

**Chapter 5**  
**Urban Design**  
**Framework**



## 5. URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The quality of the built environment is vital in ensuring the success of the Borough's town centres.
- 5.2 In order to achieve high quality, the plan does not intend to set out rigid design standards but emphasises key design objectives and principles. These will lead to good urban design and will enhance the particular character of the Atherton Centreplan area.
- 5.3 **The key objectives or principles of Urban Design can be described as:**
- (a) creating a place with its own character and identity;**
  - (b) ensuring that public and private spaces can be clearly distinguished;**
  - (c) making places with attractive and successful outdoor areas;**
  - (d) ensuring ease of movement through the area and connecting people and places;**
  - (e) creating a legible environment with recognisable routes and landmarks;**
  - (f) promoting adaptability in buildings and areas;**
  - (g) making places with variety and choice that respond to local needs.**
  - (h) ensuring quality of architectural detail and materials.**
- 5.4 The embracing of these principles, which are taken from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environments 'By Design' publication will help to promote sustainable development, attract business and investment and reinforce civic pride.

The above principles will have varying degrees of relevance to Atherton Town Centre. The following section attempts to relate these principles to the

Atherton Centreplan area and sets out a broad framework for Urban Design

within the area.

- 5.5 The town has a number of positive townscape features which help to forge the area's individual character and which should be reinforced and enhanced. These include:
- (i) The Market Place Conservation Area** - Proposals should seek to improve the setting of the St John the Baptist Church. Modifications to shop fronts should be of a style which is sympathetic to the age and character of the building as a whole.
  - (ii) Bolton Old Road/The Valley** - The mixed character and scale of this area should be preserved and enhanced. The relationship between the listed chapel, former Minister's house, terraced housing and the larger Victoria Mill creates a visually interesting area which reflects the development of the town and its industrial heritage.
  - (iii) The presence of stone setts** in several streets is an attractive traditional feature and also has a traffic calming effect. These should be preserved wherever possible.
- 5.6 The Centreplan area is characterised by terraced housing and shops, many of which are built up to the back of the established footpath. New infill developments should maintain this strong urban form, clearly define the boundaries between public and private space and maintain a suitable sense of enclosure. There are a number of sites where improved boundary treatments will help to emphasise the boundaries between public and private areas.
- 5.7 The most important public realm areas are probably Central Park and the main shopping streets around Market Place and Market Street. Both these areas require improvements to make them safer, more attractive, better used and to restore civic pride.

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5.7 The key principles to be considered when carrying out works to these areas (and other public spaces) are:

- a clear relationship between the space and the buildings around it;
- its use and purpose;
- areas should feel safe with natural surveillance;
- high quality appropriate materials and street furniture should be used;
- public art should be considered where possible.

5.8 The convenience, safety and comfort of people using the town centre is of particular importance given the identified conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles within the main shopping streets.

Whilst the urban structure of the centre is not expected to change significantly, there is scope to modify transport routes and redesign Market Street and Market Place as public spaces rather than purely traffic routes.

The existing close urban grain created by the traditional terraced housing and shops has created a strong network of footpaths and this should be enhanced through measures such as better lighting, drop kerbs, pedestrian signage, etc.

5.9 Existing landmark buildings such as Atherton Town Hall, Ena Mill and Victoria Mill and St. John the Baptist Church and adjacent obelisk help people find their way around the area and create a unique 'sense of place'.

Views of these buildings, together with important routes that lead to them, should be safeguarded and enhanced.

5.10 Planning policies must be flexible enough to allow the town centre to adapt. In particular, the lack of demand for small retail units around the periphery of the town centre has created problems of vacancy and dereliction. The conversion of these properties to residential use can help to bring these buildings back into use and improve the vitality of the centre.

5.11 The principal shopping area is dominated by small scale retail units and is well used during the daytime hours of Monday to Saturday. At other times the limited range of leisure facilities limit the use and vitality of this area. The

relative lack of evening activity is not helped by the extensive use of solid steel roller shutters along Market Street which creates an uninviting dead frontage.

Planning proposals should seek to create the right mix of uses within the area which increases evening activity and vitality, improves personal safety and creates more sustainable patterns of development. The use of suitable alternatives to the solid roller shutters to commercial premises will help to achieve this aim.

5.12 Attention to detail and the use of high quality, sympathetic materials are particularly important within the Centreplan area, where the appearance of buildings, individually or as a group, is part of the overall visitor experience. Developments and modifications to buildings should use high quality sympathetic materials and incorporate features which provide a high level of detail and visual interest.

**5.13 The following chapter translates the broad objectives of the plan and the key urban design principles into detailed proposals and opportunities within the plan area.**

**Chapter 6**  
**Detailed Proposals**  
**and Opportunities**

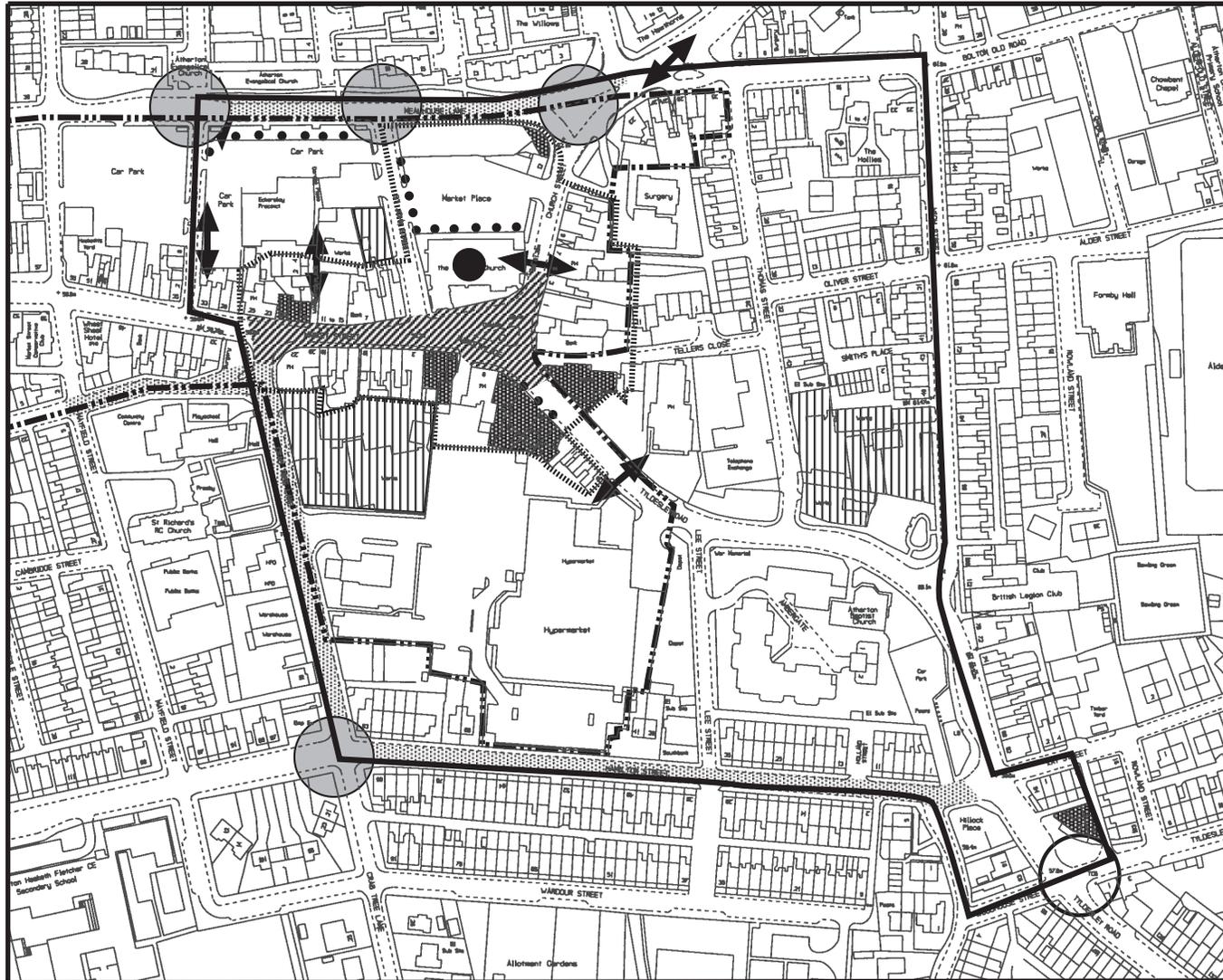




## Plan 3 The Western Sector

-  Sector boundary
-  Sites or buildings requiring improvement
-  Area subject to traffic management/traffic calming (more detailed plans available)
-  Environmental Enhancements
-  Upgrading of Park
-  Potential new Car Park
-  Pedestrian linkages which need to be protected or strengthened
-  Frontage improvements or boundary treatment required
-  UDP Town Centre Boundary
-  Junction Improvements

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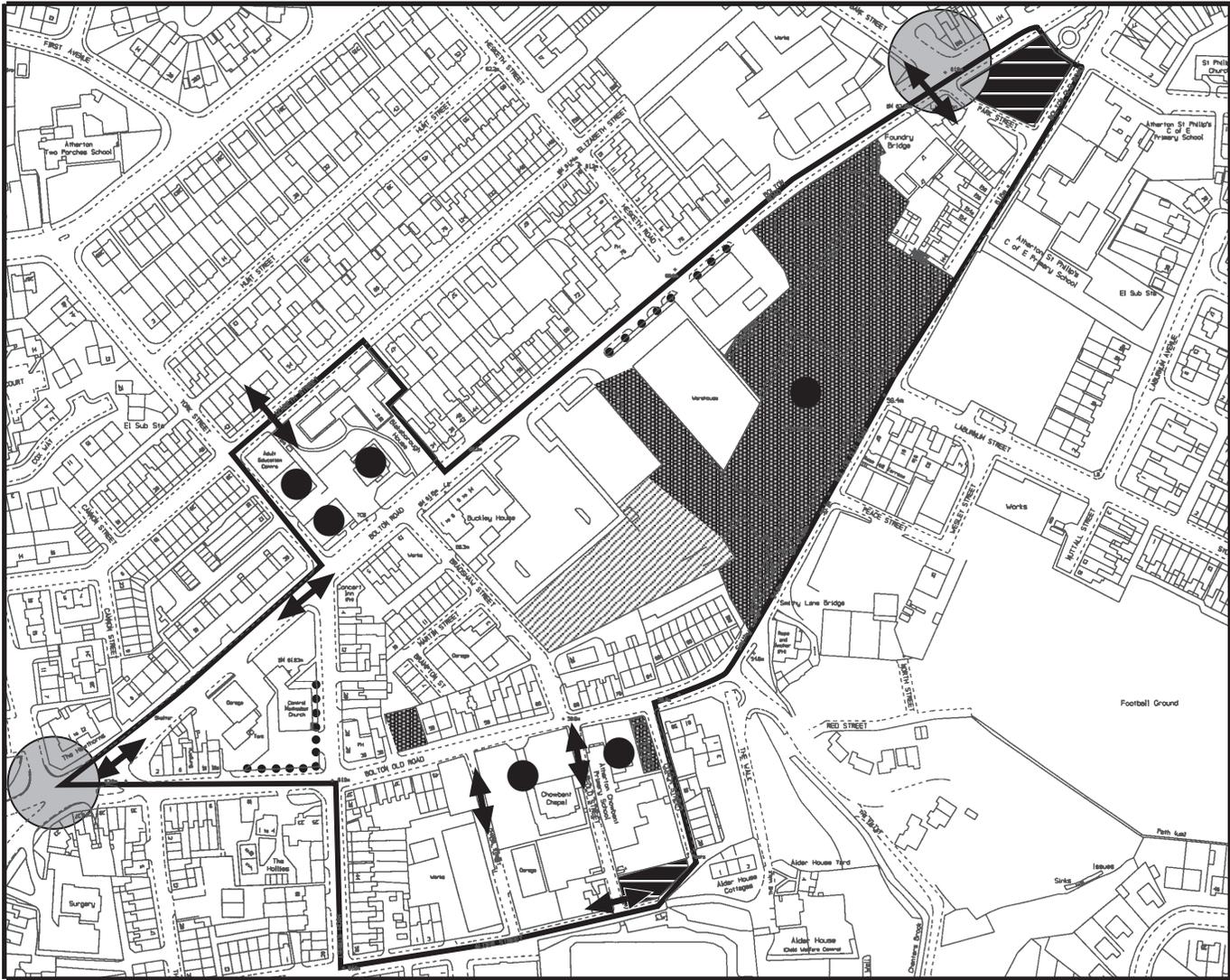


## Plan 4 The Central Sector

-  Sector boundary
-  Landmark building setting to be enhanced or preserved
-  Sites or buildings requiring improvement
-  Area subject to traffic management/traffic calming (more detailed plans available)
-  Environmental Enhancements
-  Longer Term Development Opportunities
-  Development opportunities or opportunities for new uses
-  UDP Town Centre Boundary
-  Pedestrian linkages which need to be protected or strengthened
-  Frontage improvements or boundary treatment required
-  Junction Improvements
-  Traffic Signal Installation
-  Conservation Area Boundary

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## Plan 5 The Eastern Sector



-  Sector boundary
-  Landmark building setting to be enhanced or preserved
-  Sites or buildings requiring improvement
-  Development opportunities or opportunities for new uses
-  Potential new or upgraded Car Park
-  Pedestrian linkages which need to be protected or strengthened
-  Frontage improvements or boundary treatment required
-  Junction Improvements

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**TABLE I: DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
6.1.1	Crab Tree Lane	Long Term Development of site for more beneficial town centre uses	Private owners/ Developer	Wigan Council	Private Funding	Long Term
6.1.2	Thomas Street	Long Term Residential Development Opportunity linked to relocation of industrial development.	Private owners/ Developer	Wigan Council	Private Funding	Longer Term
6.1.3	Bradshaw Street	Development of vacant site	Atherton Estates Investments	Atherton Building Communities	Private Funding / Housing Corporation	2003/2004
6.1.4	St. John Street	Infill Retail Development on garage/vacant site within town centre	Private Owners/ Developer	Wigan Council	Private Funding/ Developers	2003/2004

## 6. DETAILED PROPOSALS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### 6.1 Development and Investment Opportunities

The heavily built up nature of the town centre and the close proximity of residential dwellings to the main shopping area means that the opportunities for new development are fairly limited. A number of existing sites and buildings do have potential for investment and job creation and these are detailed below.

#### 6.1.1 Crab Tree Lane (Long Term Development Opportunity)

The site is currently occupied by an established range of general industrial units which could potentially be relocated to a more appropriate industrial location. The site occupies a prime position between the Tesco store and the main shopping street and could be used for a range of appropriate town centre uses such as retail, offices or pub/restaurant.

#### 6.1.2 Thomas Street (Long Term Development Opportunity)

The Site has a long established heavy industrial use. Redevelopment for residential purposes would improve the amenity for adjacent occupiers. Future development on the site should maintain the strong urban form displayed by nearby terraced properties and should be a minimum of 2 storeys in height.

#### 6.1.3 Bradshaw Street

Unsitely, vacant site which suffers from unlawful tipping.

The site has potential for residential development, possibly for a sheltered housing block. Access to the site would be provided from Bradshaw Street and development would need to be sensitively designed to avoid disturbance from industrial activities at Victoria Mill. Provision for vehicles servicing Victoria Mill from the Bolton Road access to circulate will also be required as part of any scheme.

#### 6.1.4 St. John Street

A partially vacant garage site adjacent to the Market Place Conservation Area. The site has the benefit of outline planning consent for retail development. Development should be a minimum of 2 storeys in height to reflect the existing character of the area.

## TABLE 2: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND CAR PARKING

	Project	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Resources	Timescale
6.2.1a	Market Street Pedestrian Priority Zone and Associated Works	Finalise detailed designs and implement works monitor impact of scheme	Wigan Council	Atherton Business Partnership /GMPTE/ GM Police/ Atherton Building Communities	Local Transport Plan, Atherton Building Communities/ Potential ERDF Funding	Summer 2001/ Winter 2002
6.2.1b	Market Place Enhancements	Carry out works to create a new Public Space in front of the Parish Church	Wigan Council	English Heritage/ Atherton Building Communities/ Landfill Tax	Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme/Landfill Tax/ Local Transport Plan/ Atherton Building Communities	Summer 2001
6.2.2a	Town Centre Car Parks (Mealhouse Lane / Alma Street / St.John Street)	Improve road markings, modifications to access points and boundary treatments	Wigan Council	GM Police/ Atherton Building Communities Atherton Business Partnership	Local Transport Plan / Wigan Council	Spring / Autumn2002
6.2.2b	Other proposed Car Parks	Prepare detailed layouts and investigate funding opportunities	Wigan Council	Private Owners	To be identified	2002 onwards
6.2.3	Controlled Parking Zone	Carry out feasibility study and consultation	Wigan Council	Local Residents GM Police	Local Transport Plan	2002

## 6.2 Traffic Management and Car Parking

**6.2.1** The current high levels of through traffic using Market Street, combined with the narrow pavements create a poor quality, dangerous environment for shoppers and users of the town centre. The removal of through traffic from the main shopping areas along Market Street forms a fundamental plank of the strategy to improve the environment of the town centre and to encourage public transport usage and access to the town centre.

The main features of the scheme, which has been developed following extensive survey work and consultations with local people are as follows:-

- a Pedestrian Priority area will be introduced on Market Street between Crab Tree Lane and Hampson Street from 10.30am-4.00pm Monday -Saturday. During these hours general traffic will be restricted, although bus access will be permitted. Outside these hours the street will be opened for local access, deliveries, collecting of heavy goods etc;
- through traffic will be re-directed onto the alternative routes of Gloucester Street, Hamilton Street and Mealhouse Lane (which will become two way along most of its length). Traffic Calming measures will be installed on all these routes to reduce traffic speeds, and other traffic management works implemented on other roads to prevent rat running;
- removing general traffic will enable footpaths to be widened and repaved;
- a new Public Space will be created outside the Listed St John the Baptist Church;
- new street lighting, benches and cycle stands will be included as part of the scheme;
- a comprehensive re-signing programme to direct traffic along the most appropriate routes.

These works will create a safer, more pleasant environment for businesses to operate within and for visitors to the town centre.

The Pedestrian Priority Zone will be introduced on a 12 month experimental basis, during which its effectiveness and impact on the town centre will be monitored.

The above works to the town centre form part of the Leigh- Bolton Quality Bus Corridor Scheme.

As part of this scheme, peak hour bus lanes will be introduced at certain locations, and 2no. Grade I Bus Shelters with improved passenger information, seating and lighting will be erected on Market Street (within the pedestrian priority zone) and on the northern side of Mealhouse Lane.

**6.2.2** Existing town centre car parks at Alma Street, St John Street and Church Street are to be upgraded in conjunction with the town centre traffic management works. This will include the remarking of parking spaces, circulation areas and amendments to the existing access/egress points.

Subject to resources, sites for new car parks to tackle problems of local congestion and on-street parking are suggested at the following locations:

**Park Street/Bolton Old Road** - the proximity of Atherton St Philip's Primary School and several retail units on Bolton Road create a demand for car parking in this locality. Existing mature landscaping around the edge of the site should be retained and supplemented.

**Alder Fold Street** - a small parcel of land to the rear of Atherton Chowbent Primary School which is currently laid out for informal parking. Future upgrading of this car park could partly lessen pressures on the narrow local streets.

**Mayfield Street** - visitors to Atherton Baths create problems of on-street parking at certain times. The use of part of the adjacent garden area for visitor/staff parking could help to alleviate these problems. Existing mature planting would need to be retained within a secure, gated car park.

**Land at Bag Lane/Mealhouse Lane** - residents on Mealhouse Lane currently have limited off-street parking. A small residents only car park served via the existing Police Station parking area could be created following the proposed improvement to this junction. Future relocation of the Police Station to an alternative site could increase the area available for residents parking.

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## **6.2 Traffic Management and Car Parking (contd)**

6.2.3 The popularity of town centre car parks at certain times does create some overspill pressures on adjacent residential streets, particularly around the Stanley Street area. In this respect, a potential Controlled Parking Zone is being considered to alleviate these problems and will be the subject of a separate consultation exercise and feasibility study.



Plan 6

Artists impression:  
Market Street,  
Atherton  
(after Partial  
Pedestrianisation)

**TABLE 3: PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE MOVEMENTS**

	<b>Project</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
6.3.1a	Access for all	Programme of drop kerbs/ access improved	Wigan Council	Access Committee	Wigan Council Local Transport Plan/ Atherton Building Communities	2002 onwards
6.3.1b	Safe Routes Network	Development of legible, well-lit network of safe pedestrian routes which link the town centre with adjacent estates, primarily Hag Fold	Wigan Council	Atherton Building Communities/ Hag Fold Residents	Local Transport Plan/ Atherton Building Communities	From Spring 2003
6.3.2a	Provision of cycle parking	Cycle stands to be erected within Pedestrian Priority Zone and at other key locations	Wigan Council	Cycle Forum	Atherton Building Communities/ Local Transport Plan	Autumn 2002 onwards
6.3.2b	Cycle Priority Measures	Provision of joint Bus and cycle lanes and traffic signal priority along Leigh - Bolton Quality Bus Corridor	Wigan Council	Bolton Council GMPTE GM Police	Local Transport Plan	2001/2002

## 6.3 Pedestrian and Cycle Movements

6.3.1 The principal objective is to enhance the pedestrian environment within the town centre and to encourage pedestrian movements in and around the centre.

In particular, there are a number of key routes which need to be strengthened to encourage safe, convenient movement by pedestrians and cyclists including people with disabilities. These include:

- various routes between the Hag Fold estate and the town centre shops;
- Bolton Road/Church Street between the Town Hall, Library and the shopping areas;
- routes across Central Park from the town centre leading to schools at Hamilton Street.

Enhancement works at the Market Place will create a new well lit pedestrian space with the provision of benches to encourage people to sit within this area.

Similarly, within the new Pedestrian Priority Zone, widened pavements, better lighting and the provision of benches will greatly assist pedestrians.

6.3.2 Within the plan area a number of measures will encourage and assist cycle users. As part of the Leigh- Bolton Quality Bus Corridor Scheme all with flow bus lanes can be utilised by cyclists. In addition, new cycle parking stands are to be provided within the Pedestrian Priority Zone on Market Street, and at other important destinations.

However, it is recognised that provision for cyclists within the area is lacking and further investigations will be carried out to determine where additional cycle parking and cycle paths can be included.

**TABLE 4 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

	<b>Project</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
6.4.1	Landscaping of Gateway Sites	Appropriate hard or soft landscaping	Wigan Council	Private landowners	to be investigated	2002 onwards
6.4.2	Upgrading of Key Buildings and Site boundaries	Grant Aided Improvements to Target Buildings within the Market Place and Victoria Mill – other buildings to be addressed if resources become available.	Wigan Council	English Heritage/ Atherton Building Communities/ Private building owners	English Heritage Other sources to be investigated	April 2002 onwards
6.4.3	Upgrading of older Private Sector Housing	Block improvements to Older Housing where necessary	Wigan Council	Private Householders	To be investigated	To be determined (subject to resources)
6.4.4	Central Park and Recreation Ground	Consultation with all interested parties and continued programme of improvements	Wigan Council (Leisure Services Department)	Park Users/ Local Residents	To be identified	2001 onwards

## 6.4 Environmental Quality

6.4.1 Whilst the pedestrian environment will be greatly improved within the Pedestrian Priority Zone, the overall quality of the built environment is uneven. A number of key buildings and sites within the area have suffered from a lack of investment or maintenance and currently detract from the attractiveness of the area.

6.4.2 Grant funding is available for a number of important historic buildings within the Market Place area and at Victoria Mill, Bolton Old Road and these will be upgraded with the agreement of the private owners. Elsewhere, the Council will continue to seek alternative sources of funding to upgrade buildings and sites requiring improvement (as identified within Plans 3-5.)

The main objective is to retain and upgrade the best features of the built environment in terms of buildings and spaces, and to encourage sensitive alterations and adaptations to buildings which respect their local context.

6.4.3 Generally, the private sector housing close to the town centre is in reasonable condition. The Councils Department of Environmental Health and Consumer Protection will monitor the situation and will address any problems within the private housing stock should suitable funds become available.

6.4.4 Central Park and the adjacent recreation ground is an under-utilised space with potential for improvements and more extensive use. The retention and phased improvement of this important space, in partnership with all users is an important part of the strategy for the central area.

## TABLE 5 CRIME AND SECURITY

	Project	Action	Lead Agency	Partners	Resources	Timescale
6.5.1a	Upgrading of CCTV system	Installation of fibre optic cables to improve picture quality	Wigan Council – Director of Land and Property	GM Police / Atherton Business Partnership	Wigan Council	2001
6.5.1b	Extension of CCTV coverage	Provision of extra cameras to extend area covered by close circuit television	Wigan Council	GM Police / Atherton Business Partnership	To be investigated – potential future Home Office funding	2002 onwards
6.5.2a	Upgrading street lighting in Market Place /Market Street and adjacent streets	Provision of better lighting within these areas as part of of enhancement schemes	Wigan Council	Atherton Building Communities / English Heritage	Atherton Building Communities / Local Transport Plan	2001 onwards
6.5.2b	Further improvements to street lighting	Identification of Priority areas Design and implementation of schemes	Wigan Council	GM Police / Local community	Atherton Building Communities / Local Transport Plan	2002 onwards
6.5.4	Development of Pubwatch Scheme	Extension and promotion of existing Town Centre Pubwatch scheme	Wigan Borough Partnership	Wigan Borough Partnership / Atherton Business Partnership / GM Police	To be identified	2001 onwards

## 6.5 Crime Prevention and Security

6.5.1 The existing Close Circuit Television System within the town centre has been upgraded with new fibre optic cables being installed to transfer higher quality pictures from the cameras to a monitoring station.

There is a need to extend the existing CCTV coverage to provide greater coverage of the car parks and the Market Place area. Additional funding opportunities for an extension of the system will be investigated.

6.5.2 The works within the Pedestrian Priority Zone, the Market Place and the amendments to Mealhouse Lane will include an upgrading of existing street lighting which will improve building and personal security. However, it is recognised that other areas, including the main car parks, Central Park and streets around the Chowbent Chapel, could be better lit, subject to resources being made available.

6.5.3 The main town centre car park at Alma Street is being considered for a Crime Prevention Scheme, which will involve introducing a separate in and out system with security fencing to control access and egress.

6.5.4 The existing Pubwatch Scheme will be continued and expanded with support from the towns publicans and GM Police.

## APPENDIX I

### STATEMENT OF CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATIONS

- I.1 A staffed exhibition illustrating the proposals within the consultation Draft Plan was held at Atherton Library on 29-30 October 2002. The exhibition was attended by over 40 people and had been advertised through the local media.
- I.2 The following individuals, bodies and agencies were also formally consulted on the draft plan:-
- Greater Manchester Police
  - Wigan and Chorley Groundwork Trust
  - Wigan Access Committee
  - Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
  - Environment Agency
  - North West Arts Board
  - English Nature
  - Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit
  - Norweb Energi
  - Atherton Heritage Society
  - Wigan and Bolton Health Authority
  - Wigan Chamber of Commerce
  - Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive
  - Transco
  - English Heritage
  - North West Development Agency
  - Government Office North West
  - Tesco
  - North West Water
  - Andy Burnham MP
  - Local Councillors
- I.3 The Draft Plan was presented to the Atherton Business Partnership at its meeting of 5 August 2002 and comments invited.
- I.4 A total of 10 written representations were received as part of the consultation exercise. All representations were considered in detail and a number of modifications made to the Draft Plan.
- I.5 Details of the consultation, written responses received and proposed modifications were reported to the Council's Development Control Committee, Environment Panel and Cabinet on 8, 14 and 16 January 2003 respectively.

## APPENDIX 2

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

LTP	–	Investing in Excellence – Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan 2000/02 –2005/06
GMPTE	–	Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive
ABC	–	Atherton Building Communities (Single Regeneration Budget Round 5) Programme
UDP	–	Unitary Development Plan
Blister Paving	–	Tactile Paving blocks with ‘dimples’ to assist partially sighted people
Pedestrian Priority Zone	–	Area of Market Street between Crabtree Lane and Hampson Street from which through traffic (excluding buses) will be restricted between 10.30am – 4.00pm from Monday to Saturday.
Pubwatch	–	A partnership crime prevention scheme involving the police and local publicans