

THE PLAN

Wigan Council

VOLUME 4 | ATHERTON



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FOREWORD

With its great schools, high quality greenspace, attractive heritage buildings and excellent road and rail transport connections, Atherton has much to be proud of.

Atherton's centre continues to thrive as a bustling local town with a diverse mix of unique independent shops and leisure venues and a developing quality night-time economy with an increasing number of busy restaurants, cafes and bars. Atherton's location close to Manchester also offers great potential for future growth.

This Plan is the first step in helping to achieve that growth, highlighting what we already have in the town and surrounding area, and what we can build on for the future.

A considerable opportunity is the huge amount of development in and around the town. By way of example, Logistics North is a major employment sites which is less than 2 miles from Atherton town centre, and has already attracted a range of international companies, creating new job and business opportunities. It's important not only that we capture the full value and benefits of this development for Atherton residents, but that we continue to build on this growth, attracting more high-quality employers to Atherton, especially through the supply chain

network.

We know that a high quality, diverse housing offer is key to supporting town centres. Atherton already has several developments underway and more are planned, including up to 2,000 new homes to the south and east of the town centre. We must ensure that we create sustainable urban neighbourhoods through new housing development, providing not only high-quality homes but also the opportunity to live, work and play in a desirable setting.

Atherton is one of the best-connected towns in the north west, with road links to the M61, M60 and M6 motorways and with a choice of two railway stations. More recently, Atherton has also benefitted from the Leigh – Salford – Manchester Guided Busway and there are further opportunities to improve transport infrastructure - for example the development of "tram-train" links which would enable local residents to access Metro-style transport services to Wigan and Manchester using the existing rail network.

There are many exciting opportunities for Atherton to take advantage of over the next few years, but this will only be achieved through the combined efforts of the private and public sectors, local businesses, residents and other stakeholders.

There is a genuine sense of community in Atherton and testament to this is the considerable effort from local councillors in engaging with local businesses and residents to help shape this Plan. We look forward to working alongside developers, inward investors, businesses, elected members, residents and strategic

partners alike to help Atherton realise its full potential, creating sustainable growth for all.

Councillor David Molyneux



01 INTRODUCTION

Exciting things are happening in Greater Manchester. As the biggest economy and most populous city region in the Northern Powerhouse, Greater Manchester is ‘turning heads’.

Atherton’s location close to Manchester City Centre and the centre of other large towns, has helped it become both an established commuter town and a thriving business location – and means it is well-positioned to take advantage of future growth too.

Located in the borough of Wigan, Atherton will play a central role in a borough-wide economy that is anticipated to grow to £5.2 billion over the next 10-years, as well as delivering 10,000 new jobs and 10,000 new homes across Wigan.

Whilst socially Atherton very much identifies with Manchester, it also has close infrastructure links with Liverpool City Region and Bolton too. As such, Atherton is exceptionally well positioned to continue to grow.

Atherton is currently home to around 15,000 people; however this is set to increase with new housing developments already in the pipeline creating over 1,700 new homes.

Founded in the 13th century, Atherton has its roots as a traditional market town, and has a range of listed buildings and a town centre conservation area that characterise its rich history. Going forward, we want Atherton to play a bigger role as a district centre of the borough, and it is a town with fantastic potential to do so.



Atherton is already one of the North West's best connected small towns, by both road and rail. It's adjacent to the M61, and less than 30 mins from the centre of Manchester using the North West's first guided busway. Atherton also has excellent rail connections with two stations on the Manchester to Southport line.

This Investment Framework sets out our objectives and aspirations for Atherton, outlining several ambitious schemes, regeneration priorities and development areas. Whilst this

document does not limit itself to the town centre, this is a core priority and an area in which we believe some of the biggest gains can be made over coming years.

We know that Atherton is already a great place to live, work and visit, but it has the ingredients to become one of the most desirable places in the North-West. This document is our plan to achieve that.



02 ATHERTON TODAY

CONNECTIVITY

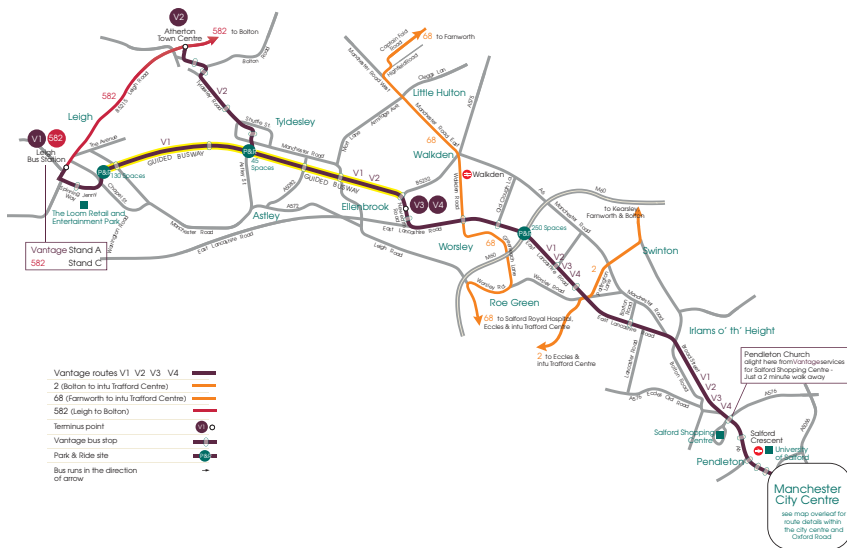
Located between the A580 East Lancs Road, M6, M60, M58 and M61, as well as close to the M62 and M56, Atherton is one of the best connected towns in the North West.

Atherton has a choice of two local railway stations, Atherton and Hag Fold, providing local services to Manchester and Wigan and, further afield, to Southport and Kirkby. The closest major rail hub is Wigan, recently announced as one of the new HS2 hubs, and this provides additional frequent local services as well as direct national connections including London, Leeds, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow. A potential tram-train route Manchester – Atherton – Wigan has been considered by Transport for Greater Manchester and included as part of their tram-train strategy for Greater Manchester, to be taken forward in conjunction with the wider work on future transport priorities and the emerging components of a longer-term transport strategy.



Atherton is a short drive from both Manchester and Liverpool International Airports too – providing invaluable global connections. The North West’s first guided busway also provides a highly reliable, low-emissions bus service between Atherton and Manchester along a prioritised route. The scheme connects communities and business centres along the route, and

reduces peak journey times to/ from Manchester by 30-minutes. The multi-award winning hybrid bus service features Wi-Fi, USB charging points, comfortable leather seating and climate control – all of which significantly enhance passenger experience. Already, passenger use has far exceeded its targets with over 2 million passengers travelling in the first year of operation.

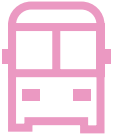


98%
satisfaction rate

20% of respondents use the busway as opposed to their previous journey by car.

36% commented that they could have made their daily commute by car, but instead choose to travel by bus.

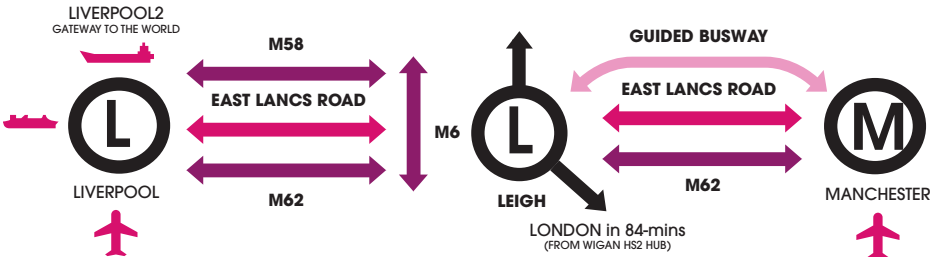
IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY



LEIGH

50 MINS

MANCHESTER



FIRST YEAR TARGET - 800,000 PASSENGERS



FIRST YEAR ACTUAL - 2,000,000 PASSENGERS

EDUCATION

Atherton enjoys a fantastic choice of schools, with 8 primary schools, all within walking distance of the town centre. In addition, there is a choice of 3 secondary schools, including an independent academy, with several labelled 'Good' and 'Outstanding' in recent Ofsted reports. They are complemented by high quality local nurseries, and good access from the town to a range of post-16 provision - making Atherton a particularly attractive place to raise a family.

GREENSPACE

There is an abundance of high-quality green space throughout the area - from the formal urban leisure space of Atherton Central Park, to the natural beauty of the open farmland to the south and east. Atherton has a great sense of community, with a number of community groups who are active in the management of the town's open spaces. The award-winning Howe Bridge historical mining village, complete with its Heritage Trail walks, is a mile away from the town centre. There is a

new 550-acre country park nearing completion as part of the Logistics North development on the Bolton border, less than a 15 minute drive away from the centre of town.

LEISURE AND COMMUNITY

Atherton is a 5 minute drive away from the excellent sport and leisure facilities at Howe Bridge, which is packed with exciting attractions for the whole family. It offers everything including a superbly equipped gym, skate-park, adventure play area, 14 state of the art climbing walls and two swimming pools, as well as a range of top quality outdoor pitches. In addition, Atherton has a number of well used local pitches, and local sports clubs.

Atherton has a great sense of community, with a number of thriving local centres, including Atherton Town Hall, the Green Grass Centre and the volunteer-run centre at Dorset Road. These spaces facilitate many community groups and activities including painting, drama, and a range of other crafts.



HOMES

Atherton has a wide range of quality housing, from Edwardian and Victorian townhouses through to modern homes. Together with the new developments already in the pipeline, this extensive offer means there's something for everyone.

The average house price is below the Wigan average, and substantially below the average in Greater Manchester, and the wider North West, making Atherton an attractive and affordable option for people working in the regional centre.

With excellent connectivity, schools, leisure, green space, and homes Atherton is a highly desirable, but still affordable, place to live.



UNIQUE ATHERTON

As a long-established market town, Atherton has a vibrant and distinctive mix of independent businesses.

The retail area along Market Street provides Atherton's core retail offer. Here you can find an extensive array of grocery shops, food and drink outlets, hair and beauty specialists, fashion retailers, and a plethora of other high street services all meeting residents' needs.

The town has an active Business Partnership Group who provide regular events to attract more shoppers to the town and support local businesses.

Atherton is also home to a small but well-regarded mix of highly rated cafés and restaurants, and the recent refurbishment of Atherton Town Hall with high quality meeting space and a tea room have added to this. Within a 5 minute walk of Market Street is Ena Mill, a destination retail outlet located in a Grade II listed mill building, where you can browse everything from high end fashion to household goods.



BIG BUSINESS

The centre of Atherton is a 15 minute drive from the new Business Park at Logistics North on the outskirts of Bolton, one of the North West's newest and largest business locations for distribution and manufacturing.

With excellent access to the M61, the Park is already a hive of activity for several high-profile businesses. It offers 4 million square feet of employment space across 250 acres. The market remains buoyant here, and that is reflected in recent investments such as Aldi's 610,000 sq ft regional distribution centre, and Whistl's new super depot for its northern operations.

We think there is a real opportunity to build upon this growth, to attract high-quality employers to Atherton, especially through the supply chain network.



03 OUR VISION

Our vision for Atherton is based on four principles:

ENHANCING OUR PLACE

Quality of place is paramount to thriving towns. A series of interventions are set out throughout this vision which seek to increase the quality of the existing built environment, and ensure future development is of a high standard.

STRENGTHENING OUR ENTERPRISE

We know that both new and existing businesses require support. We will continue to nurture our strong retail offer, whilst seeking to complement and enhance Atherton's distinctiveness through new development.

EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE

At the core of the Investment Framework is a desire to support our people to achieve their ambitions. Promoting investments in the people of the town through education, job growth and access to employment will ensure that their success is evident throughout the town. Employers have long recognised the advantages of the high quality workforce in Atherton, and this is something we aim to build on.

PROVIDING CONNECTED INFRASTRUCTURE

We recognise that infrastructure is the network that connects people, places, and enterprise together. We want the people of Atherton to have better connections to education, employment, services, and leisure facilities.

STRUCTURING OUR VISION

Our vision for Atherton has been developed by focusing primarily upon the town centre, but also considering some of the major 'strategic growth areas' around Atherton.

By structuring our approach around these two key themes, this Investment Framework provides a toolkit to enhance Atherton's position relative to other North West towns

03:01 ATHERTON TOWN CENTRE

The town centre is an established hub for local goods and services, but has significant potential for growth, diversification, and improvement. As such, we have developed a '7-point plan' of objectives to transform the beating heart of Atherton.

03:02 STRATEGIC GROWTH AROUND ATHERTON

Strategic growth areas have been identified at Gibfield Park, housing/employment land South and East of Atherton, Logistics North and Hulton Park, due to their significant potential to provide the homes, jobs or leisure space that Atherton requires as the town and borough continue to grow.



ATHERTON TOWN CENTRE

THE AREA

Traditionally a market town, Atherton is looking to the future by diversifying its offer to meet current needs. The town has retained a good range of quality independent vendors and discount retailers, complemented by a small, but thriving number of high street names. In addition, Atherton has a strong leisure offer in its town centre including The Escape Rooms, Paintballing, the Dance and Soft Play Centres, Roller Rink and Rifle Range.

Whilst the catchment is principally local, Atherton has a strong and loyal customer base. The town centre is flat, and offers those with young children or mobility issues good access.

We have identified Market Street heritage area around the parish church as a gateway site and Ena Mill Designer Outlet as a major opportunity area in the town centre – both of which have significant potential for regeneration or further development.

Additionally, public realm and streetscape improvements along Market Street will refresh the principal retail area.



OUR OBJECTIVES

1. STRENGTHEN OUR OFFER FOR LOCAL BUSINESS

Local businesses are the life blood of towns like Atherton, and have the potential to create a diverse and unique offer that attract a wide catchment of visitors. We will seek to support both new and existing businesses; both directly through business support and indirectly by ensuring any new development is of an appropriate type and scale. This will ensure that the existing offer is complemented and strengthened.

In addition, we will encourage pop-up stalls as part of a rejuvenated town hall to encourage new business start-ups, and help them to establish a customer base.

2. DEVELOP OUR MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA

Well located and of a good scale, Ena Mill is already a successful designer retail outlet.

The site provides additional opportunities for business as well as residential development.

3. REGENERATE OUR GATEWAY SITE AND UNDERUSED BUILDINGS

First impressions count and the eastern side of Atherton has many

attractive heritage buildings, and a conservation area. There is an opportunity to improve the area around Atherton parish church to provide a striking first impression of the town, including lighting to further highlight the sense of arrival.

Although few in number here, unused buildings can detract from the positives of a place. Atherton's shops, especially along Market Street, and the side streets which radiate out, present a real value for money investment. Carefully considered design of shop fronts here will also significantly enhance the image of this part of Atherton.

4. A HUB FOR NEW BUSINESS

Atherton is well located amongst the North West's biggest economies, by both road and rail. Whilst big businesses have clearly already taken advantage of this at the nearby Logistics North site, we firmly believe that there are other opportunities to take advantage of Atherton's offer as a base for small and medium sized business, in the town centre and surrounding area. In particular, there is an opportunity to support the town's emerging quality evening offer, with new restaurants and modern pubs recently opened and in the pipeline.

5. IMPROVE THE STREETScape

Streetscape is an all-encompassing term for the visual elements that make-up a street; building frontages, roads, footways, street furniture, lighting, and trees. These elements form the street's character. Improving the streetscape along Market Street will help create an environment that is aesthetically pleasing and strengthens Atherton's standing as a place to live, work and visit.

A particular need is to provide a high quality canopy to provide an area of shelter for shoppers. This could help to increase footfall to benefit local businesses, and provide a pleasant shopping environment in all weathers.

6. ENCOURAGE MORE TOWN CENTRE HOUSING

A high quality, diverse town centre housing offer is key to rejuvenating town centres. Atherton already has a number of developments underway on the Howe Bridge Mill site, at Summerhill Park and as part of the Ena Mill development. We will work with developers and landowners to encourage more housing close to and within the town centre.

7. ACCESSIBILITY

Atherton town centre is flat and easily accessible for those with disabilities, and offers plentiful, good quality, free parking. Market Street has restricted vehicle access, providing a pleasant and safe shopping environment. It is regularly used as a training ground by Guide Dogs for the Blind, who have their regional centre based in the town.

There is a real opportunity to create something distinctive and interesting using spaces along Market Street, many of which are sheltered and carry the potential to create public spaces, to dwell or enjoy food and drink. Improved signage between the town centre and other leisure and retail outlets including Tesco, Victoria Mill and Ena Mill will help to increase footfall and support the town centre businesses.



AMBITIONS

Quality Design and Desirable Brands

We want to both improve and expand Atherton's offer. To do this we need to provide both a quality and unique mix – particularly brands that are not located in adjacent towns and will have a strong draw.

Development of an Appropriate Type and Scale

New development should be proportionate to the size of Atherton Town Centre, but also be aesthetically pleasing. New retail, restaurants and cafes will improve the local offer and encourage dwell time.

Atherton Conservation Area

Nurturing Quality Local Business

Quality independent retailers provide an offer that is distinctive and appealing – they set places apart and contribute significantly to the desirability of a place to live. We will support new and existing quality businesses as a priority.

Enhancing the Urban Environment

A number of schemes have been outlined that will boost the quality of streets in the town centre; from revamped shop frontages, to new spaces to enjoy or meet friends.

Living, Visiting and Working in

Atherton

Atherton is already a great example of a town where people choose to live, visit and work. We want to boost this even further; providing more options for people to live close to the town centre, more reasons to visit Atherton, and more spaces where people choose to work (or even grow their own business!).



IMPROVING LINKS

Our vision for the future of Atherton town centre is to further improve the links between the town centre and the Strategic Growth Areas which surrounding the town, including Logistics North. We want to ensure that all residents can access the employment opportunities the growth areas bring, by car, public or sustainable transport.

Part of the proposals at Gibfield Park include a new link road which will provide better connections to the M61 and beyond to the wider motorway network across the North West.

We also want to strike the right balance between vehicles and pedestrians in the town centre, providing a safe environment for shoppers whilst still supporting the excellent road links that currently serve the area.

As part of this, we will explore options to improve the quality of the streetscape and open spaces alongside encouraging a greater use of the strong public transport network within and around Atherton.



STRATEGIC GROWTH AROUND ATHERTON

THE AREA

Our vision for Atherton is supported by four strategic development sites to the north, south east and west of the town.

Between them, these four sites will be significant contributors to the housing stock within the borough, and employment opportunities that clearly will drive growth across Atherton.

As such, it is imperative that the high-level objectives for these sites are outlined within this Investment Framework.

GIBFIELD MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

THE AREA

Already home to a number of local companies, including the regional base for Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Borough's only Driving Test Centre, Gibfield Industrial estate is a popular location.

The wider Gibfield site, covering over 70 hectares, is zoned for a mix of employment land, housing and greenspace within the Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework for development, and planning approval is already in place on some parcels of land.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Create High-Quality Local Jobs

We are aiming to build upon our core employment sectors as well as attracting high-end businesses from new sectors including advanced manufacturing, increasing the number of quality local employment opportunities.

Improve Strategic Connections

A new link road between the industrial estate and the M61 to the north of the site will improve connectivity for existing businesses and help attract new investment.



SOUTH/EAST OF ATHERTON HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

THE AREA

Outline planning permission has been granted for around 830 new homes on land to the south of Atherton, which has excellent links to the Guided Busway in Manchester, and the strategic highway network. In addition, there is land identified for a further 1100 new houses all within 10-15 minute walk from the town centre, as well as 9 hectares of new employment land.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Maximise local jobs and supply chain opportunities

We want to maximise the job creation within the development of this new employment land, and ensure it complements the existing offer at Chanters Industrial Estate. We also want to make the most of the opportunity for residents in Atherton to secure these new jobs, as well as construction related jobs in the new housing and employment developments, and also support local companies to provide goods and services for the development and building companies.

A Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood

New development here should seek to provide not only high-quality homes, but also the opportunity to live, work and play in a desirable setting, through measures such as new cycle ways and quality open spaces.

The close proximity of the Guided Busway and Atherton and Hag Fold Rail Stations add real value to these developments – but we also think value can be created here through environmentally sensitive design, and the provision of recreational facilities, such as sports pitches.

In addition, with such a large increase in population, we need to ensure that local services are able to meet demand, including healthcare, schools and transport infrastructure.

LOGISTICS NORTH

THE AREA

Already home to the distribution hubs for a number of national and international companies including Lidl, Aldi and Costa Coffee, this Logistics and Manufacturing business park has a high profile in the North West, and it is set to grow even more.

Located adjacent to the M61, it has excellent strategic links, and local links to Atherton.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Accessible High-Quality Jobs

We want to maximise the opportunity for residents in Atherton to secure jobs in this new development.

Promoting supply chain opportunities

We want to encourage both existing and new businesses providing services to the large companies at Logistics North to locate in Atherton.

HULTON PARK

THE AREA

There are current proposals for the restoration of Hulton Park through the creation of a championship golf course and resort that will be capable of hosting major tournaments. In addition, proposals include a golf training academy, a new hotel on the site of the former Hulton Hall, the restoration of lost gardens, lakes and pleasure grounds, a community trail and new homes.

The plans will provide significant benefits to Wigan, including new jobs, skills and education opportunities.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Create High-Quality Local Jobs

We want to maximise the opportunity for residents in Atherton to secure jobs in this new development.

Promoting supply chain opportunities

We want to encourage both existing and new businesses providing services for the facilities at Hulton Park to locate in Atherton.



04 DELIVERY

We've identified three key mechanisms that will help us deliver our ambitious vision for Atherton:

PARTNERSHIPS

WORKING TOGETHER

The wide and varied nature of the opportunities identified in this Investment Framework will require strong liaison with a number of external organisations.

We will continue to work in close communication with partner bodies including;

- GM Combined Authority
- Transport for Greater Manchester
- GM Local Enterprise Partnership
- GM Police
- Network Rail
- Canal & River Trust
- Homes & Communities Agency
- Central Government Bodies

Creating the right conditions to encourage enterprise in Atherton will also require us to work proactively with existing businesses, prospective businesses, land owners and developers. We want to help foster new ideas, support business planning and help identify funding streams.

GREATER MANCHESTER SPATIAL FRAMEWORK (GMSF)

The framework is a joint plan to manage the supply of land for jobs and new homes across Greater Manchester.

GMSF identifies the borough as a major contributor to the future growth of Greater Manchester.

The framework will ensure that we have the right land in the right places to deliver the homes and jobs we need up to 2035, along with identifying the new infrastructure (such as roads, rail, Rapid Transit and utility networks) required to achieve this.

As such, it will provide a critical overarching strategy for how Atherton fits into the wider picture of a fast growing Manchester City Region.

FUNDING

The funding landscape is continuously changing and our Business Investment Team are well briefed on new and emerging opportunities.

Collaborating with a number of independent organisations we aim to boost Atherton's economy through business support.

Businesses of all sizes have benefited from our guidance, from sole traders to national companies with 1,000+ employees.

Whatever your interest, whatever your size and whatever your opportunity, contact us so we can work with you to help unlock access to funding.

DEVOLUTION

Devolution is the transfer of certain powers and responsibilities from national government to a particular region.

Decisions made locally can better meet the needs and aspirations of the people who live and work in the area.

Wigan Council is a key player in Greater Manchester devolution. Wigan Council will receive significant

new powers over its economic development and control over billions of pounds of public funding with the pioneering Greater Manchester devolution deal.

We want to put people at the centre of devolution. Allowing us more control over how we govern and spend locally will allow us to take great strides in developing our people and the place they live.

THE DEAL IN ACTION

With such ambitions for new development and regeneration, we are looking for support from the private sector to help accelerate transformational change in Atherton. We can boost our impact by working in partnership; recognising that both public and private funding can only go so far on their own. If we want to deliver the aspirations set out in this document and we want to invest in local facilities and spaces that communities deserve, we need to work together to make it happen.



OUR TOWN CENTRE PROGRAMME

Atherton already has a strong portfolio of community activities and events that support the economy, foster local pride and strengthen the positive image of the town.

We will work with partners to support existing and highly successful community activities, including Atherton Business Partnership.

Local events are an essential part of this too and we will continue to

support those such as the Proms in the Park, Nativity Parade, 'Memory Tree' Christmas Light Switch-On, Atherton Carnival, St Georges Day Parade and the Summer and Christmas Markets.

These events and activities are not only important to local residents, but also help bring new people to the town and show what Atherton has to offer.



