

6.4.4.1 Temporary items should still be selected to complement the Conservation Area and should not create excessive street clutter. A coherent palette of furniture and materials would be preferable to an accumulation of unrelated interventions.

6.4.5 Assessment

6.4.5.1 This option is strongly recommended alongside Option B.

6.5 Option D – Targeted Permanent Improvements

6.5.1 Description

6.5.1.1 Once evidence has been gathered from programming and temporary trials, targeted permanent works can be directed towards recurring needs.

6.5.2 Potential Forms of Permanent Intervention

6.5.2.1 Targeted permanent improvements need not amount to comprehensive redesign of the Town Square. Rather, individual interventions could be introduced where they respond to an identified deficiency while retaining the existing layout, planting and overall flexibility of the space.

6.5.2.2 Such interventions could take a variety of forms. A small, open-sided pavilion or gazebo could provide shelter and informal seating during ordinary use while also accommodating small-scale performances, community activity or event functions when required. Other measures might include additional accessible seating; integrated tables; modest areas of shelter or shade; improved lighting; drinking-water provision; cycle parking; additional or redesigned planting; wayfinding or heritage interpretation; and carefully located infrastructure to support markets and temporary events.

6.5.2.3 Permanent event infrastructure may also offer greater utility than a structure dedicated exclusively to performance. Subject to technical feasibility, power connections, water provision, anchor points, data connections, discrete storage or adaptable servicing points could reduce the cost and complexity of temporary events while leaving the central space substantially unobstructed between them.

6.5.2.4 The benefit of this approach is that permanent investment can remain proportionate and multipurpose. A small pavilion, for example, could provide everyday amenity on substantially more days of the year than a conventional raised stage while retaining the capacity to support performance activity when required. The appropriate form would need to respond to the Conservation Area, existing planting, visibility and

movement through the Square, together with the title covenant and relevant planning controls.

6.5.2.5 The precise intervention should therefore follow evidence of need rather than precede it. The objective should be to identify relatively modest permanent additions which increase the range of activities the Square can accommodate without materially diminishing its established civic openness and adaptability.

6.5.3 Seating and Amenity

6.5.3.1 A mix of seating types could improve everyday inclusivity. Fixed benches perform a different function from chairs around tables, seats suitable for older users, perch seating or informal social seating.

6.5.4 Lighting and Safety

6.5.4.1 A lighting review could identify whether existing illumination provides appropriate facial recognition, route legibility and surveillance without harming the historic character or creating excessive glare.

6.5.5 Greening

6.5.5.1 Existing planting should generally be retained or strengthened. Where individual planters are poorly positioned or difficult to maintain, redesign should seek a net improvement in green infrastructure rather than simple removal.

6.5.6 Accessibility and Movement

6.5.6.1 Any permanent intervention should preserve clear accessible routes through the Square, adequate space for wheelchair users and people with pushchairs, and emergency/event servicing arrangements.

6.5.7 Assessment

6.5.7.1 Targeted permanent improvement is recommended as a medium-term strategy once the Council has identified actual recurring needs through use and monitoring.

6.6 Option E – Permanent Performance Stage

6.6.1 Strategic Rationale

6.6.1.1 A permanent stage could provide a visible civic focus, reduce repeated assembly of temporary performance infrastructure and signal the Council's commitment to cultural programming.

6.6.1.2 There is clear evidence that performance is an established use of the Square, including brass-band and seasonal events.

6.6.2 Need

6.6.2.1 The existence of performances does not by itself establish that a permanent stage is required. The Square already accommodates performances using temporary arrangements.

6.6.2.2 Before a permanent structure is justified, the Council should establish:

- a. how frequently a stage is presently hired or assembled;
- b. the annual cost of temporary provision;
- c. which existing or potential events are constrained by the lack of a permanent stage;
- d. the dimensions genuinely required;
- e. likely frequency of use;
- f. responsibility for maintenance and inspection;
- g. whether a fixed stage would require barriers, power, lighting or other associated permanent infrastructure; and
- h. how the structure would function when no performance is taking place.

6.6.3 Loss of Existing Planter

6.6.3.1 The publicly described proposal involves removal of an existing stone planter. This engages both public-realm and heritage concerns because existing planting is specifically recognised in the Conservation Area Appraisal as contributing positively to the Square.

6.6.3.2 Loss would not necessarily make development unacceptable, but an application or design exercise would need to demonstrate why that location is preferable and how the wider landscape and townscape quality would be maintained or improved.

6.6.4 Flexibility

6.6.4.1 A permanent stage inevitably dedicates part of a flexible public square to a comparatively specific function. Its design should therefore seek useful secondary purposes when no performance takes place, or be sufficiently unobtrusive that it does not constrain ordinary civic use.

6.6.5 Noise and Surrounding Businesses

6.6.5.1 A permanent stage could facilitate an increase in live performance. Orientation, amplified sound, evening hours and cumulative activity should therefore be considered against nearby businesses and any residential receptors.

6.6.5.2 The presence of established pubs and other night-time uses is not a reason to resist further cultural activity, but it does make cumulative management relevant.

6.6.6 Covenant

6.6.6.1 The reported restrictive covenant represents a potentially determinative non-planning issue.

6.6.6.2 The relevant covenant prevents the Town Council from erecting any additional building, wall, fence or other erection without the prior written approval of the Borough Council of Pendle.

6.6.6.3 A permanent performance stage would be likely to require consideration against this provision. Whether the particular structure falls within the precise legal scope of "other erection" should ultimately be confirmed if necessary by the Council's legal advisers, but it would not be prudent to assume that a permanent stage falls outside the restriction.

6.6.6.4 Importantly, the covenant does not state that such development can never occur. It provides a mechanism through which Pendle Borough Council may approve it. The private title position should therefore be regarded as an additional project gateway rather than necessarily an absolute constraint.

6.6.6.5 Any approval from Pendle Borough Council under the covenant would remain separate from planning control. The TR1 itself expressly records that approval remains subject to all necessary planning permission and Building Regulations consents.

6.6.6.6 Before detailed expenditure upon the stage proceeds, Barnoldswick Town Council should therefore seek written confirmation from Pendle Borough Council as to whether it would be willing in principle to approve an appropriately designed performance structure under the terms of the transfer.

6.6.7 Planning Route

6.6.7.1 Depending on its final size, function and ownership position, a permanent stage may potentially be capable of consideration under Part 12 Class A permitted-development rights. This should not be assumed without a defined proposal.

6.6.7.2 If the Council wishes to pursue the stage, the recommended sequence is:

1. confirm title and covenant position;
2. prepare dimensioned concept designs and alternatives which test retention of existing planting;
3. establish operational need and frequency of use;
4. determine whether Part 12 Class A is applicable;
5. where appropriate, seek a Certificate of Lawfulness or pre-application advice;
6. undertake proportionate heritage and acoustic consideration; and
7. only thereafter proceed to detailed procurement or planning submission.

6.6.8 Overall Assessment

6.6.8.1 The permanent stage is **not rejected in principle**, but it is not recommended as the Council's immediate priority on the evidence currently available.

6.6.8.2 It addresses one established function—performance—more directly than it addresses the broader issue identified by this review, namely the inclusivity and everyday civic usefulness of the Square between organised events.

6.6.8.3 A temporary or demountable stage should therefore be regarded as the appropriate benchmark against which the benefits of permanence are demonstrated.

6.7 Option F – Comprehensive Redevelopment

6.7.1 Scope

6.7.1.1 At the highest level of intervention, the Council could commission a comprehensive redesign of the Town Square, potentially incorporating new surfacing, drainage, landscaping, lighting, furniture, performance infrastructure and changes to its relationship with surrounding streets.

6.7.2 Benefits

6.7.2.1 A comprehensive project offers the greatest opportunity to resolve circulation, accessibility, event servicing, planting and visual coherence as one coordinated scheme.

6.7.3 Limitations

6.7.3.1 It would also entail the greatest cost, disruption and professional input and would risk replacing public realm which existing evidence already regards as comparatively successful.

6.7.3.2 A redesign restricted only to the Town Council's ownership could also fail to address the more significant weaknesses identified in the 2024 Masterplan, many of which concern the adjoining street network and connection with surrounding buildings.

6.7.4 Requirements

6.7.4.1 Were comprehensive redevelopment pursued, it should involve:

- a. topographical and utilities surveys;
- b. landscape architecture and urban design;
- c. highway authority involvement;
- d. accessibility assessment;
- e. heritage assessment;
- f. event and servicing requirements;

- g. drainage and engineering input where necessary;
- h. capital cost planning;
- i. consultation with residents, businesses and community organisations; and
- j. pre-application engagement with Pendle Borough Council.

6.7.5 Assessment

6.7.5.1 Comprehensive redevelopment should be retained as a long-term possibility rather than pursued as the immediate response. The present evidence does not demonstrate that the Square's fundamental physical layout is the primary cause of its identified weaknesses.

6.8 Comparative Options Summary

Option	Cost/complexity	Flexibility	Principal benefit	Principal concern	Recommendation
A – Existing arrangement	Low	Very high	Retains successful fabric	Does not address current deficiencies	Insufficient alone
B – Management/programming	Low-moderate	Very high	Broadens use without capital works	Requires ongoing Council capacity	Priority
C – Reversible interventions	Low-moderate	High	Tests demand and diversifies amenity	Requires active management	Priority

D – Targeted permanent works	Moderate	High if well designed	Resolves demonstrated recurring needs	Needs design/technical work	Recommended medium term
E – Permanent stage	Moderate-high	Medium	Dedicated event facility	Covenant, planter loss, heritage, single-use footprint	Defer pending evidence
F – Comprehensive redesign	High	Design dependent	Holistic transformation	Cost, disruption, presently weak evidence of need	Long-term only

7. Recommended Strategy

7.1 Strategic Principles

7.1.1 The recommended strategy is based upon eight principles.

7.1.2 Protect the Square's civic character. The Square should remain recognisably available to everybody rather than becoming dominated by any single commercial, age-specific or programmed use.

7.1.3 Broaden its everyday demographic appeal. Improvements should provide legitimate and comfortable reasons for a wider range of people to spend time in the Square.

7.1.4 Preserve flexibility. Permanent additions should be justified by recurring needs and should enable more uses than they displace.

7.1.5 Support surrounding businesses without commercialising the whole space. Hospitality spill-out can contribute positively while clearly free public areas are retained.

7.1.6 Conserve and enhance heritage and greening. Existing positive townscape and landscape features should be retained or replaced by demonstrably superior provision.

7.1.7 Address safety through positive use and good design. Lighting, visibility, maintenance, activity and broad legitimate occupation should take precedence over hostile or exclusionary design.

7.1.8 Test before fixing. Temporary and reversible interventions should be used to establish actual demand wherever practical before major capital works.

7.1.9 Coordinate with the wider town centre. Longer-term improvements should acknowledge that the Square's relationship with surrounding streets and businesses extends beyond the Town Council's ownership.

7.2 Preferred Overall Approach

7.2.1 The preferred strategy is therefore an **incremental stewardship approach** rather than either simple preservation or immediate redevelopment.

7.2.2 The Town Square should be treated as an established asset capable of refinement. Its successful event function, heritage setting and flexible central space provide a strong baseline from which targeted improvements can be made.

7.2.3 The principal first task should be to increase the diversity of ordinary users and activities. Where physical changes are made, they should initially be reversible and capable of adaptation.

7.3 Immediate Actions – 0 to 6 Months

7.3.1 The Council should prepare its Town Square Usage Policy around the strategic principles identified in Section 7.1.

7.3.2 A simple annual event audit should be established, recording event type, organiser, attendance where known, physical layout, duration, complaints, operational difficulties and approximate Council resource requirement.

7.3.3 The Council should review its historic event programme and identify demographic or functional gaps rather than simply seeking additional events of the same character.

7.3.4 The Council should confirm the legal and spatial extent of commercial spill-out around surrounding premises and determine whether clearer delineation is desirable.

7.3.5 A proportionate baseline of antisocial-behaviour evidence should be assembled using available police, CCTV, complaint and maintenance records.

7.3.6 A small programme of movable or temporary public-realm interventions should be considered. Their success should be monitored before permanent equivalents are procured.

7.3.7 The Council should obtain and retain an up-to-date official copy of the register and title plan for LA629649, together with the completed and dated TR1 and any deeds or documents referred to in the register.

7.3.8 Before commissioning detailed design for any permanent stage or comparable structure, the Council should establish the Borough Council of Pendle's position under the covenant requiring prior written approval for additional buildings, walls, fences or other erections.

7.3.9 The title documentation, premises licence, highway boundaries and any approvals granted by Pendle Borough Council should thereafter be maintained together as an operational property record for the Square. This would allow future temporary and permanent proposals to be screened efficiently before expenditure is committed.

7.4 Short- to Medium-Term Actions – 6 to 24 Months

7.4.1 Following a period of monitoring, the Council should identify recurring physical constraints experienced by event organisers and everyday users.

7.4.2 Targeted capital expenditure should then address those evidenced constraints, potentially including event servicing, additional accessible seating, lighting, planting, waste provision, cycle parking, interpretation and minor accessibility works.

7.4.3 Any works should use a coherent palette appropriate to the Conservation Area rather than being commissioned incrementally without an overall design language.

7.4.4 Where the permanent performance stage remains an ambition, its operational business case and planning/legal feasibility should be tested during this period.

7.5 Longer-Term Actions – 2 Years and Beyond

7.5.1 Comprehensive public-realm redesign should only be considered if monitoring demonstrates that the existing spatial arrangement materially prevents achievement of the Council's strategic objectives.

7.5.2 Any such project should revisit the recommendations of the 2024 Masterplan and ideally consider the Town Square together with its approaches and adjoining streets.

7.5.3 At that stage, a multidisciplinary design team and public consultation would be proportionate.

7.6 Monitoring Success

7.6.1 The success of the strategy should not be measured simply by counting events.

7.6.2 Suitable indicators could include:

- a. diversity of event types;
- b. observed variety of everyday users;
- c. daytime and evening dwell activity;
- d. number and nature of ASB complaints;
- e. cleanliness and maintenance incidents;
- f. feedback from event organisers;
- g. balance between free public space and commercial spill-out;
- h. use of temporary seating or new facilities; and
- i. effects on surrounding business activity.

7.6.3 A simple photographic record taken at consistent locations and times across the year could provide a particularly inexpensive means of understanding how the Square functions under different conditions.

8. Implications for the Town Square Usage Policy

8.1 Purpose of a Usage Policy

8.1.1 The eventual Usage Policy should translate the broad planning and public-realm principles of this report into transparent operational rules.

8.1.2 Its purpose should be neither to maximise activity at all times nor to prohibit activities capable of causing inconvenience. Instead, it should establish how competing legitimate uses of a finite civic space can coexist.

8.2 Matters the Policy Should Address

8.2.1 Subject to the Council's legal powers and separate advice where necessary, the Usage Policy should consider:

- a. the overriding civic purpose of the Square;
- b. eligibility and procedures for organised events;
- c. distinction between community, charitable and commercial events;
- d. areas and maximum extents for temporary occupation;
- e. commercial spill-out and outdoor furniture;
- f. operating and event hours;
- g. amplified music and noise management;
- h. alcohol-related activity where relevant;
- i. temporary structures and installations;
- j. emergency and servicing access;

- k. accessibility and maintenance of pedestrian routes, including preservation of public movement during events and temporary occupations;
- l. protection of planting, furniture and surfaces;
- m. waste, cleaning and reinstatement;
- n. insurance and event-safety documentation;
- o. protection of the conservation-area character;
- p. arrangements for power and other Council infrastructure;
- q. treatment of recurring or long-duration events;
- r. identification of proposals which may require separate consent from the Borough Council of Pendle under the transfer covenants;
- s. a procedure for distinguishing ordinary temporary use and management activity from proposals involving permanent structures or substantial exclusive occupation; and
- t. processes for complaints and periodic review.

8.3 Avoiding Over-Prescription

8.3.1 The policy should avoid being so prescriptive that novel community activity becomes difficult to accommodate. The value of a town square lies partly in uses which could not have been anticipated when a policy was drafted.

8.3.2 Wherever possible, the policy should therefore establish principles and thresholds, with proportionate discretion retained for the Council to approve unusual but beneficial uses.

8.4 Public and Commercial Space

8.4.1 The policy should make clear that supporting surrounding businesses is consistent with the objectives of the Town Square, but that the Square remains a civic asset.

8.4.2 Any authorised commercial occupation should consequently preserve sufficient free seating, pedestrian movement and unprogrammed public space to ensure that non-customers remain equally entitled and practically able to use the Square.

8.5 Events

8.5.1 Event assessment should consider not simply whether an event can physically fit but whether it contributes to a balanced annual programme.

8.5.2 The Council may reasonably distinguish between repeated events which duplicate existing provision and activities which widen the range of people using the Square.

8.6 Relationship with Planning Control

8.6.1 The Usage Policy should not purport to grant planning permission or determine whether development is lawful.

8.6.2 Where a proposed event, structure or change exceeds ordinary management activity, the Council should separately establish whether it amounts to development and whether express planning permission, permitted development, a Certificate of Lawfulness or another consent route is applicable.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Overall Assessment

9.1.1 Barnoldswick Town Square is an established and generally successful civic space. Its central location, conservation-area character, existing landscaping, relationship with surrounding businesses and established programme of public events provide a strong foundation for continued use.

9.1.2 The evidence does not indicate a Square requiring wholesale physical rescue. Indeed, both the 2024 Masterplan and Conservation Area Appraisal identify positive qualities which should be protected through future decision-making.

9.1.3 The principal challenge is subtler. The Square can accommodate substantial activity, but activity is not distributed evenly across uses or groups. At times it operates particularly successfully as a family or event space; at others, surrounding hospitality activity can exert a strong influence over its character. Between these conditions, its everyday offer to the wider community is comparatively limited.

9.1.4 The Council should therefore distinguish between increasing the **quantity** of activity and improving the **breadth and quality** of civic use.

9.1.5 The private ownership framework supports this conclusion. The terms upon which the property has been transferred expressly preserve its use as a town square and subject additional permanent erections to the approval of the Borough Council of Pendle. The appropriate strategic starting point is therefore stewardship and enhancement of an established civic asset, rather than approaching the land as an unrestricted redevelopment opportunity.

9.2 Preferred Strategy

9.2.1 The preferred approach is to retain the successful underlying public-realm structure while progressively broadening its use through programming, management and reversible intervention.

9.2.2 This should be followed by selective permanent investment where actual experience identifies recurring needs. Event infrastructure, seating, lighting, greening, accessibility and other multi-purpose improvements are likely to provide broader civic benefit than prematurely dedicating significant space to a single function.

9.2.3 Surrounding pubs, bars and other businesses should be viewed as important components of a vibrant Town Centre rather than as problems to be designed out. At the same time, the Town Council should preserve the visual and functional distinction between business spill-out and genuinely public space.

9.2.4 Reported antisocial behaviour warrants attention, but substantial physical intervention should be informed by evidence as to when and where problems occur. The strongest long-term response is likely to combine active management, legitimate mixed use, appropriate lighting, natural surveillance and good maintenance rather than rely upon exclusionary design.

9.3 Permanent Stage

9.3.1 The proposed permanent stage is a potentially legitimate future intervention but does not presently emerge as the highest-priority recommendation of this review.

9.3.2 Its principal benefit would be improved permanent performance infrastructure. Against this must be weighed the loss or alteration of established landscaping, potential heritage effects, reduction in spatial flexibility, the extent to which performances already operate successfully using temporary arrangements, and the additional private consent required from the Borough Council of Pendle for qualifying permanent erections under the transfer.

9.3.3 The proposal should therefore be taken forward only following confirmation of the title position, evidence of operational need, preparation of an appropriate design and confirmation of the correct planning route.

9.4 Long-Term Potential

9.4.1 A comprehensive redesign should remain available as a longer-term option rather than become the default response.

9.4.2 If ultimately pursued, its greatest value would be in addressing the Square and its surrounding streets as one piece of public realm, building upon rather than duplicating the broader work already undertaken through the 2024 Town Centre Masterplan.

9.4.3 Until such a need is demonstrated, Barnoldswick Town Council has an opportunity to improve the Town Square through comparatively modest interventions: treating it not as an empty site waiting for development, but as an existing civic asset requiring active and considered stewardship.

9.4.4 On this basis, the central recommendation of this review is:

Retain what works; broaden who the Square works for; test change before making it permanent; and ensure that any eventual capital intervention increases rather than reduces the civic flexibility which presently gives Barnoldswick Town Square much of its value.