

# A SHTON TOWN CENTRE

## Expression of Interest Brochure

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# About the Project

Wigan Council have secured £6.6 million of funding from the Government to transform the heart of Ashton-in-Makerfield, delivering a major programme of investment that will restore the market, introduce greenery and public realm improvements, as well as public art and enhanced shop frontages.

The Our Future Ashton vision is for a strong town centre offer, supporting our existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and creating new creative spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy and take pride in.

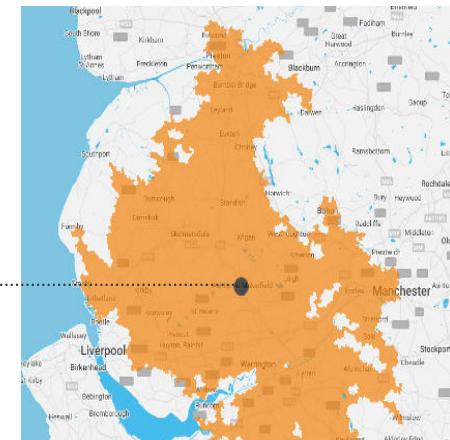
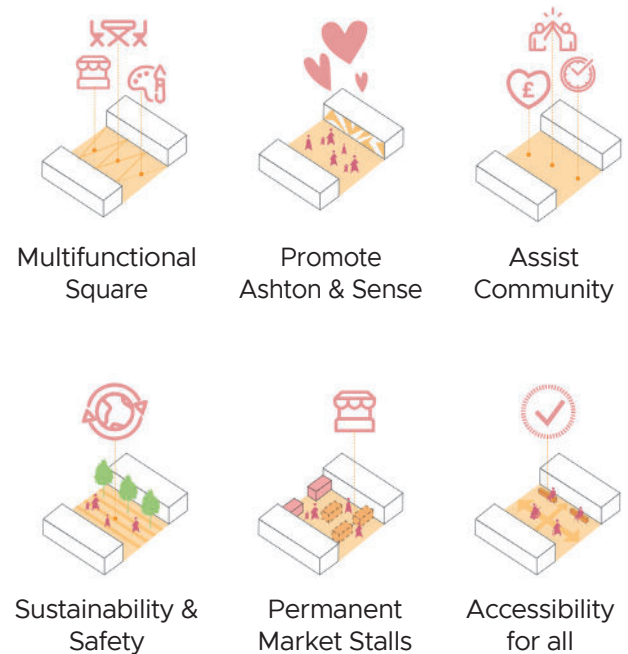
This project is located on the heart of the town centre. The highlight of our project is to bring the historic market site back into active use. For more than 100 years, Ashton had a thriving market on Garswood Street which closed in 2020. There is widespread public support to have a market offer in Ashton once again. The aim is to restore the market site, bringing new life, new traders, new community uses right back into the centre of the town.

Ashton Square will offer an exciting range of community, social and entrepreneurial uses to the historic market site.

Our aim is to boost footfall, offer a range of trading outlets, including new food and beverage units that will appeal to all. Situated in a new beautiful public space which will be used for regular events and activities throughout the year, restoring a sense of community and local pride and bringing Ashton's vibrant and prosperous history back to life.

Wigan Council has recently completed a public consultation about the proposals, from the 9<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024. This consultation was hosted online and two drop in events were held in Ashton. 227 responses were gathered. Overall, while there were some concerns, the trend showed support for proposals -in particular the revival of Ashton Market. seventy-five percent of the respondents mentioned that they would link a trip to the market with a visit to other businesses in Ashton.

**2,550,000 people  
within 30 min drive of  
Ashton**





Using the six key project principles (illustrated on the page opposite) the project is looking at three core proposals, which will support the outputs (illustrated below)

1. A new, rejuvenated **Ashton Square** in the heart of the town. The new square will be an adaptable space that can provide a new market offer, host events, or be simply a welcoming and accessible space to relax and socialise.
2. Safety and public realm improvements to **Gerard Street**. New and improved pedestrian crossing points, public realm enhancements such as seating and planting inviting people to dwell and spend time.
3. Improving and better managing car parking facilities. Retaining and enhancing the northern part of the **Garswood Street** car park with improvements made to facilitate local deliveries, and make the area more accessible for those walking, wheeling, and cycling.

## OUTPUTS



# New Ashton Market Square

At the heart of this project is the creation of a new multi-functional square, which will host permanent market units alongside a flexible public space for markets, events and daily life. The Council is awaiting confirmation for the new square and market proposals in January 2025.

The square will provide space for market stalls and greenery. Care is being taken to ensure that the market offer will be complementary to existing shops and traders. The new square will also provide a place for events and socialising, and will be a focal point for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Located on the site of the historic market, the square will occupy the southern end of the existing car park. The northern end of the car park will be laid out with formal spaces and enhanced with sustainable drainage and planting. The Council are currently consulting on the proposals to make this a short stay car park (but remain without charges) during the day.

We have included the current proposals for Ashton Square and market stalls over the next few pages which provide a background for the Expression of Interest.

The proposals currently include the closure of Garswood St and Market Approach to vehicles except deliveries. This facilitates additional

planting, gathering space and promotion of a pedestrian environment helping to create a safe and vibrant town centre.

Permanent market stalls are located along the northern and eastern edges of the square. A retractable canopy cover along the northern edge provides space for visitors to shelter from the weather, overlooking the centre of the square. The centre has been designed to be a multifunctional space capable of hosting a variety of events. The proposals also include the refurbishment/ replacement of the public toilet facilities in the south-eastern corner.

Along the western edge of the square, several large planted 'islands' provide a green buffer to the square with integrated seating.

The new square has been designed to allow for maximum flexibility. Incorporating pop-up power units and anchor points for events or temporary uses. Paved with high quality concrete paving units in red tones, with artistic motifs built in. This space will be pedestrian only but will be built to withstand vehicular loading to allow for the set up of events and deliveries to the permanent market stalls during specific times.



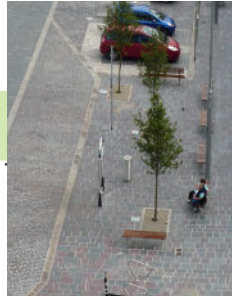


Garswood St service access only

Enhanced car park



Access only with widened footway, street trees and seating



Permanent market stall



Image by Tammy Annie

Canopy cover



Planted 'islands'



Enhanced toilet facilities

Image by Danilo

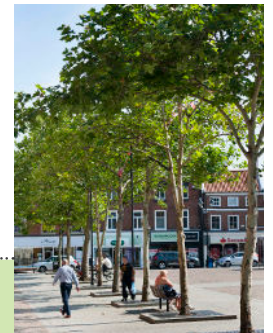


Space for temporary markets or events



Image by Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce

Market approach pedestrainised



No through traffic



# Market

A central component of the project is to bring a market offer back to Ashton. This has received broad support through two public consultation exercises which have taken place to date. The proposal is for the new square to have both permanent market kiosks as well as space for pop up markets or special events in a managed, curated space.

## Permanent Market Stalls

The current plan will deliver 10 permanent units, each measuring 3x4m (12m<sup>2</sup>). These are currently positioned in an arrangement which allows for 6 of these units to be combined into 3 larger double units which would measure 6x8m (24m<sup>2</sup>).

8 of the permanent units form a cluster to the north of the square adjacent to proposed canopy cover.

The remaining two are set alongside the eastern edge of the square and provide an active edge to the rear of The Golden Lion. Adjacent to these two units will be the enhanced public toilet facilities and a storage unit.

The intention is for these stalls to be a mixture of food and drink vendors and high quality market offers.

The arrangement and specification of the permanent market units will be finalised with the preferred market operator. But components which will be incorporated are:

- Security (ensuring the kiosk is fully lockable and can withstand antisocial behaviour)
- Facilitate easy selling of goods (via a trading window/ counter)
- Robust
- Built from sustainable materials
- Safe and fully adaptable (to the market traders or accessibility needs)
- Lighting
- Power
- Provides storage and waste facilities



Key

- Enhanced Toilet Facilities
- Permanent market stall (4 or 10)
- Potential double market stall (3)
- Pop-up gazebo stall



Image by Tammy Anne

## Flexible Curated Space

The central space of the square has been intentionally left clear of furniture/ fittings to allow for the set up of events and pop-up markets. This area of the square can accommodate up to 26 traditional pop-up gazebo stalls (3x3m). This has been planned with consideration of circulation space.

Part of the public toilet building will house a small (12m<sup>2</sup>) storage area for the housing of temporary gazebo stalls for when these are not in use.

Within the paving there will be built in anchors which will allow either gazebos or other structures to be secured, during inclement weather. There will also be two pop-up power units within this central space to allow for events which need power.

Different events and layouts could be used within this flexible space as shown in the scenarios on the right. This would allow the space to offer various events throughout the year.



Image by Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce



Traditional Market:  
26 Pop-up Gazebo Stalls



Artisan Christmas Market and Tree:  
12 Pop-up Market Stalls with Town  
Christmas Tree and Carolers

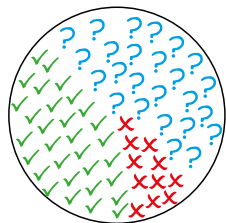


Movie night:  
Large Pop-up Screen with over  
200 seats for screening events

# Public Opinion

Wigan Council have recently completed public consultation about the proposals. This consultation was hosted online and two drop in events were held in Ashton. The consultation ran from the 9<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

In total 230 responses were gathered. Overall, while there were some concerns, the trend showed support for proposals - in particular the revival of Ashton Market. The survey had was divided into three sections; questions about the Market and Ashton Square proposals; questions about the Gerard Street improvements and personal/social data to ensure the information gathered was from a broad range of the population. The graphics to the right summarise some of the key outcomes of the consultation. A full summary can be obtained from the Council.



80% of the respondents were positive or neutral  
20% of the respondents were negative



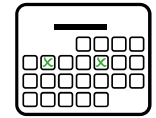
230 responses were gathered



51% would use a private vehicle to get to the site  
41% by foot  
3% by public transport



78% would like to see farmers market stalls  
76% would like to see traditional market stalls  
60% would like to see street food vendors  
39% would like to see arts and craft stalls



69% would visit the market at least once per week  
44% would visit during a weekday lunch time  
57% would visit during a weekend lunch time

75% would link the trip with other businesses in the town



Top community events wished for were:  
70% Christmas themed  
70% Local Music  
54 % Events for Children



# TIME FOR YOU TO GET INVOLVED....

**We are looking for an innovative partner(s) to work with the Council over the next three years. We are inviting expressions of interest at this time for experienced market managers, and curators of space.**

**Please get in touch ....**

[Markets@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:Markets@wigan.gov.uk)

**Learn more at: <https://participate.wigan.gov.uk/en-GB/folders/our-future-ashton>**