

Barnoldswick Town Square Usage Policy

Draft for consideration by Barnoldswick Town Council 17/09/2026

1. Purpose

Barnoldswick Town Square is a civic asset and an important part of the town centre. Its purpose is to provide an attractive, welcoming and flexible public space for residents, visitors, community organisations, businesses and event organisers.

The Council's aim is to ensure that the Square:

- remains a genuinely public space;
- supports a wide range of residents and visitors;
- encourages positive and desirable activity;
- supports the vitality of the town centre and surrounding businesses;
- provides opportunities for community, cultural, family and recreational activities;
- protects the Square's historic and Conservation Area character;
- remains flexible enough to accommodate different activities and events;
- provides opportunities for people to use and enjoy the Square even when no organised event is taking place.

The purpose of this policy is **not to maximise activity at all times**, nor to prevent activities simply because they may cause some inconvenience. Its purpose is to provide a fair and transparent framework for managing competing legitimate uses of a finite civic space.

2. Guiding Principles

All proposed uses of the Square should be considered against the following principles:

Civic use

The Square should remain primarily a public civic space. Activities should not prevent residents who are not participating in an event from using it.

Inclusivity

The Council should encourage activities that broaden the range of people using the Square, including families, young people, older residents, community groups and visitors.

Positive activity

The Council will favour activities which encourage people to spend time in the Square, create natural activity and surveillance, and contribute positively to the town centre.

Supporting local businesses

The Square should complement and support surrounding businesses by encouraging footfall and activity. However, commercial activity must not result in the Square appearing or functioning as private or exclusive space.

Heritage and character

The Square sits within the Barnoldswick Conservation Area. Activities, temporary structures, furniture and installations should respect its historic setting and existing planting, seating and public-realm character.

Flexibility

The Square's ability to accommodate different activities is one of its strengths. New arrangements should enable more valuable uses than they prevent.

Safety and accessibility

Events must maintain safe, accessible pedestrian routes, emergency access and appropriate arrangements for people with disabilities, older people and families.

Proportionate management

Requirements placed on organisers should be proportionate to the size, nature and potential impact of the activity.

3. Activities the Council Wishes to Encourage

The Council will actively encourage activities which enhance the character of the Square and contribute to a balanced programme.

These may include:

Community

- Community group showcases
- Charity and voluntary organisation events
- Community information days
- Local club activities
- Community exhibitions
- Neighbourhood and civic events

Arts and Culture

- Local art exhibitions
- Temporary public art
- Craft events
- Poetry and spoken-word events
- Small theatre and performance activities

- Dance and cultural performances
- Local music and acoustic performances

Heritage

- Local history exhibitions
- Heritage interpretation
- Historical displays
- Heritage walks and activities linked to the Square
- Celebrations of Barnoldswick's local character and history

Family Activities

- Family activity days
- Children's craft activities
- Storytelling
- Outdoor games
- Seasonal activities
- Small family entertainment
- Temporary play installations

Young People

- Youth arts projects
- Youth music and performance
- School and college activities
- Youth-led exhibitions
- Creative projects
- Low-key games and activities

Markets and Local Enterprise

- Small community markets
- Craft and makers' markets
- Local produce events
- Food events
- Local business showcases
- Seasonal markets
- Events promoting local independent businesses

Wellbeing and Recreation

- Community walking activities
- Gentle outdoor activities
- Social and wellbeing groups
- Appropriate outdoor games
- Activities encouraging people to sit, meet and spend time in the Square

Environmental and Green Activities

- Community planting activities
- Gardening demonstrations
- Seasonal planting displays
- Environmental awareness events
- Temporary planting and planters

Seasonal and Civic Events

- Christmas activities
- Christmas Switch-On
- Family Fun Day/Gala
- Remembrance and civic occasions
- Seasonal celebrations
- Other significant town or community occasions

These activities reflect the report's recommended approach of broadening the programme beyond existing event types and include markets, community exhibitions, book and craft events, heritage interpretation, youth cultural activities, outdoor games, low-volume performances, food events, public art, community-group showcases and temporary installations.

4. Major Events

The Council recognises that larger events form an important part of the Square's role.

The Council may support a limited number of major town-wide events each year, with particular consideration given to events which:

- attract visitors to Barnoldswick;
- benefit local businesses;
- provide activities for a broad range of residents;
- contribute to the town's identity;

- are well managed and appropriately resourced; and
- do not prevent reasonable public access to the Square for an unreasonable period.

The Council should seek to balance major events with smaller activities throughout the year rather than relying solely on large, resource-heavy programmed events.

When considering event applications, the Council should consider whether the proposed activity adds something to the annual programme or simply duplicates existing provision.

5. Commercial Use and Business Spill-Out

The Council recognises the important contribution made by surrounding hospitality and other businesses.

Commercial activity can provide:

- footfall;
- economic activity;
- passive surveillance;
- animation and vitality; and
- support for the wider town centre.

However, the Square remains a civic asset.

Any commercial occupation must therefore:

- retain sufficient free public seating;
- maintain clear pedestrian movement;
- avoid unnecessarily dominating the Square;
- not prevent non-customers from using the space;
- comply with agreed limits on furniture and occupation;
- maintain emergency and servicing access; and
- be removed or reinstated when required.

The Council should clearly identify areas and maximum extents for commercial spill-out where appropriate.

6. Events and Temporary Occupation

Anyone wishing to organise an event requiring organised occupation of the Square must apply through the Council's agreed booking process.

Applications should provide, where appropriate:

- event details and timings;

- expected attendance;
- layout plan;
- equipment and temporary structures;
- power requirements;
- noise/amplification arrangements;
- alcohol arrangements where relevant;
- accessibility arrangements;
- emergency arrangements;
- waste and cleaning arrangements;
- public liability insurance;
- event safety documentation (including Martyn's Law considerations); and
- arrangements for reinstating the Square.

The level of information required should be proportionate to the size and nature of the event.

7. Noise and Amplified Music

Music and entertainment are welcomed where they contribute positively to the Square.

However, organisers must consider:

- volume;
- operating hours;
- proximity to residential and other sensitive premises;
- the cumulative effect of repeated events;
- the character of the Square; and
- potential disturbance to surrounding businesses and residents.

Amplified music should be appropriate to the scale and nature of the event.

The Council may impose reasonable conditions on volume, timing or equipment where necessary.

8. Alcohol

Events involving alcohol will be considered individually and must comply with all relevant licensing requirements.

Alcohol-related activity should not result in the Square becoming perceived as primarily a drinking space.

Where alcohol is permitted, organisers must demonstrate appropriate arrangements for:

- licensing;
 - responsible service;
 - public safety;
 - waste;
 - toilets where appropriate;
 - event management; and
 - preventing unreasonable disturbance.
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9. Temporary Structures and Installations

Temporary structures may be appropriate where they support the use and enjoyment of the Square.

Examples include:

- temporary stages;
- market stalls;
- temporary seating;
- planters;
- seasonal shelter;
- art installations;
- heritage displays;
- games/play equipment;
- event furniture; and
- temporary wayfinding.

Temporary measures should, wherever possible:

- be visually appropriate;
- avoid unnecessary clutter;
- protect the Conservation Area character;
- preserve pedestrian movement;
- protect planting and surfaces; and
- be removed promptly following the activity.

The Council should favour reversible measures where there is uncertainty about long-term demand and should monitor their success before committing to permanent equivalents.

10. Permanent Structures

This policy does not prevent the Council from considering permanent infrastructure in the future.

Any proposal for a permanent structure should be considered separately and should demonstrate:

- a clear and recurring need;
- benefits to the Square and wider town;
- appropriate design and materials;
- compatibility with the Conservation Area;
- preservation or improvement of green infrastructure;
- accessibility;
- flexibility of use;
- maintenance and operating arrangements;
- financial value;
- planning requirements; and
- any legal or title restrictions.

A useful test should be:

“Does this intervention enable more valuable uses than it prevents?”

11. Accessibility and Public Movement

All events and temporary occupations must maintain appropriate pedestrian routes.

Organisers must consider the needs of:

- wheelchair users;
- people with mobility difficulties;
- visually impaired people;
- older residents;
- parents with pushchairs; and
- other users requiring clear and accessible routes.

The Square must remain practically accessible to people who are not attending an event.

Permanent or temporary changes should not unnecessarily restrict movement through the Square.

12. Protection of the Square

Organisers are responsible for ensuring that activities do not cause unreasonable damage to:

- planting;
- trees and planters;
- seating;
- paving and surfaces;
- lighting;
- street furniture;
- other Council infrastructure.

The existing planting and landscaping contribute to the character of the Square and should be retained or improved wherever possible.

13. Cleaning and Reinstatement

Event organisers must leave the Square clean and in the condition agreed with the Council.

This includes:

- removal of litter;
- removal of temporary equipment;
- cleaning of affected areas;
- removal of temporary signage;
- reinstatement of furniture; and
- reporting any damage.

The Council may require a deposit, bond or other appropriate arrangement for larger or higher-risk events, subject to its legal powers and procedures.

14. Emergency and Servicing Access

All event layouts must preserve appropriate emergency access.

The Council will also consider:

- delivery and servicing requirements;
- access for maintenance;
- waste collection;
- emergency vehicles; and
- access for Council contractors.

No event should create an unreasonable obstruction to these functions.

15. Event Priorities

When several events compete for the Square, priority should generally be given to activities which:

1. provide clear public benefit;
2. broaden the range of people using the Square;
3. support local businesses and town-centre vitality;
4. complement rather than duplicate existing activities;
5. support Barnoldswick's character and identity;
6. are inclusive and accessible;
7. are proportionate to the Square;
8. can be delivered safely and responsibly; and
9. maintain the Square as a public civic space.

The Council should retain discretion to support unusual or innovative proposals where they provide clear benefits to the town.

16. Activities Which May Be Restricted or Refused

The Council may restrict or refuse proposals where they would:

- unreasonably prevent public access;
- create significant or unreasonable noise or disturbance;
- cause unacceptable risk to public safety;
- damage planting, surfaces or heritage features;
- occupy an excessive area for an unreasonable period;
- create unreasonable obstruction;
- result in disproportionate commercial control of public space;
- duplicate existing provision without providing wider benefit;
- create unreasonable antisocial behaviour or nuisance;
- fail to provide appropriate safety or insurance documentation; or
- conflict with planning, licensing, legal or other statutory requirements.

The Council should not, however, use this policy to unnecessarily exclude innovative or unfamiliar community activities. The report specifically recommends retaining proportionate discretion for unusual but beneficial uses.

17. Complaints and Enforcement

The Council will maintain a process for receiving and considering complaints relating to events and use of the Square.

Where problems arise, the Council should seek proportionate solutions, which may include:

- discussion with the organiser;
 - revised event conditions;
 - changes to operating hours;
 - changes to layout;
 - noise controls;
 - additional cleaning;
 - restrictions on future bookings; or
 - refusal of future use where serious or repeated problems occur.
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18. Monitoring Success

The Council will review the operation of the Square and this policy periodically.

Success should not simply be measured by the number of events.

The Council should consider:

- diversity of event types;
- diversity of everyday users;
- daytime and evening use;
- time people spend in the Square;
- ASB complaints;
- cleanliness and maintenance incidents;
- feedback from event organisers;
- balance between public and commercial space;
- use of temporary seating and facilities; and
- effects on surrounding businesses.

A simple photographic record at consistent locations and times may also be used to understand how the Square functions throughout the year.

19. Review of the Policy

This policy should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to reflect:

- experience of using the Square;

- feedback from residents and businesses;
- changes in the Council's assets and responsibilities;
- changes to the events programme;
- evidence relating to antisocial behaviour;
- emerging opportunities for community use; and
- any relevant planning, licensing or legal changes.

The policy should remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate new activities and changing community needs.

Appendix A – Activities That Enhance the Character of the Square

The following list is intended as positive guidance rather than an exhaustive list.

Strongly encouraged

- Community exhibitions
- Heritage events and displays
- Local history activities
- Craft and makers' events
- Small community markets
- Local produce and food events
- Public art
- Temporary art installations
- Local music and low-volume performances
- Choirs and acoustic performances
- Youth cultural activities
- School and community performances
- Outdoor games
- Family activities
- Storytelling and book events
- Community group showcases
- Seasonal celebrations
- Local charity activities
- Community gardening and planting

- Temporary heritage interpretation
- Activities that promote local independent businesses
- Events which encourage people to visit and spend time in the town centre

Particularly valuable characteristics

Activities should, wherever possible:

Bring people together

Create opportunities for residents and visitors to meet and interact.

Celebrate Barnoldswick

Reflect the town's history, identity, culture and community.

Support local businesses

Generate footfall and encourage visitors to use surrounding shops, cafés, pubs and other businesses.

Include different generations

Provide opportunities for children, young people, adults and older residents.

Encourage repeat use

Give people reasons to return to the Square rather than relying entirely on occasional large events.

Look appropriate in the Square

Respect the historic setting, planting, furniture and visual character.

Leave room for everyday life

An event should not make the Square feel as though it belongs only to those attending the event.

Create positive activity

The overall aim should be to encourage legitimate, welcoming activity and natural surveillance rather than relying on restrictive or hostile measures to deal with antisocial behaviour. The report specifically identifies good visibility, appropriate lighting, active frontages, clean surroundings, clear routes and a broad mix of users as the preferred public-realm response.

Appendix B – Core Test for Proposals

When considering any proposed use of the Town Square, the Council should ask:

Does this activity make a positive contribution to the Square?

And:

1. Does it provide public benefit?
2. Does it broaden or support the range of people using the Square?
3. Does it support the town centre and local businesses?
4. Does it respect the Square's historic character?
5. Does it maintain public access?
6. Is it safe and accessible?

7. Is it proportionate to the size of the Square?
8. Can it be accommodated without damaging planting or infrastructure?
9. Does it complement rather than unnecessarily duplicate existing activity?
10. Does it encourage positive use and natural surveillance?
11. Is the impact on residents and surrounding businesses reasonable?
12. Does it preserve the Square's flexibility for other uses?

Where the answer is broadly yes, the Council should seek to enable the activity rather than unnecessarily restrict it.

Where there are concerns, the first response should normally be to explore whether appropriate conditions or modifications can make the activity acceptable.

The policy should remain flexible enough to allow new and beneficial uses that cannot necessarily be anticipated in advance.