

# **'The Pinfold' Public Open Space**

## **Design and Access Statement**

## 1. Introduction

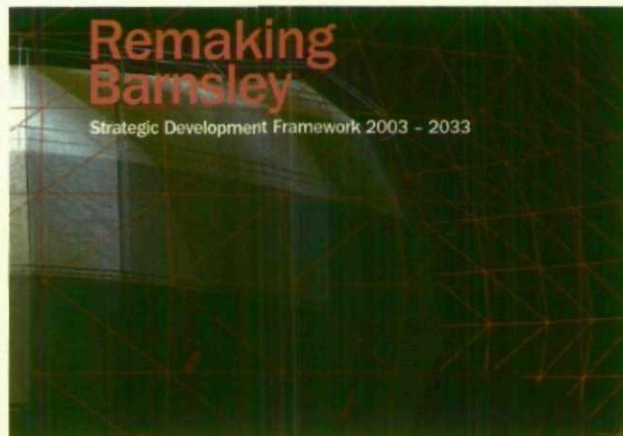
This Design and Access Statement gives details of the proposal for a Public Open Space at the existing Pinfold Steps. BMBC has secured Growth Point funding from the Leeds City Region for this project, which must be spent by close of the 2010/11 financial year. The intention is to create useable and high quality public space for those residents of Gateway Plaza and the Town Centre community generally. Gateway Plaza is a scheme with 188 apartments located directly adjacent to the subject site. It is desired to deliver a quality place as well as an open, inviting and safe route.

The site has a strong heritage, its name acknowledging the 'Pinfolds' of medieval times which were found mostly in the North and East of the country and built to hold animals who had been found straying.

### 1.1 Renaissance of the Town Centre

Barnsley is a Renaissance town in the Yorkshire Forward Renaissance Towns Initiative. A vision for the urban renaissance of Barnsley has been set out in 'Remaking Barnsley Strategic Development Framework 2003-2033' (SDF) prepared by Alsop Architects for the Council and Yorkshire Forward. The SDF rethinks the role of the Borough and of Barnsley town centre and sets out a 30 year vision. The main themes that emerged from the Framework relevant to this commission are:

- Provision of high quality urban design
- Managing the town's transport network to favour pedestrians, cyclists and people who use public transport
- Creating a 'Green Sprint' to link the town centre with the Dearne Valley Park
- Creating and improving public spaces and public art



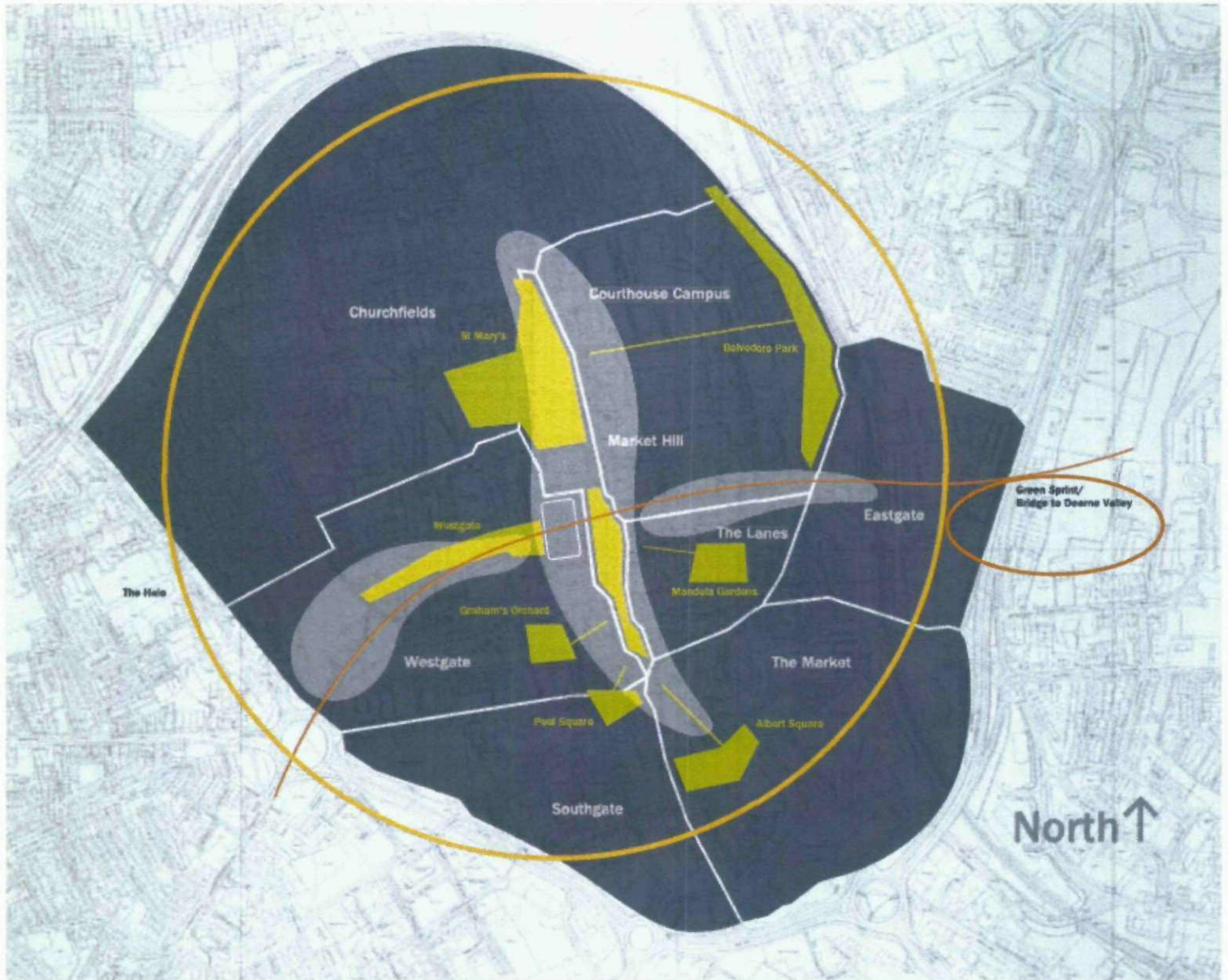
The vision for the public spaces in the town centre is;

*To create a unique and sustainable high quality town centre environment of beautiful and safe public spaces which will give rise to a distinct sense of place, cherished by the whole community and which will drive fundamental and lasting positive change to its image and identity. This will in turn underpin a prosperous future by attracting investment and economic regeneration.*

### 1.2 'Green Sprint'

The design of the Pinfold Steps Public Open Space will incorporate a key section of the 'Green Sprint' – identified by Will Alsop in the Strategic Development Framework as hugely important to the renaissance of Barnsley - which takes the form of a legible east-west course through the town centre out towards the Dearne Valley.

The Green Sprint, depicted below, begins in the west of the Town at Town End and follows the Pinfold Steps into Westgate by the Lamproom Theatre and the Gateway Plaza development. It then follows Westgate, the southern side of the Town Hall, Royal Street, Regent Street South, Barnsley Passenger Interchange and eastwards to the Dearne Valley.



### 1.3 Planning Policy Context

#### PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development and PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth

This National planning policy encourages the development and improvement of public spaces. PPS 1 is clear that it is an important priority, and PPS 4 specifically cites environmental quality, including trees, landscaping and open spaces as important indicators in Town Centre Health Check data.

#### Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

Policy YH4 of The Yorkshire and Humber Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2026, states that plans, strategies, investment decisions and programmes should 'develop a strong sense of place with a high quality of public realm and well-designed buildings within a clear framework of routes and spaces'.

#### Remaking Barnsley Strategic Development Framework 2003 - 2033

This high-profile document by Will Alsop sets out an ambitious vision for the town centre. It led to the advancement of a number of projects and initiatives, including the 2003 'Public Realm Strategy' commissioned by BMBC to guide public spaces improvements.

#### Public Spaces Strategy

In 2008, a 'Public Spaces Strategy' was commissioned, to analyse Barnsley's existing streets and spaces and propose a vision, priorities for investment, design guidance and briefs. The document hopes to make possible the creation of a unique, sustainable, high quality town centre environment of beautiful, user friendly public spaces.

#### Barnsley LDF – Core Strategy February 2010 Publication

The Core Strategy sets out the key elements of the planning framework for Barnsley, and the approach to its long-term physical development to achieve the Council's vision of what sort of place Barnsley wants to become. It recognises that schemes such as public realm improvements will make Barnsley a better place.

#### Barnsley Town Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options

The Area Action Plan aims to secure new areas of open space. In the Westgate area, where the subject site is located, it identifies the potential to improve public spaces here, and more specifically to explore opportunities relating to the Lamproom Theatre and the Gateway Plaza development. It is also considered that Public Art would improve the character of the spaces around the new offices.

### 1.4 Objectives of Development

The scheme will create an area of quality open space with opportunities for future residents of Gateway Plaza and others to gather and sit in the enjoyment of a well-designed and landscaped area. In addition, an open, inviting and safe route respecting the heritage of the existing Pinfold Steps between Shambles Street and Westgate should be created. The scheme is anticipated to incorporate seating, lighting, public art and planting.

## 2. Assessment

### 2.1 Site Location

The steep site is located between Westgate and the lower-level Shambles Street, and is almost a pedestrian continuation of Sackville Street between the two roads. It lies adjacent to the Gateway Plaza mixed-use scheme, the Lamproom Theatre and the John Rideal House office building.

### 2.2 Immediate Surroundings and Context

The application site lies in the Westgate area, the commercial and civic core of Barnsley Town Centre. There are a high number of pedestrians in the locality of Westgate and Pinfold Steps as a result of new office development, and this increase in numbers will continue as other developments are completed. This is the 'knowledge hub' of the town with Council headquarters, the Courts, Library headquarters, Police headquarters, Town Hall and other offices. The influence of these activities extends to the whole of the Metropolitan District. It is a civic and office area during working hours but connects residential areas of the town as a route throughout the day and night. Gateway Plaza will increase its role in this regard with 188 apartments being provided in a mixed development which includes a hotel. Pinfold Steps is crucial to the legibility of the town giving an important link between Sackville Street/Westgate and Shambles Street.

### 2.3 Relationship to Existing Townscape and Urban Area

The application site currently provides 'breathing space' for the surrounding developments. It is a valuable amenity space. However it is not currently a place of any quality, and more could be made of it to make more attractive and useable. It is currently a poorly lit and potentially unsafe pedestrian route at night.

### 2.4 Character

The existing site is not currently a place of any quality, and much more could be made of it to create an attractive, useable and safe place. Its setting is an interesting juxtaposition of old and new development, with its adjacency to both the listed Lamproom Theatre and the new Gateway Plaza mixed-use scheme.

### 2.5 Views

Enhancing the setting and views to and from the Lamproom Theatre is important. Furthermore, the site is a gateway to the Town Centre from the Town End roundabout. The proposed scheme will greatly enhance the site's appearance.



Photographs of existing scheme

### **3. Consultation and Involvement**

#### **3.1 Neighbourhood Services**

The Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services has been consulted with, as the person responsible for the department who will maintain the scheme. Feedback on the proposed design was very positive and support was given.

#### **3.2 Barnsley Civic Trust**

Barnsley Civic Trust was consulted at their meeting of the 24<sup>th</sup> May. The scheme was well received, and they are very supportive of it, particularly the heritage connections made and the proposed public art/carvings. The Trust has requested that due consideration is given to the following:

- Ensuring high quality natural materials are used and that artificial materials are not substituted.
- Considering the sustainability of the scheme which is paramount and will be down to good maintenance and a scheme which perhaps does not demand too much in the way of maintenance.

#### **3.3 BMBC**

The project has been progressed in collaboration with several Council departments, including Neighbourhood Services and Planning and Transportation, with relevant officers participating in a project Steering Group

#### **3.4 Gateway Plaza Occupiers**

Barneslai Homes, one of the principal occupiers of the Gateway Plaza offices, have had the scheme discussed with them and look forward to its implementation and completion.

#### **3.5 Developer of Gateway Plaza**

We have been working closely with the developer's architect as works are completed on a complimentary adjacent scheme to the west of Pinfold Steps.

#### **3.6 Further Consultation**

It is intended to consult with the following:

- Other occupiers of Gateway Plaza, including the NHS Barnsley Health Centre
- Lamproom Theatre
- Occupants/owner of John Rideal House
- Police Architectural Liaison Officer

## **4. Design and Evaluation**

### **4.1 General Considerations**

- The project considers that at Pinfold Steps there is scope to create an area of quality open space with opportunities for future residents of the adjacent Gateway Plaza scheme and others to gather and sit in the enjoyment of a well-designed and landscaped area. In addition, an open, inviting and safe route respecting the heritage of the steps between Shambles Street and Westgate can be created.
- The Gateway Plaza scheme is nearing completion, including the external landscaping works – the palette of materials for which complies with the Barnsley Public Spaces Strategy. This document supports the Remaking Barnsley programme and sets out an ambitious strategy for improving the town centre environment.
- Development Control officers and the Barnsley Development Agency have been liaising with the developer and their design team regularly in order to ensure that high quality and consistency is delivered.

### **4.2 Design Process**

Barnsley Development Agency is leading on the delivery of this project, and has commissioned BMBC's Landscape Design Group following authorisation from the Cabinet Spokesperson for Development and the Executive Director of Development. Engineering consultancy, quantity surveying and CDM co-ordination services are also included in the appointment.

- The brief set was as follows:
  - Take account of the design objectives outlined in the brief.
  - Design a scheme in accordance with the provisions of the Public Spaces Strategy
  - Identify opportunities to introduce new 'greenery' including trees, especially around the parking area to the western elevation of Westgate Plaza One and the retention of appropriate existing trees
  - Be innovative through a combination of street furniture, lighting and surfacing, and public art.
  - Include in the design, the surface treatment of the pedestrian crossing point of Westgate which is the approach to Pinfold Steps
  - Take into account the constraints of any services, including their reasonable requirements for maintenance, and cost estimates should also include for any necessary ducting to future-proof the area for new technologies/CCTV
  - Pay attention to the interface of the improvement scheme with service areas and frontages
  - Ensure that, where applicable, design proposals comply with the latest specification for Highway Works, Volume 1 of the Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works.

### **4.3 Design Development and Options**

#### **Heritage**

- There is a need to retain the integrity of the existing steps. Some minor repair work will need undertaking, and slight adjustments may be made to the existing alignment for reasons of safety.
- Further initial assessment considered that the existing Pinfold Steps should as far as practical remain as existing, although handrail function and the safety of the route would be evaluated. Protection of the heritage of the steps and their setting is important and was mentioned by the Barnsley Civic Trust.

### Highways

- The status of the steps as a public highway was confirmed with the Highway Authority, along with site ownership.
- Proposed that we could make a minor change to the alignment of the bottom section of the steps to remove the currently undesirable corner. This would not require a footpath diversion, although a temporary diversion would be required during the construction period.
- The relationship with a proposed Controlled Parking Zone has been considered.
- The connectivity of the route with the continuation of the Public Right of Way and Highways has been considered.

### Surveys

- A Topographic Survey was undertaken. This determined what is deliverable in terms of design and practical in terms of delivering a useable space.

### Site Investigation

- The site formerly had homes which may have had cellars, warranting the need for a full SI. This will be undertaken shortly, and engineering detail can then be submitted.

### Services

- The constraints of any services, including their reasonable requirements for maintenance, and the capacity of existing drainage and lighting have been explored.
- The interface of the improvement scheme with service areas and frontages has been considered.
- The scheme will also provide any necessary ducting to future proof the area for new technologies/CCTV.

## **5. Use**

The scheme will provide a high quality public space for the apartment residents of Gateway Plaza. It will also serve the office occupiers in this building, and those who work and use other neighbouring developments including the Lamproom Theatre and Westgate Plaza 1.

The principle of amenity space in this location is long-established, but it was not previously fulfilling its potential.

It will provide a more interesting and attractive environment which complements the adjacent developments, both new and old, and secures public art in an appropriate location. It contributes to place-making, and will remain an important access route between Westgate and Shambles Street.

## 6. Amount

The scheme is a transformation of the existing amenity space, and does not involve any significant volume of development. All of the land is in Council ownership.

Extensive site analysis has identified how more can be made of the site, and where on the site it is appropriate to propose new interventions, including a seating terrace. Restrictions have been posed by the topography of the site.

The scheme does not affect the way Pinfold Steps functions as a pedestrian route. There are no 'boundaries' to the open space.

## 7. Layout

The layout of the scheme is detailed in the Concept Plan. It meets the objectives of the brief whilst working around the difficult topography the site presents, and has a successful fit with the existing through route. A new route to access the seating area is proposed, which leads people nicely from the end of Sackville Street.

Priority has been given to the creation of a seating area, as the objective of the scheme first and foremost is to provide public open space for those residents who will occupy the 188 apartments at Gateway Plaza.

The layout is also designed to face outwards, making an impressive and striking impact towards the Town End Roundabout and enhancing the appearance of this gateway. The retaining wall, similar in construction to the picture shown, surrounding the seating area is low in height to allow for views out when seated, although there will be a railing finished in black to ensure safety.

Further low-level curved retaining walls create a terraced-effect whilst lessening the effect of the topography at the lower end of the site. The



Random rubble uncoarsed in facework to concrete, with recessed mortar

## 8. Scale

The scale of the proposed intervention ie. the seating terrace and routes to and from it sit well on the site and are appropriate given the plot available for development. It provides a good-sized seating area, with sufficient circulation space around the seats themselves.

The scheme will have a positive relationship with the buildings around it, making the setting of the Lamproom Theatre more attractive, and complementing the landscaping works recently undertaken at Gateway Plaza.

## 9. Landscaping

The scheme uses natural materials – largely yorkstone flags and blocks, but with a contrasting silver grey granite as contrast on the ramped steps which lead to the seated area. This is to represent the Green Sprint and uses the material already selected and shortly to be implemented in another scheme. Further creative ways of making reference to the Green Sprint will be identified.

The seating will be timber slats on stone pediments, with handrails finished in black. LED lighting will delineate the curved retaining walls and provide a suitable level of lighting to the steps and the seating areas.

The site was planted with shrubs and trees in the 1970s as an amenity area but the shrubs have become overgrown and tired and the trees are generally poor examples of their species. A site investigation shortly to commence to inform the detailed design will require the removal of much of the existing stock. The individual trees have been surveyed and carefully examined, and a number identified for removal. However, the new scheme will include the planting of semi-mature trees. Species are likely to include *Quercus Rubra*, *Quercus Robur* 'Fastigiata Koster', *Carpinus Betulus* 'Fastigiata' and *Carpinus Betulus* 'Frans Fontaine', some of which are exemplified below.



*Quercus robur*



*Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata'



*Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer'

The scheme will be 'greened' through extensive low-level shrub planting. Further planting of flowering species along the retaining walls will create bold strips of seasonal colour, and again create a positive impression as people enter the town centre at Town End.



*Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald Surprise'



*Hebe* 'Mrs Winder'



*Lonicera nitida* 'Lemon Beauty'

The design of the scheme is ultimately to make this area as attractive, safe and useful as possible. The existing Pinfold Steps already provide a through route in a green setting, but at present it is not popular and the route creates a feeling of insecurity especially in the dark hours. It is hoped that the interventions proposed will increase its useability.

The proposed landscape design will be low maintenance and require limited management. The scheme has been discussed with Neighbourhood Services who are responsible for maintenance of such spaces, and they were fully supportive of the scheme, considering it to be a huge improvement on the existing appearance of the area.

## 10. Appearance

The design takes its reference from the historic associations of 'the Pinfold' which was located in this area, and uses this concept to create a high quality landscaped area with seating.

In order to strengthen this design concept, the scheme will include some public art which makes reference to 'the Pinfold' itself, with sentinel gate posts carved from stone and a pediment to the centre of the circular seat at the centre of the seating area.



Beaufort Square, Chepstow



Carved Stone  
Farm  
Gateposts,  
Lancashire

It is also intended to replace the Pinfold Steps 'Hidden Barnsley' tablet (similar example shown in adjacent image) which has been removed because of vandalism. This represents the site as being of historic significance along with others which form the 'Hidden Barnsley' trail in the Town Centre.



## **11. Access**

The steepness of the site and the steep access to it from the service access road to John Rideal House presents an impossible design constraint to making the new open space accessible to wheelchair users. The gradient of the service access road is considerably steeper than required for wheelchair access and there is no possibility of providing a gentler gradient because the road occupies virtually all the space available. In addition, the access to the site of the open space from Shambles Street is via the Pinfold Steps which is equally wheelchair inaccessible. It is very important to note that this scheme is a 'public space scheme' and not a 'highway improvement scheme' and the funding is strictly only available for open space. It would not be acceptable to the funder to use the funding to create access ramps even if they could be provided satisfactorily. Access ramps if provided through the site would take up all the open space land and would be a costly engineering scheme requiring a sum of money, it is estimated, at least equal to the funding available for the open space improvement. Furthermore and very significantly ramps could only be provided as far as the service access road and could not be provided further to level higher ground in Westgate.